

1 Samuel 21:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.

Analysis

So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.

The priest's decision to provide the showbread represents a remarkable pastoral judgment. The Hebrew construction emphasizes that this was the only bread available—literally 'there was no bread except.' The detail about replacing old bread with fresh 'hot bread' indicates this occurred on the Sabbath when the exchange happened (Leviticus 24:8). Thus David received bread that had just completed its week of sacred service. Jesus cited this incident to demonstrate that God's law was made for humanity's benefit, not to impose burdens. Ahimelech's act of mercy would cost him everything, yet Scripture presents his decision as commendable—a priest who understood that compassion fulfills the law's deepest intent.

Historical Context

The showbread was replaced every Sabbath. The old bread, having served its symbolic purpose before the Lord for seven days, was then consumed by the priests in a holy place. Ahimelech's distribution to David stretched but did not violate the spirit of this provision.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 – Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. When has God provided for you through unconventional means?
2. How do you balance respect for sacred things with responsiveness to urgent human needs?

Interlinear Text

לִשְׁוֹם	יְהִי הַמֶּלֶךְ	בְּמִזְרָחִים	מִלְּפָנָי	לְצַמֵּם	אָם	כִּי
H3588	H518	bread	from before	that was taken	from before	the LORD
	H3899		H6440	H5493	H6440	H3068

בְּיֹום הַמִּלְחָמָה הַלְּקָחוּ בְּיֹום הַמִּלְחָמָה הַלְּקָחוּ

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