

1 Samuel 22:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the king said, Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou, and all thy father's house.

Analysis

And the king said, Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou, and all thy father's house.

Saul's death sentence employs the emphatic Hebrew construction 'mot tamut' (dying you shall die), the formula used for capital crimes in the Torah. The extension to 'all thy father's house' reveals the scope of Saul's murderous intent—collective punishment for imagined collective guilt. This verdict against God's priests inverts Saul's earlier disobedience, where he spared those God commanded destroyed (the Amalekites) but now destroys those God commanded protected (the priests). The sentence fulfilled Eli's prophecy that his priestly line would be cut off (2:31-33), though through human wickedness rather than divine command. Saul had become an instrument of judgment while himself under judgment.

Historical Context

Family execution for treason was practiced in the ancient Near East, based on collective responsibility concepts. However, destroying an entire priestly family represented unprecedented sacrilege in Israel, violating the sacred status of those who ministered before the Lord.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does Saul's destruction of priests contrast with his earlier sparing of Agag the Amalekite?
2. What does this perversion of justice teach about the trajectory of rejecting God's authority?

Interlinear Text

אָתָּה אֲמִיכָם לֹא תַּנִּזְנֵהּ וְאָמַר
said And the king Thou shalt surely Thou shalt surely Ahimelech H859
H559 H4428 H4191 H4191 H288

אֶת־יְהֹוָה בְּיַת־אַבְּיָהָב
house thou and all thy father's
H3605 H1004 H1

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 28:15 (Parallel theme): As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people.