

1 Samuel 22:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword.

Analysis

And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword.

The total destruction of Nob employs *cherem* (ban) language—the complete annihilation vocabulary reserved for God's enemies like the Canaanites. The Hebrew phrase 'lefi cherev' (edge of the sword) appears twice for emphasis. The listing 'men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep' echoes the Amalekite destruction Saul was commanded to execute but refused (15:3). The terrible irony burns: Saul would not destroy Israel's enemies but utterly destroys Israel's priests. He practiced holy war against God's servants while sparing God's enemies. This inversion marks the complete moral collapse of Saul's reign.

Historical Context

Nob's destruction eliminated an entire religious center. The totality of slaughter—including nursing infants and livestock—matches the pattern of *cherem* warfare typically reserved for pagan enemies. This act represented unprecedented violence against Israelite religious infrastructure.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does Saul's destruction of Nob mirror and invert his failure with Amalek?
2. What does this massacre teach about the trajectory of rejecting God's word?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵת	נֹב	עִיר	הַכֹּהֲנִים	הִכָּה	לְפִי	חֶרֶב:	
H853	And Nob	the city	of the priests	smote	he with the edge	of the sword	
	H5011	H5892	H3548	H5221	H6310	H2719	
וְאִישׁ	וְעַד	אִשָּׁה	מְעוֹלָל	וְעַד	יֹנֵק	וְשׁוֹר	וְחֶמֶל
both men	H5704	and women	children	H5704	and sucklings	and oxen	and asses
H376		H802	H5768		H3243	H7794	H2543
וְשֶׁה	לְפִי		חֶרֶב:				
and sheep	he with the edge		of the sword				
H7716	H6310		H2719				

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 15:3 (Parallel theme): Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.