

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

נַבְנִים	הַכְּבָדִים	הַכְּבָדָה	לְפִי	סְרִבָּה:
the priests	of the priests	the priest	with the edge	of the sword
נַבְנִים	הַכְּבָדִים	הַכְּבָדָה	לְפִי	סְרִבָּה:
And Nob	the city	smote	he with the edge	of the sword
H853	H5011	H5892	H5221	H2719
both men	and women	children	and sucklings	and oxen
H376	H5704	H802	H3243	H7794
מְאִישׁ	מְעוּלָה	יְעֵד	יְנִינָה	מְאִישׁ
both men	children	and women	and sucklings	and asses
H376	H5768	H802	H3243	H2543
לְפִי	לְפִי	לְפִי	לְפִי	לְפִי
and sheep	he with the edge	of the sword	of the sword	of the sword
H7716	H6310	H2719	H2719	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 sucking, ox and sheep, camel and ass.