

1 Samuel 24:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house.

Analysis

Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house.

Saul's request reveals his true concern—dynastic survival rather than personal life. The Hebrew 'lo tachrit et-zar'i acharai' (you will not cut off my seed after me) asks protection for descendants. Ancient Near Eastern succession often involved eliminating rival claimants—Saul feared David would practice what he himself would have done. The phrase 'destroy my name' (tashmid shemi) concerns legacy obliteration, the worst fate imaginable in honor-shame cultures. Saul's request for oath 'by the LORD' seeks divine guarantee. Having failed to kill David, he now negotiates for his family's survival, acknowledging David's eventual power over life and death.

Historical Context

Dynastic elimination was common practice—new kings often killed previous royal families to prevent rival claims. Saul's request acknowledged David would have power to destroy his house. The oath 'by the LORD' invoked divine witness and curse for violation.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What does Saul's focus on family survival reveal about his priorities?
2. How should those in power treat the families of former rivals?

Interlinear Text

וְאִם	בְּיַהְעַנְתָּךְ	הַשְׁבָּעָה וְעַתָּה	לֵי	וְעַתָּה בְּעֵת	וְעַתָּה	וְעַתָּה
H518	H3068	now therefore unto me by the LORD	H0	בְּיַהְעַנְתָּךְ	הַשְׁבָּעָה וְעַתָּה	וְעַתָּה
Swear	H6258		H7650	לֵי	וְעַתָּה בְּעֵת	וְעַתָּה
cut off	H853	my seed	H2233	after	H310	that thou wilt not
H3772						H518
me and that thou wilt not destroy	H8045	תִּשְׁמַם יְדֵךְ	H853	אַתָּה	H8034	שְׁמָה יְתָהַנֵּן
		me and that thou wilt not destroy		that thou wilt not		my name
						H1004
						out of my father's
						H1

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 21:23 (Parallel theme): Now therefore swear unto me here by God that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son: but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned.