

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

וְעַתָּה הִנֵּנִי H6258	שֹׁמֵר בְּעֵת הַשְׁבָּעָה Swear H7650	לִי H0	כִּי הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה now therefore unto me by the LORD H3068	וְאַתָּה that thou wilt not H518
וְעַתָּה הִנֵּנִי cut off H3772	אֶת זֶרְעִי H853 my seed H2233	אַחֲרָי after H310	וְאַתָּה that thou wilt not H518	
וְעַתָּה הִנֵּנִי me and that thou wilt not destroy H8045	אֶת שְׁמִי H853 my name H8034	מִבֵּית יְהוָה house H1004	אֲבִי 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.