

1 Samuel 27:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive, and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel, and returned, and came to Achish.

Analysis

The brutality of David's warfare, leaving 'neither man nor woman alive,' presents modern readers with difficulty but must be understood within its ancient context and specific targets. The Hebrew 'lo yechayeh' (did not keep alive) indicates intentional elimination of witnesses. While morally complex, David's targets were peoples under divine judgment whose survival would expose his deception. The spoils taken (sheep, oxen, asses, camels, apparel) represented the wealth of pastoral peoples and provided resources for David's community.

Historical Context

Ancient warfare commonly involved total destruction of enemy populations, particularly in raids. The specific mention of camels suggests David's raids extended into desert-dwelling populations. These activities built David's wealth and reputation as a warrior while eliminating witnesses to his true loyalties.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How do you navigate moral complexity when survival seems to require compromising actions?
2. What aspects of biblical history challenge your understanding of God's purposes?

Interlinear Text

וְיָהִי הַיּוֹם כִּי־אַתָּה בָּאָרֶץ וְאֵשׁ אָנֹכִי הַיּוֹם כִּי־אַתָּה בָּאָרֶץ וְאֵשׁ
smote And David the land alive and left neither man
H5221 H1732 H853 H776 H3808 H2421 H376

וְאִמְלָיִם תִּמְלֹךְ יְמִינְךָ וְבָקָר צָאָן וְלַקְרָב וְאִשָּׁה
nor woman and took away the sheep and the oxen and the asses and the camels
H802 H3947 H6629 H1241 H2543 H1581

אֲכִישׁ יְמִינְךָ וְבָקָר צָאָן וְלַקְרָב וְאִשָּׁה
and the apparel and returned and came to Achish
H899 H7725 H935 H413 H397

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.