

1 Samuel 31:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

All the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and came to Jabesh, and burnt them there.

Analysis

The all-night march by Jabesh-gilead's valiant men demonstrates courage and loyalty that honors Saul in death as he honored them in life. Their retrieval of the bodies from Beth-shan's wall, burning them at Jabesh, and proper burial represents significant risk. The burning (unusual for Israelite practice) may have been necessary due to decomposition or to prevent further desecration. Their courage restores some dignity to the fallen king.

Historical Context

Cremation was not typical Israelite practice, making this action notable. Some suggest burning removed decayed flesh while preserving bones for proper burial. Others see it as emergency measure given circumstances. The courage required to retrieve bodies from enemy territory was exceptional.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What risks are worth taking to honor those who cannot honor themselves?
2. How does the men of Jabesh-gilead's courage model loyalty to fallen leaders?

Interlinear Text

אֶת וַיִּקַּח ו	כָּל הַלַּיְלָה	כָּל וַלְכָ ו	חֵיל	אֲנִישׁ כָּל וַיִּקַּח וּמֹו	
H853	all night H3915	H3605	All the valiant H2428	men H376	arose H6965
וַיִּקַּח ו	מִחוּמֵּת	בְּנֵי יוֹ	וַיִּקַּח ו	שָׂא וּל	גְּוִיֵּת
H3947	from the wall H2346	of his sons H1121	and the bodies H1472	of Saul H7586	and the bodies H1472
שָׂם:	אֶת־ם	וַיִּשְׂרֹף ו	יָב־שָׁה	וַיָּב־אוֹ	שָׁן
H8033	H853	and burnt H8313	to Jabesh H3003	and came H935	of Bethshan H1052

Additional Cross-References

2 Chronicles 16:14 (Parallel theme): And they buried him in his own sepulchres, which he had made for himself in the city of David, and laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odours and divers kinds of spices prepared by the apothecaries' art: and they made a very great burning for him.

Jeremiah 34:5 (Parallel theme): But thou shalt die in peace: and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings which were before thee, so shall they burn odours for thee; and they will lament thee, saying, Ah lord! for I have pronounced the word, saith the LORD.

Amos 6:10 (Parallel theme): And a man's uncle shall take him up, and he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that is by the sides of the house, Is there yet any with thee? and he shall say, No. Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of the LORD.

