

1 Samuel 4:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the man said unto Eli, I am he that came out of the army, and I fled to day out of the army. And he said, What is there done, my son?

Analysis

The messenger identifies himself as an eyewitness: 'I am he that came out of the army.' His statement 'I fled to day' indicates same-day arrival, emphasizing urgency and recent experience of the disaster. Eli's question 'What is there done?' invites the terrible report. The Hebrew *mah hayah hadavar* ('what was the thing/word') requests the substantive news beneath the crying. Eli must hear the specific content of the catastrophe his failures have brought about.

Historical Context

Eyewitness testimony carried special weight in ancient cultures. The messenger's identification as a battlefield participant authenticated his report. Same-day arrival demonstrated the urgency of his mission.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. Why does the messenger emphasize his eyewitness status?

2. What weight does immediate, firsthand testimony carry in establishing truth?

Interlinear Text

מִן	הִבְאֵר	אָנֹכִי	עַל	בָּאָשָׁר	אָל	וְאָמַר
I am he that came	H4480	I am he that came	H935	unto Eli	H595	And the man
And he said	H559	And he said	H376	H413		
out of the army	H4634	out of the army	H4480	H589	H4480	the army
And he said	H559	and I fled	H5127	H3117	H4634	from the
What is there done	H1961	my son	H1121	H1697	H4100	What is there done

Additional Cross-References

2 Samuel 1:4 (Parallel theme): And David said unto him, How went the matter? I pray thee, tell me. And he answered, That the people are fled from the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead; and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also.

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