

1 Samuel 8:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.

Analysis

And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.

The royal tithe directly parallels—and competes with—the sacred tithe owed to God. Under the Mosaic covenant, Israelites gave a tenth of their produce to support the Levites (Numbers 18:21-24) and the sanctuary system. Now the king will impose his own tenth, effectively doubling the tax burden while diverting resources from sacred to secular purposes. The term "sarim" (officers, or eunuchs) appears here, possibly anticipating the foreign court practices Israel would eventually adopt. These officials and "avadim" (servants) form the bureaucratic class every monarchy requires. The agricultural tithe ("zera'," seed, and vineyard produce) represents ongoing taxation rather than one-time confiscation—the king's take will continue year after year. This perpetual extraction contrasts with God's abundant provision. Where the divine tithe supported worship and care for the poor, the royal tithe enriches the political elite.

Historical Context

Royal taxation in ancient Near Eastern kingdoms typically ranged from 10-20% of agricultural produce. Egyptian records document detailed tax collection systems. The mention of "sarim" (possibly eunuchs) reflects Mesopotamian court practices where castrated officials served in positions of trust near royal households.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does the concept of competing tithes challenge you to evaluate where your primary loyalties and resources flow?
2. What does it mean practically to give God the "first" of your resources rather than what remains after other obligations?

Interlinear Text

וְנָתַן	יְשַׁׁעַת	רְאֵשׁ	וְנָתַן	וְנָתַן
of your seed	and of your vineyards	And he will take the tenth	and give	
H2233	H3754	H6237	H5414	
וְלֹא־עָבָדְךָ יְהוָה				
to his officers	and to his servants			
H5631	H5650			

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