

1 Samuel 9:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then said Saul to his servant, But, behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we?

Analysis

Then said Saul to his servant, But, behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present to bring to the man of God: what have we?

Saul's response reveals cultural sensitivity and proper etiquette: one did not approach a prophet empty-handed. His concern about having no gift (teshurah, a present given to secure favor or consultation) reflects both humility and awareness of social customs. The detail that their bread provisions were exhausted emphasizes the length and difficulty of their journey. Yet Saul's focus on material offering contrasts with the spiritual reality that Samuel would soon present him with a gift beyond measure, the kingship itself. This moment subtly exposes a pattern that would characterize Saul's reign: excessive concern with external formalities and human approval rather than the heart disposition God truly desires. His question 'what have we?' unknowingly echoes Israel's spiritual poverty even as they sought human kingship over divine rule.

Historical Context

Offering gifts to prophets was customary practice (2 Kings 4:42; 8:8-9). Such presents were not payment for services but tokens of respect and recognition of

the prophet's status. The practice continued in various forms throughout Israel's history, though prophets like Samuel and Elisha often refused material gain to preserve the purity of their ministry.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How might our concern with proper religious forms sometimes overshadow the relationship God truly desires?
2. What does Saul's anxiety about approaching the prophet without a gift reveal about his understanding of spiritual authority?

Interlinear Text

לֹא	יֵשׁ	לְהָבִי	יָא	וּמָה	נִלְךָ	וְהֵיכָל	לְנָעֲרִי	שָׂא	וְלִי	אָמַר
		to bring					to his servant	Saul	Then said	
		H935					H5288	H7586	H559	

אֵין	וּתְשׁוּבָה	הֵ	מִכֵּלִי	יְנוּ	אֵלַי	לִ	הֶלֶךְ	חֶם	כִּי
	and there is not a present		in our vessels		is spent		for the bread		
	H8670		H3627		H235		H3899		H3588

אֶתְנוּ:	מֵה	הָאֱלֹהִים	יֵשׁ	לְהָבִי	יָא
		of God	the man	to bring	
		H430	H376	H935	

Additional Cross-References

1 Kings 14:3 (Parallel theme): And take with thee ten loaves, and cracknels, and a cruse of honey, and go to him: he shall tell thee what shall become of the child.

2 Kings 8:8 (References God): And the king said unto Hazael, Take a present in thine hand, and go, meet the man of God, and enquire of the LORD by him, saying, Shall I recover of this disease?

2 Kings 4:42 (References God): And there came a man from Baal-shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. And he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat.

2 Kings 5:5 (Parallel theme): And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment.

2 Kings 5:15 (References God): And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant.

Judges 6:18 (Parallel theme): Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again.