

2 Samuel 18:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Absalom met the servants of David. And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away.

Analysis

And Absalom met the servants of David. And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away.

This verse contributes to the narrative of Absalom's Death, emphasizing tragedy of rebellion. Absalom's death despite David's orders demonstrates the tragic consequences of rebellion against God's anointed. The graphic description of Absalom caught in oak branches suggests divine judgment. David's overwhelming grief ("O my son Absalom") reveals parental love even for rebellious children. Theological themes include the tragedy of rebellion, the reality that sin leads to death, parental love's persistence, and the danger of prioritizing family over kingdom responsibilities.

Historical Context

The historical setting of 2 Samuel 18 occurs during David's reign (circa 1010-970 BCE) over Israel's united monarchy. Archaeological discoveries, including the Tel Dan inscription mentioning the 'House of David,' corroborate biblical historicity.

Ancient Near Eastern customs regarding tragedy of rebellion provide crucial background. The geopolitical situation involved regional powers—Philistines, Ammonites, Arameans, Moabites, Edomites—as David consolidated and expanded Israel's territory. Cultural practices concerning kingship, warfare, covenant relationships, family dynamics, and religious observance differed significantly from modern Western contexts, requiring careful attention to avoid anachronistic interpretation while extracting timeless theological principles applicable across cultures and eras.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does this passage deepen your understanding of tragedy of rebellion?
2. What does this verse reveal about God's character, and how should that shape your worship and obedience?
3. In what specific ways can you apply this truth to your current circumstances and relationships this week?

Interlinear Text

רָכַב אֶבְשָׁל וּמִקְרָא	לְפָנָיו עַבְדֵי וּמִקְרָא	לְפָנָיו עַבְדֵי וּמִקְרָא	לְפָנָיו עַבְדֵי וּמִקְרָא	לְפָנָיו עַבְדֵי וּמִקְרָא	רָכַב אֶבְשָׁל וּמִקְרָא
met And Absalom the servants	met And Absalom the servants	met And Absalom the servants	met And Absalom the servants	met And Absalom the servants	met And Absalom the servants
H7122 H53 H6440 H5650 H1732 H53	H7122 H53 H6440 H5650 H1732 H53	H7122 H53 H6440 H5650 H1732 H53	H7122 H53 H6440 H5650 H1732 H53	H7122 H53 H6440 H5650 H1732 H53	H7122 H53 H6440 H5650 H1732 H53
עַל שׁוֹבֵר	וַיַּבְאֵן וַיַּפְאֵל כִּי תִּתְחַזֵּק	וַיַּבְאֵן וַיַּפְאֵל כִּי תִּתְחַזֵּק	וַיַּבְאֵן וַיַּפְאֵל כִּי תִּתְחַזֵּק	וַיַּבְאֵן וַיַּפְאֵל כִּי תִּתְחַזֵּק	עַל שׁוֹבֵר
and the mule went and the mule	and the mule went and the mule	and the mule went and the mule	and the mule went and the mule	and the mule went and the mule	and the mule went and the mule
H5921 H6505 H935 H6505 H8478 H7730	H5921 H6505 H935 H6505 H8478 H7730	H5921 H6505 H935 H6505 H8478 H7730	H5921 H6505 H935 H6505 H8478 H7730	H5921 H6505 H935 H6505 H8478 H7730	H5921 H6505 H935 H6505 H8478 H7730
בָּאֵל הַגְּדוֹלָה בָּאֵל הַגְּדוֹלָה בָּאֵל הַגְּדוֹלָה בָּאֵל הַגְּדוֹלָה	בָּאֵל הַגְּדוֹלָה בָּאֵל הַגְּדוֹלָה בָּאֵל הַגְּדוֹלָה בָּאֵל הַגְּדוֹלָה	בָּאֵל הַגְּדוֹלָה בָּאֵל הַגְּדוֹלָה בָּאֵל הַגְּדוֹלָה			
oak of a great caught hold and his head	oak of a great caught hold and his head	oak of a great caught hold and his head	oak of a great caught hold and his head	oak of a great caught hold and his head	oak of a great caught hold and his head
H424 H1419 H2388 H7218 H424 H5414	H424 H1419 H2388 H7218 H424 H5414	H424 H1419 H2388 H7218 H424 H5414	H424 H1419 H2388 H7218 H424 H5414	H424 H1419 H2388 H7218 H424 H5414	H424 H1419 H2388 H7218 H424 H5414
בּוּנָה אֲשֶׁר וַיַּפְאֵל כִּי הַשְׁמָם יִמְלָא בְּיַם	בּוּנָה אֲשֶׁר וַיַּפְאֵל כִּי הַשְׁמָם יִמְלָא בְּיַם	בּוּנָה אֲשֶׁר וַיַּפְאֵל כִּי הַשְׁמָם יִמְלָא בְּיַם	בּוּנָה אֲשֶׁר וַיַּפְאֵל כִּי הַשְׁמָם יִמְלָא בְּיַם	בּוּנָה אֲשֶׁר וַיַּפְאֵל כִּי הַשְׁמָם יִמְלָא בְּיַם	בּוּנָה אֲשֶׁר וַיַּפְאֵל כִּי הַשְׁמָם יִמְלָא בְּיַם
H996 between the heaven H8064 H996	H996 between the heaven H8064 H996	H996 between the heaven H8064 H996	H996 between the heaven H8064 H996	H996 between the heaven H8064 H996	H996 between the heaven H8064 H996
עַלְרָא:					
that was under him went away					
H5674					

Additional Cross-References

2 Samuel 14:26 (Parallel theme): And when he polled his head, (for it was at every year's end that he polled it: because the hair was heavy on him, therefore he polled it:) he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king's weight.

Job 31:3 (Parallel theme): Is not destruction to the wicked? and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity?

Proverbs 30:17 (Parallel theme): The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.