

Saul's Foolish Vow (c. 1050 – c. 1022 BC)

1 Samuel 13:15b–14:46

The Philistines Mobilize Their Forces

13:15b Saul mustered the army that remained with him; there were about six hundred men.

16 Saul, his son Jonathan, and the army that remained with them stayed in Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin, while the Philistines camped in Micmash.

17 Raiding bands went out from the camp of the Philistines in three groups. One band turned toward the road leading to Ophrah by the land of Shual;

18 another band turned toward the road leading to Beth Horon; and yet another band turned toward the road leading to the border that overlooks the valley of Zeboim in the direction of the desert.

Explanation of Disparity in Armaments Between Israel and Philistia

19 A blacksmith could not be found in all the land of Israel, for the Philistines had said, "This will prevent the Hebrews from making swords and spears."

20 So all Israel had to go down to the Philistines in order to get their plowshares, cutting instruments, axes, and sickles sharpened.

21 They charged two-thirds of a shekel to sharpen plowshares and cutting instruments, and a third of a shekel to sharpen picks and axes, and to set ox goads.

22 So on the day of the battle no sword or spear was to be found in the hand of anyone in the army that was with Saul and Jonathan. No one but Saul and his son Jonathan had them.

Jonathan and His Armor Bearer Attack a Philistine Garrison

23 A garrison of the Philistines had gone out to the pass at Micmash.

14:1 Then one day Jonathan son of Saul said to his armor bearer, "Come on, let's go over to the Philistine garrison that is opposite us." But he did not let his father know.

2 Now Saul was sitting under a pomegranate tree in Migron, on the outskirts of Gibeah. The army that was with him numbered about six hundred men.

3 Now Ahijah was carrying an ephod. He was the son of Ahitub, who was the brother of Ithobal and a son of Phineas, son of Eli, the priest of the LORD in Shiloh. The army was unaware that Jonathan had left.

4 Now there was a steep cliff on each side of the pass through which Jonathan intended to go to reach the Philistine garrison. One cliff was named Bozez, the other Seneh.

5 The cliff to the north was closer to Micmash, the one to the south closer to Geba.

6 Jonathan said to his armor bearer, "Come on, let's go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised men. Perhaps the LORD will intervene for us. Nothing can prevent the LORD from delivering, whether by many or by a few."

7 His armor bearer said to him, "Do everything that is on your mind. Do as you're inclined. I'm with you all the way!"

8 Jonathan replied, "All right! We'll go over to these men and fight them.

9 If they say to us, 'Stay put until we approach you,' we will stay right there and not go up to them.

10 But if they say, 'Come up against us,' we will go up. For in that case the LORD has given them into our hand—it will be a sign to us."

11 When they made themselves known to the Philistine garrison, the Philistines said, "Look! The Hebrews are coming out of the holes in which they hid themselves."

12 Then the men of the garrison said to Jonathan and his armor bearer, "Come on up to us so we can teach you a thing or two!"

Then Jonathan said to his armor bearer, "Come up behind me, for the LORD has given them into the hand of Israel!"

13 Jonathan crawled up on his hands and feet, with his armor bearer following behind him. Jonathan struck down the Philistines, while his armor bearer came along behind him and killed them.

14 In this initial skirmish Jonathan and his armor bearer struck down about twenty men in an area that measured half an acre.

God Strikes the Philistines / Saul, After Much Hesitation, Attacks

15 Then fear overwhelmed those who were in the camp, those who were in the field, all the army in the garrison, and the raiding bands. They trembled and the ground shook. This fear was caused by God.

16 Saul's watchmen at Gibeah in the territory of Benjamin looked on as the crowd of soldiers seemed to melt away first in one direction and then in another.

17 So Saul said to the army that was with him, "Mustering the troops and see who is no longer with us." When they mustered the troops, Jonathan and his armor bearer were not there.

18 So Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring near the ephod," for he was at that time wearing the ephod.

19 While Saul spoke to the priest, the panic in the Philistines' camp was becoming greater and greater. So Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand!"

20 Saul and all the army that was with him assembled and marched into battle, where they found the Philistines in total panic killing one another with their swords.

21 The Hebrews who had earlier gone over to the Philistine side joined the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan.

22 When all the Israelites who had hidden themselves in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines had fled, they too pursued them in battle.

23 So the LORD delivered Israel that day, and the battle shifted over to Beth Aven.

Saul's Rash Oath

24 Now the men of Israel were hard pressed that day, for Saul had made the army agree to this oath: "Cursed be the man who eats food before evening! I will get my vengeance on my enemies!" So no one in the army ate anything.

25 Now the whole army entered the forest and there was honey on the ground.

26 When the army entered the forest, they saw the honey flowing, but no one ate any of it, for the army was afraid of the oath.

27 But Jonathan had not heard about the oath his father had made the army take. He extended the end of his staff that was in his hand and dipped it in the honeycomb. When he ate it, his eyes gleamed.

28 Then someone from the army informed him, "Your father put the army under a strict oath saying, 'Cursed be the man who eats food today!' That is why the army is tired."

29 Then Jonathan said, "My father has caused trouble for the land. See how my eyes gleamed when I tasted just a little of this honey.

30 Certainly if the army had eaten some of the enemies' provisions that they came across today, would not the slaughter of the Philistines have been even greater?"

The Sin of the Troops

31 On that day the army struck down the Philistines from Micmash to Aijalon, and they became very tired.

32 So the army rushed greedily on the plunder, confiscating sheep, cattle, and calves. They slaughtered them right on the ground, and the army ate them blood and all.

33 Now it was reported to Saul, "Look, the army is sinning against the LORD by eating even the blood." He said, "All of you have broken the covenant! Roll a large stone over here to me."

34 Then Saul said, "Scatter out among the army and say to them, 'Each of you bring to me your ox and sheep and slaughter them in this spot and eat. But don't sin against the LORD by eating the blood.'" So that night each one brought his ox and slaughtered it there.

35 Then Saul built an altar for the LORD; it was the first time he had built an altar for the LORD.

Saul Inquires of the Lord

36 Saul said, "Let's go down after the Philistines at night; we will rout them until the break of day. We won't leave any of them alive!" They replied, "Do whatever seems best to you." But the priest said, "Let's approach God here."

37 So Saul asked God, "Should I go down after the Philistines? Will you deliver them into the hand of Israel?" But he did not answer him that day.

38 Then Saul said, "All you leaders of the army come here. Find out how this sin occurred today.

39 For as surely as the LORD, the deliverer of Israel, lives, even if it turns out to be my own son Jonathan, he will certainly die!" But no one from the army said anything.

40 Then he said to all Israel, "You will be on one side, and I and my son Jonathan will be on the other side." The army replied to Saul, "Do whatever you think is best."

41 Then Saul said, "O LORD God of Israel! If this sin has been committed by me or by my son Jonathan, then, O LORD God of Israel, respond with Urim. But if this sin has been committed by your people Israel, respond with Thummim." Then Jonathan and Saul were indicated by lot, while the army was exonerated.

42 Then Saul said, "Cast the lot between me and my son Jonathan!" Jonathan was indicated by lot.

43 So Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have done." Jonathan told him, "I used the end of the staff that was in my hand to taste a little honey. I must die!"

44 Saul said, "God will punish me severely if Jonathan doesn't die!"

45 But the army said to Saul, "Should Jonathan, who won this great victory in Israel, die? May it never be! As surely as the LORD lives, not a single hair of his head will fall to the ground! For it is with the help of God that he has acted today." So the army rescued Jonathan from death.

46 Then Saul stopped chasing the Philistines, and the Philistines went back home.

Saul's Wars (c. 1050 – c. 1022 BC)

1 Samuel 14:47–48, 52; 1 Chronicles 5:10, 18–22

Saul Has Victory Over Israel's Enemies

1 Sam 14:47 After Saul had secured his royal position over Israel, he fought against all their enemies on all sides—the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines. In every direction that he turned he was victorious.

48 He fought bravely, striking down the Amalekites and delivering Israel from the hand of its enemies.

52 There was fierce war with the Philistines all the days of Saul. So whenever Saul saw anyone who was a warrior or a brave individual, he would conscript him.

War With the Hagrites

1 Chr 5:10 During the time of Saul they [the Transjordan tribes] attacked the Hagrites and defeated them. They took over their territory in the entire eastern region of Gilead.

18 The Reubenites, Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh had 44,760 men in their combined armies, warriors who carried shields and swords, were equipped with bows, and were trained for war.

19 They attacked the Hagrites, Jetur, Naphish, and Nodab.

20 They received divine help in fighting them, and the Hagrites and all their allies were handed over to them. They cried out to God during the battle; he responded to their prayers because they trusted in him.

21 They seized the Hagrites' animals, including 50,000 camels, 250,000 sheep, and 2,000 donkeys. They also took captive 100,000 people.

22 Because God fought for them, they killed many of the enemy. They dispossessed the Hagrites and lived in their land until the exile.

Saul's Family (c. 1050 – c. 1022 BC)

1 Samuel 14:49–51	2 Samuel 21:8a	1 Chronicles 9:39
<p>49 The sons of Saul were Jonathan, Ishvi, and Malki-Shua. He had two daughters; the older one was named Merab and the younger Michal.</p> <p>50 The name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz. The name of the general in command of his army was Abner son of Ner, Saul's uncle.</p> <p>51 Kish was the father of Saul, and Ner the father of Abner was the son of Abiel.</p>	<p>8a So the king [David] took Armoni and Mephibosheth, the two sons of Aiah's daughter Rizpah whom she had born to Saul</p>	<p>39 Ner was the father of Kish, and Kish was the father of Saul. Saul was the father of Jonathan, Malki-Shua, Abinadab, and Eshbaal.</p>

God Rejects Saul (c. 1022 BC)

1 Samuel 15

God Commissions Saul to Destroy Amalek

1 Then Samuel said to Saul, "I was the one the LORD sent to anoint you as king over his people Israel. Now listen to what the LORD says.

2 Here is what the LORD of hosts says: 'I carefully observed how the Amalekites opposed Israel along the way when Israel came up from Egypt.

3 So go now and strike down the Amalekites. Destroy everything that they have. Don't spare them. Put them to death—man, woman, child, infant, ox, sheep, camel, and donkey alike.'"

Amalek Defeated

4 So Saul assembled the army and mustered them at Telaim. There were 200,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 men of Judah.

5 Saul proceeded to the city of Amalek, where he set an ambush in the wadi.

6 Saul said to the Kenites, "Go on and leave! Go down from among the Amalekites! Otherwise I will sweep you away with them! After all, you were kind to all the Israelites when they came up from Egypt." So the Kenites withdrew from among the Amalekites.

7 Then Saul struck down the Amalekites all the way from Havilah to Shur, which is next to Egypt.

Saul Disobeys

8 He captured King Agag of the Amalekites alive, but he executed all Agag's people with the sword.

9 However, Saul and the army spared Agag, along with the best of the flock, the cattle, the fatlings, and the lambs, as well as everything else that was of value. They were not willing to slaughter them. But they did slaughter everything that was despised and worthless.

God Rejects Saul as King

10 Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel:

11 "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned away from me and has not done what I told him to do." Samuel became angry and he cried out to the LORD all that night.

12 Then Samuel got up early to meet Saul the next morning. But Samuel was informed, “Saul has gone to Carmel where he is setting up a monument for himself. Then Samuel left and went down to Gilgal.”

13 When Samuel came to him, Saul said to him, “May the LORD bless you! I have done what the LORD said.”

14 Samuel replied, “If that is the case, then what is this sound of sheep in my ears and the sound of cattle that I hear?”

15 Saul said, “They were brought from the Amalekites; the army spared the best of the flocks and cattle to sacrifice to the LORD our God. But everything else we slaughtered.”

16 Then Samuel said to Saul, “Wait a minute! Let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night.” Saul said to him, “Tell me.”

17 Samuel said, “Is it not true that when you were insignificant in your own eyes, you became head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD chose you as king over Israel.

18 The LORD sent you on a campaign saying, ‘Go and exterminate those sinful Amalekites! Fight against them until you have destroyed them.’

19 Why haven’t you obeyed the LORD? Instead you have greedily rushed upon the plunder! You have done what is wrong in the LORD’s estimation.”

20 Then Saul said to Samuel, “But I have obeyed the LORD! I went on the campaign the LORD sent me on. I brought back King Agag of the Amalekites after exterminating the Amalekites.

21 But the army took from the plunder some of the sheep and cattle—the best of what was to be slaughtered—to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal.”

22 Then Samuel said,

“Does the LORD take pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices

as much as he does in obedience?

Certainly, obedience is better than sacrifice;

paying attention is better than the fat of rams.

23 For rebellion is like the sin of divination,

and presumption is like the evil of idolatry.

Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,

he has rejected you as king.”

Saul’s False Repentance

24 Then Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned, for I have disobeyed what the LORD commanded and what you said as well. For I was afraid of the army, and I followed their wishes.

25 Now please forgive my sin! Go back with me so I can worship the LORD.”

26 Samuel said to Saul, “I will not go back with you, for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel!”

27 When Samuel turned to leave, Saul grabbed the edge of his robe and it tore.

28 Samuel said to him, “The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to one of your colleagues who is better than you!

29 The Preeminent One of Israel does not go back on his word or change his mind, for he is not a human being who changes his mind.”

30 Saul again replied, “I have sinned. But please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel. Go back with me so I may worship the LORD your God.”

31 So Samuel followed Saul back, and Saul worshiped the LORD.

Samuel Kills Agag

32 Then Samuel said, “Bring me King Agag of the Amalekites.” So Agag came to him trembling, thinking to himself, “Surely death is bitter!”

33 Samuel said, “Just as your sword left women childless, so your mother will be the most bereaved among women!” Then Samuel hacked Agag to pieces there in Gilgal before the LORD.

34 Then Samuel went to Ramah, while Saul went up to his home in Gibeah of Saul.

35 Until the day he died Samuel did not see Saul again. Samuel did, however, mourn for Saul, but the LORD regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.