

Making Promises

Part 6: The Kingdom

Review

- In 1 Samuel 12, while the people are gathered to celebrate a recent victory, Samuel took the occasion first to verify his own credibility among the people and then to rehearse for them God's mighty acts on their behalf from the time of the exodus to the present hour.
- Encouraged by his defensive campaign against Ammon and by the spirit of solidarity and covenant favor he had experienced at Gilgal, Saul undertook the first of his offensive campaigns against the Philistines.
- While at Gilgal, Saul recalled the words of Samuel two years before that a time would come when the king would have to wait seven days for the prophet to arrive at Gilgal. Fearful of the imminent attack of the Philistines, Saul offered sacrifice to Yahweh and thus violated not only Samuel's precise instructions but also the cultic prescriptions concerning proper ritual.

Preparing for Battle

- After leaving Gilgal, the place of his unlawful sacrifice, Saul took refuge at **Gibeah** with only six hundred men, while the Philistines were camped mainly at nearby **Micmash** sending out raiding parties from there to Ophrah, Bethel, Beth Horon, and Zeboim (**1 Sam. 13:15-18**).
 - ▶ As an effective method of denying weapons to the Israelites, the Philistines had apparently deported all the Israelite **blacksmiths**. Hebrew fighting men were not to have swords or spears, except of course for Saul and Jonathan (**1 Sam. 13:19-23**).
 - ▶ For decades archaeologists working at many different sites have unearthed **iron artifacts** in staggering number and variety dating from the period of greatest Philistine power and leading to the general consensus that the Philistines introduced the metal to the land of Canaan.
- Drawing somewhat closer to Micmash, Saul took up a defensive stance at Migron (about 5 miles from Gibeah) between Micmash and Geba. **Jonathan**, however, slipped away and with only his armor bearer attacked a Philistine detachment near Micmash, killing about twenty men (**1 Sam. 14:1-2, 6, 13-15**).
 - ▶ The reference to **Ichabod**, whose name means "no glory" (**1 Sam. 4:21**), recalls yet another tragedy in Eli's family. Thus the rebuked king Saul is in the company of the priest Ahijah of the rejected house of Eli, and neither

is aware that the courageous Jonathan, son of Saul, was on his way to fight the Philistines.

- ▶ This blow, together with an **earthquake**, caused such panic among the Philistines that Saul and his men were immediately aware that something unusual had happened. A quick check revealed that Jonathan and his armor bearer were missing (**1 Sam. 14:16-17**).
- ▶ Still not quite ready to go to Jonathan's aid, however, Saul told the priest Ahijah to bring **the ark or ephod** of God before him (**1 Sam. 14:18**). Hearing the increasing tumult in the Philistine camp, Saul apparently changed his mind about the need to make use of the ark and told Ahijah to stop the ritual proceedings (**1 Sam. 14:19**). Together with his men he then marched into battle (**1 Sam. 14:20**), presumably without benefit of priestly blessing of any kind.
- ▶ As a result of the Philistine confusion, brother was wielding sword against brother, and ultimately, the **Hapiru** mercenaries, who had been hired by the Philistines, were encouraged to defect and take sides with Israel. Additionally, reinforcements from the group of Israelite deserters also joined the fight (**1 Sam. 14:21-23**).

The Vow

- Saul had put his army under an **oath** not to eat until God gave Israel victory, so his men were famished to the point of fainting (**1 Sam. 14:24**). So when the Philistines fled, the Israelites committed two violations of the oath:
 - ▶ Jonathan ate **honey** because he had not heard his father's command, and the people **slaughtered the animals** that were left behind and ate them without properly draining the blood (**1 Sam. 14:27-29, 32**).
 - ▶ This breach of the oath and of **Mosaic ritual law** (**Deut. 12:16, et al.**) so frightened Saul that he built an altar in order to offer appropriate sacrifice. Then he sought a word from Yahweh about continuing his pursuit of the Philistines, but no word was forthcoming.
 - ▶ Saul took this to mean that someone had angered Yahweh by violating the oath. Casting **the sacred lots**, he discovered the guilty party to be his own son Jonathan (**1 Sam. 14:41-43**). Only the pleas of the people restrained Saul from killing Jonathan (**1 Sam. 14:45**).
 - ▶ Here we see the beginnings of Saul's **irrationality** and **madness**. Distracted by his determination to execute his own son, Saul loses his best opportunity to deal the Philistines a lethal blow (**1 Sam. 14:46**).

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<p>1 Samuel 13:15–18</p>	<p>15 And Samuel arose and went up from Gilgal. The rest of the people went up after Saul to meet the army; they went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people who were present with him, about six hundred men. 16 And Saul and Jonathan his son and the people who were present with them stayed in Geba of Benjamin, but the Philistines encamped in Michmash. 17 And raiders came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies. One company turned toward Ophrah, to the land of Shual; 18 another company turned toward Beth-horon; and another company turned toward the border that looks down on the Valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness.</p>
<p>1 Samuel 13:19–23</p>	<p>19 Now there was no blacksmith to be found throughout all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, “Lest the Hebrews make themselves swords or spears.” 20 But every one of the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen his plowshare, his mattock, his axe, or his sickle, 21 and the charge was two-thirds of a shekel for the plowshares and for the mattocks, and a third of a shekel for sharpening the axes and for setting the goads. 22 So on the day of the battle there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people with Saul and Jonathan, but Saul and Jonathan his son had them. 23 And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the pass of Michmash.</p>
<p>1 Samuel 14:1–2</p>	<p>1 One day Jonathan the son of Saul said to the young man who carried his armor, “Come, let us go over to the Philistine garrison on the other side.” But he did not tell his father. 2 Saul was staying in the outskirts of Gibeah in the pomegranate cave at Migron. The people who were with him were about six hundred men,</p>
<p>1 Samuel 14:6</p>	<p>Jonathan said to the young man who carried his armor, “Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised. It may be that the Lord will work for us, for nothing can hinder the Lord from saving by many or by few.”</p>
<p>1 Samuel 14:13–15</p>	<p>13 Then Jonathan climbed up on his hands and feet, and his armor-bearer after him. And they fell before Jonathan, and his armor-bearer killed them after him. 14 And that first strike, which Jonathan and his armor-bearer made, killed about twenty men within as it were half a furrow’s length in an acre of land. 15 And there was a panic in the camp, in the field, and among all the people. The garrison and even the raiders trembled, the earth quaked, and it became a very great panic.</p>
<p>1 Samuel 4:21</p>	<p>And she named the child Ichabod, saying, “The glory has departed from Israel!” because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband.</p>
<p>1 Samuel 14:16–17</p>	<p>16 And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked, and behold, the multitude was dispersing here and there. 17 Then Saul said to the people who were with him, “Count and see who has gone from us.” And when they had counted, behold, Jonathan and his armor-bearer were not there.</p>
<p>1 Samuel 14:18</p>	<p>So Saul said to Ahijah, “Bring the ark of God here.” For the ark of God went at that time with the people of Israel.</p>
<p>1 Samuel 14:19</p>	<p>Now while Saul was talking to the priest, the tumult in the camp of the Philistines increased more and more. So Saul said to the priest, “Withdraw your hand.”</p>
<p>1 Samuel 14:20</p>	<p>Then Saul and all the people who were with him rallied and went into the battle. And behold, every Philistine’s sword was against his fellow, and there was very great confusion.</p>
<p>1 Samuel 14:21–23</p>	<p>21 Now the Hebrews who had been with the Philistines before that time and who had gone up with them into the camp, even they also turned to be with the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan. 22 Likewise, when all the men of Israel who had hidden themselves in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines were fleeing, they too followed hard after them in the battle. 23 So the Lord saved Israel that day. And the battle passed beyond Beth-aven.</p>

<p>1 Samuel 14:24</p>	<p>And the men of Israel had been hard pressed that day, so Saul had laid an oath on the people, saying, “Cursed be the man who eats food until it is evening and I am avenged on my enemies.” So none of the people had tasted food.</p>
<p>1 Samuel 14:27–29</p>	<p>27 But Jonathan had not heard his father charge the people with the oath, so he put out the tip of the staff that was in his hand and dipped it in the honeycomb and put his hand to his mouth, and his eyes became bright. 28 Then one of the people said, “Your father strictly charged the people with an oath, saying, ‘Cursed be the man who eats food this day.’” And the people were faint. 29 Then Jonathan said, “My father has troubled the land. See how my eyes have become bright because I tasted a little of this honey.</p>
<p>1 Samuel 14:32</p>	<p>The people pounced on the spoil and took sheep and oxen and calves and slaughtered them on the ground. And the people ate them with the blood.</p>
<p>Deuteronomy 12:16</p>	<p>Only you shall not eat the blood; you shall pour it out on the earth like water.</p>
<p>1 Samuel 14:41–43</p>	<p>41 Therefore Saul said, “O Lord God of Israel, why have you not answered your servant this day? If this guilt is in me or in Jonathan my son, O Lord, God of Israel, give Urim. But if this guilt is in your people Israel, give Thummim.” And Jonathan and Saul were taken, but the people escaped. 42 Then Saul said, “Cast the lot between me and my son Jonathan.” And Jonathan was taken. 43 Then Saul said to Jonathan, “Tell me what you have done.” And Jonathan told him, “I tasted a little honey with the tip of the staff that was in my hand. Here I am; I will die.”</p>
<p>1 Samuel 14:45</p>	<p>Then the people said to Saul, “Shall Jonathan die, who has worked this great salvation in Israel? Far from it! As the Lord lives, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day.” So the people ransomed Jonathan, so that he did not die.</p>
<p>1 Samuel 14:46</p>	<p>Then Saul went up from pursuing the Philistines, and the Philistines went to their own place.</p>