

STUDIES IN SAMUEL  
A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 13

- Vv. 1- 4 *Saul's campaign against the Philistines.* The initial victory over the Ammonites at Jabesh-gilead must have given the Israelites courage to go against their chief oppressors, the Philistines. Jonathan won the first battle, and the Philistines were infuriated.
- Vv. 5- 7 *The counter-attack of the Philistines.* The weapons of war used by the Philistines indicate that they enjoyed a rather highly developed civilization. To this point in history, we know of Israel having only weapons for foot soldiers, there being no references of their use of chariots and other military equipment. At this particular time, they were largely subjugated by the Philistines and had hardly any weapons at all.
- Vv. 8-10 *Saul's presumptuous sacrifice.* Samuel had made arrangements to meet Saul at Gilgal and to lead the people in a sacrifice to God. Saul tarried a minimum amount of time and then took things into his own hand. He had no right to do this. He was not a priest in any sense of the word. He committed a grave sin.
- Vv. 11-16 *Samuel's rebuke of Saul.* Once again it was Samuel's task to pronounce judgment against Israel's leader. As he had received a message of doom to pronounce against Eli, he now pronounces God's judgment against Saul, Israel's first king.
- Vv. 17-23 *The battle pitched.* The Philistine policy was to divide their host and attack the two companies of Israelites. Their superiority in equipment is brought out in the fact. ". . . that

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there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan; but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found" (v. 22).

### LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *A minimum is not enough in God's service.* It is evident from the text that Saul waited until the seventh day for the arrival of Samuel. He did not wait until the seventh day was completed. He was not patient in waiting for God's servant to perform his part of the covenant. His failure to be thorough brought the announcement that his dynasty would not be long-lived.
2. *The folly of trusting in man's strength.* The history of Israel is filled with examples of God's people going out to battle against their enemies with overwhelming odds in favor of their foes. In many of these instances they were nonetheless victorious. When they trusted in God, they found that they had nothing to fear.

### THE REIGN OF SAUL. 13:1—31:13

The early days of Saul's reign, 13:1—14:52.

#### *Saul's Campaign Against the Philistines, 13:1-4*

Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel,

2 Saul chose him three thousand *men* of Israel; *whereof* two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Beth-el, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent.

3 And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that *was* in Geba, and the Philistines heard *of it*. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear.

4 And all Israel heard say *that* Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines, and *that* Israel also was had in abomination with the Philistines. And the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal.

1. *How old was Saul when he began to reign? 13:1*

Saul already had a son Jonathan who commanded a division of the army. Saul himself was hardly less than forty years of age, and Jonathan hardly less than twenty. Israelites did not go to war until they were twenty (Numbers 1:3). No number is in the Hebrew text in the first part of this verse, and the translation in the authorized version is a bit awkward. It is hard to understand the impact of such a statement as is made here. All we learn from it is that he reigned one year and then he reigned another year. The normal way of introducing a king was to give his age and then to tell how long he reigned (II Kings 15:1-5). We are left to wonder if this is the intention of the author here.

2. *What was the purpose of the 3,000 men chosen by Saul? 13:2*

Saul was attempting to check the advance of the Philistines. He took the advance position himself in Michmash, a prominent overlook in the mountains of Ephraim near Beth-el. Beth-el was the famous spot where Jacob had seen a vision of the angels of God ascending and descending on a ladder set up on the earth (Genesis 28:10-22). A thousand men were with Jonathan back in Gibeah, the home of Saul. Saul evidently felt that it was not necessary to keep the 330,000 men away from their homes and normal occupations. He sent the rest of the army home and manned the outposts with only a few soldiers.

3. *Where was Michmash? 13:2 b*

Michmash is the present village of *Mukbmas*. The village is in ruins and lies on the northern ridge of the *Wady Suweinit*. Although it is only some ten miles north

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of Jerusalem, it is difficult to reach and takes a person some three hours and a half to make the journey on foot. Beth-el is northwest of this point, and it is some two hours' journey away by the road if one were to walk. The mountain of Beth-el cannot be identified exactly. Beth-el itself was located on a very high ground, but the location is surrounded by heights.

### 4. *Why did Jonathan make his attack? 13:3*

Jonathan was closer to the garrison which the Philistines kept in Gibeah. Jonathan was a very brave man and won the respect and admiration of all the Israelites by his daring exploits. By winning this initial skirmish, Jonathan gave courage to the rest of the people. Saul took advantage of the situation and publicized the victory widely.

### *The Counter-attack of the Philistines. 13:5-7*

5 And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which *is* on the seashore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Beth-aven.

6 When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed,) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits.

7 And *some of* the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he *was* yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

### 5. *Why were the people so alarmed? 13:6*

The armies of Israel were caught in a trap. The Philistines came against them with their 30,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen, and innumerable foot soldiers. Caves, thickets, rocks, high places, and pits afforded the people the only safety. Some of them even went across the Jordan into

the land of Gilead in order to get as far away from Philistia as possible.

6. *Why did Saul go to Gilgal? 13:7*

Gilgal was on the very eastern border of western Israel. It was the farthest rallying point from Philistia. In addition to being rather inaccessible to the Philistines, the spot was hallowed by the many events which had transpired here in Israel's earlier history. Moreover, Samuel had told Saul that he would meet him there when Saul was anointed by Samuel (10:8).

*Saul's Presumptuous Sacrifice. 13:8-10*

8 And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel *had appointed*: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.

9 And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering.

10 And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him.

7. *What was Saul's first act of disobedience? 13:8-14*

Samuel had made an appointment with Saul when Saul was anointed king (10:8). It was Samuel's intention that Saul should call the people together at Gilgal again and keep them there until he could arrive. Saul impatiently took matters into his own hand and sinned greatly by offering sacrifice himself. Since he was not a priest, he was openly disobeying the Law of God. At that time, Samuel told Saul that there would be one chosen who would obey God. There was no personal conflict between the two men other than that which comes when God's representative is treated disrespectfully. Saul's refusal to heed Samuel's injunctions was tantamount to rejecting the commands of God.

*Samuel's Rebuke of Saul.* 13:11-16

11 And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and *that* thou camest not within the days appointed, and *that* the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash;

12 Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the Lord: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.

13 And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.

14 But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord, hath commanded him *to be* captain over his people, because thou hast not kept *that* which the Lord commanded thee.

15 And Samuel arose, and gat him up from Gilgal unto Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people *that were* present with him, about six hundred men.

16 And Saul, and Jonathan his son, and the people *that were* present with them, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin: but the Philistines encamped in Michmash.

8. *What was the purpose of the offering?* 13:12

No doubt the Israelites were wanting to beseech God for His help in the battle. Saul said that he had not made supplication unto the Lord. The Hebrew original gives the idea of entreating the face of the Lord. Saul may have been wanting to know the will of the Lord with regard to this battle. No doubt it was the custom of these people to make a sacrifice before they went into battle. Before Jephthah went into battle he vowed a vow to the Lord (Judges 11:30, 31).

*9. In what way had Saul done foolishly? 13:13*

It was not wrong to make a sacrifice. Saul had sinned in that he had not kept the commandment of the Lord. Samuel had told Saul to wait until he came to him before he made a sacrifice (10:8). To disobey the commandment of the prophet, was to disobey the commandment of the Lord. Saul had sinned against God. As a result the kingdom was not to be longlived.

*10. What is the meaning of "after his own heart"? 13:14*

Saul had been a very popular choice. He was in effect a man after the peoples' hearts. Saul had failed. He had rationalized and depended upon his own strength in such a way as to make him unacceptable to God. The man who was to be after God's own heart was David. David is described in this way in Acts 15:22. David was not perfect; when he sinned he repented. He was more completely devoted to God and was thus a man after God's own heart.

*11. Why did Samuel go to Gibeah? 13:15*

Gibeah was a well-known assembly place for the people. In addition, it was Saul's home. Jonathan had stayed with the garrison here and made the first attack against the Philistines. It was a high place, a place where Samuel could offer an acceptable sacrifice to God.

*12. Why did Saul return with such a small army? 13:15 b*

Saul had not accomplished his avowed purpose in sacrificing. He had said that he thought the people would be scattered from him and for this reason had forced himself in offering a burnt offering. When he was at Michmash, he had 2,000 men with him. Jonathan had another 1,000 with him. Now Saul had only 600. The people themselves must have revolted against Saul's impertinence in offering a whole burnt offering. They must have known of the judgment of Samuel and were unwilling to follow Saul.

*The Battle Pinched. 13:17-23*

17 And the spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies: one company turned unto the way *that leadeth* to Ophrah, unto the land of Shual:

18 And another company turned the way *to* Beth-horon: and another company turned *to* the way of the border that looketh to the valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness.

19 Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make *them* swords or spears:

20 But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock.

21 Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads.

22 So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that *were* with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found.

23 And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the passage of Michmash.

*13. Where was Beth-horon? 13:18*

Two towns bear the name of Beth-horon. One is known as the "upper," and the other "nether" (Joshua 16:3, 5; I Chronicles 7:24; II Chronicles 8:5). They lie off the road from Gibeon to Azekah (Joshua 10:10, 11) on the way to the Philistine plain. These locations lay on the boundary lines between Benjamin and Ephraim (Joshua 16:3, 5; 18:13, 14). They were assigned to Ephraim and given to the Kohathites as Levitical cities (Joshua 21:22). Reference is made to an enlargement of these locations in later Israelite history (I Chronicles 7:24). The building referred to was not the establishment, but the rebuilding and enlarging. Sherah was no doubt an heiress who had



received these places as her inheritance. The road running between the two Beth-horons is one of the roughest and steepest in Palestine, but is still used as the road from the coast. In effect, the road is a key to the country. The Philistines naturally used this road as an access against Israel.

14. *What had become of the smiths? 13:19*

The Philistines had made it illegal for a blacksmith to practice his art. Many of them had no doubt been taken out of the country. Some may have been slain. The Philistines forced an Israelite to go down into their country to sharpen his plowshare and the coulter of his plow. Even his ax and his mattock had to be sharpened by the Philistine lords. The only tool left for the Israelite to use was a file. He could use this instrument to keep an edge on his mattocks, coulters, pitchforks, axes, and goads. When the edge was worn away, however, he had to depend upon his captors to repair his tools and implements. This kind of regulation would keep an Israelite from forging swords and spears.

15. *How were Saul's men armed? 13:22*

Only meager implements were in the possession of the Israelites. They could defend themselves only with such tools as were normally used in peaceful pursuits. Some of them probably had axes; others used goads and forks. Only Saul and Jonathan were equipped with normal weapons. These verses describe a people that are completely beaten. It explains why the loss of the Ark was such a catastrophe and indicates how low Israel had been brought by the Philistines. As a matter of fact, this period in Israel's history is known as the "captivity of the land" (Judges 18:30). This condition prevailed all the time until Saul began to win some decisive and permanent victories. The victories were not complete in the days of David, and it was left to him to be a man of war and firmly establish the Israelite kingdom in Palestine.

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CHAPTER 13 IN REVIEW

1. How old was Saul when he began to reign? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many men did Saul take into battle? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many were with Jonathan? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Where were Saul and his men? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Where were Jonathan and his men? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Where were the Philistines whom Jonathan attacked? \_\_\_\_\_
7. How many chariots did the Philistines have? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Where did Saul go to make a sacrifice? \_\_\_\_\_
9. How long did he wait for Samuel? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Who were the only two men who had spears in Israel? \_\_\_\_\_

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 14

- Vv. 1-23 *Jonathan's surprise attack on the Philistines.* Jonathan and his armor-bearer devised a startling plan of going against the enemy by themselves. Evidently the Philistines thought that their position was impregnable and that the Israelites were so poorly equipped that they had nothing to fear. The skirmish started by Jonathan and his armor-bearer started such confusion that the Philistines attacked their own men, and a great victory was won for Israel.
- Vv. 24-46 *Saul's ill-advised oath.* King Saul had ordered that his men were to fast as they went into battle. Although Jonathan was unaware of his father's order, Saul threatened to punish him for tasting a little honey. Only the intercession of the people saved Jonathan.
- Vv. 47-52 *Saul's other battles and his family.* Saul was a great warrior, and his campaigns took him against Moab, Ammon, Edom, Syria, as well