
1SAMUEL 13: 1 Saul reigned a year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel,

Saul chooses a body of troops, 1Sam 13:1, 1Sam 13:2. Jonathan smites a garrison of the Philistines, 1Sam 13:3, 1Sam 13:4. The Philistines gather together an immense host against Israel, 1Sam 13:5. The Israelites are afraid; and some hide themselves in caves, and others flee over Jordan, 1Sam 13:6, 1Sam 13:7. Samuel delaying his coming, Saul offers sacrifice, 1Sam 13:8, 1Sam 13:9. Samuel comes and reproves him, and Saul excuses himself, 1Sam 13:10-12. Samuel shows him that God has rejected him from being captain over his people, 1Sam 13:13, 1Sam 13:14. Samuel departs; and Saul and Jonathan, with six hundred men abide in Gibeah, 1Sam 13:15, 1Sam 13:16. The Philistines send out foraging companies, and waste the land, 1Sam 13:17, 1Sam 13:18. Desolate state of the Israelitish army, having no weapons of defense against their enemies, 1Sam 13:19-23.

Verse 1

Saul reigned one year - A great deal of learned labor has been employed and lost on this verse, to reconcile it with propriety and common sense. I shall not recount the meanings put on it. I think this clause belongs to the preceding chapter, either as a part of the whole, or a chronological note added afterwards; as if the writer had said, These things (related in 1 Samuel 12:1-25) took place in the first year of Saul's reign: and then he proceeds in the next place to tell us what took place in the second year, the two most remarkable years of Saul's reign. In the first he is appointed, anointed, and twice confirmed, viz., at Mizpeh and at Gilgal; in the second, Israel is brought into the lowest state of degradation by the Philistines, Saul acts unconstitutionally, and is rejected from being king. These things were worthy of an especial chronological note.

And when he had reigned - This should begin the chapter, and be read thus: "And when Saul had reigned two years over Israel, he chose him three thousand," etc. The Septuagint has left the clause out of the text entirely, and begins the chapter thus: "And Saul chose to himself three thousand men out of the men of Israel."

1SAMUEL 13: 2 Saul chose for himself three thousand men of Israel, of which two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in the Mount of Bethel, and one thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent.

Verse 2

Two thousand were with Saul - Saul, no doubt, meditated the redemption of his country from the Philistines; and having chosen three thousand men, he thought best to divide them into companies, and send one against the Philistine garrison at Michmash, another against that at Beth-el, and the third against that at Gibeah: he perhaps hoped, by surprising these garrisons, to get swords and spears for his men, of which we find, (1Sam 13:22), they were entirely destitute.

1SAMUEL 13: 3 Jonathan struck the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba: and the Philistines heard of it. Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, "Let the Hebrews hear!"

 Verse 3

Jonathan smote - He appears to have taken this garrison by surprise, for his men had no arms for a regular battle, or taking the place by storm. This is the first place in which this brave and excellent man appears; a man who bears one of the most amiable characters in the Bible.

Let the Hebrews hear - Probably this means the people who dwelt beyond Jordan, who might very naturally be termed here העברים haibrim, from עבר abar, he passed over; those who are beyond the river Jordan: as Abraham was called עברי Ibri because he dwelt beyond the river Euphrates.

1SAMUEL 13: 4 All Israel heard that Saul had struck the garrison of the Philistines, and also that Israel was had in abomination with the Philistines. The people were gathered together after Saul to Gilgal.

Verse 4

The people were called together - The smiting of this garrison was the commencement of a war, and in effect the shaking off of the Philistine yoke; and now the people found that they must stand together, and fight for their lives.

1SAMUEL 13: 5 The Philistines assembled 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 encamped in Michmash, eastward of Beth Aven.

Verse 5

Thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen - There is no proportion here between the chariots and the cavalry. The largest armies ever brought into the field, even by mighty emperors, never were furnished with thirty thousand chariots.

I think שלשים sheloshim, Thirty, is a false reading for שלש shalosh, Three. The Syriac has telotho alpin, and the Arabic thalathato alf, both signifying Three thousand; and this was a fair proportion to the horsemen. This is most likely to be the true reading.

1SAMUEL 13: 6 When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait (for the people were distressed), then the people hid themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in coverts, and in pits.

Verse 6

The people did hide themselves - They, being few in number, and totally unarmed as to swords and spears, were terrified at the very numerous and well-appointed army of the Philistines. Judea was

full of rocks, caves, thickets, etc., where people might shelter themselves from their enemies. While some hid themselves, others fled beyond Jordan: and those who did cleave to Saul followed him trembling.

1SAMUEL 13: 7 Now some of the Hebrews had gone over the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead; but as for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

1SAMUEL 13: 8 He stayed seven days, according to the time set by Samuel: but Samuel didn't come to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.

Verse 8

He tarried seven days according to the set time - Samuel in the beginning had told Saul to wait seven days, and he would come to him, and show him what to do, 1Sam 10:8. What is here said cannot be understood of that appointment, but of a different one. Samuel had at this time promised to come to him within seven days, and he kept his word, for we find him there before the day was ended; but as Saul found he did not come at the beginning of the seventh day, he became impatient, took the whole business into his own hand, and acted the parts of prophet, priest, and king; and thus he attempted a most essential change in the Israelitish constitution. In it the king, the prophet, and the priest, are in their nature perfectly distinct. What such a rash person might have done, if he had not been deprived of his authority, who can tell? But his conduct on this occasion sufficiently justifies that deprivation. That he was a rash and headstrong man is also proved by his senseless adjuration of the people about food, 1Sam 14:24, and his unfeeling resolution to put the brave Jonathan, his own son, to death, because he had unwittingly acted contrary to this adjuration, 1Sam 14:44. Saul appears to have been a brave and honest man, but he had few of those qualities which are proper for a king, or the governor of a people.

1SAMUEL 13: 9 Saul said, "Bring here the burnt offering to me, and the peace offerings." He offered the burnt offering.

Verse 9

And he offered the burnt-offering - This was most perfectly unconstitutional; he had no authority to offer, or cause to be offered, any of the Lord's sacrifices.

1SAMUEL 13: 10 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 greet him.

Verse 10

Behold, Samuel came - Samuel was punctual to his appointment; one hour longer of delay would have prevented every evil, and by it no good would have been lost. How often are the effects of precipitation fatal!

1SAMUEL 13: 11 Samuel said, "What have you done?" Saul said, "Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you didn't come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines assembled themselves together at Michmash;

Verse 11

And Saul said - Here he offers three excuses for his conduct:

1. The people were fast leaving his standard.
2. Samuel did not come at the time, למועד lemoed; at the very commencement of the time he did not come, but within that time he did come.
3. The Philistines were coming fast upon him.

Saul should have waited out the time; and at all events he should not have gone contrary to the counsel of the Lord.

1SAMUEL 13: 12 therefore I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down on me to Gilgal, and I haven't entreated the favour of the LORD.' I forced myself therefore, and offered the burnt offering."

Verse 12

I forced myself - It was with great reluctance that I did what I did. In all this Saul was sincere, but he was rash, and regardless of the precept of the Lord, which precept or command he most evidently had received, 1Sam 13:13. And one part of this precept was, that the Lord should tell him what he should do. Without this information, in an affair under the immediate cognizance of God, he should have taken no step.

1SAMUEL 13: 13 Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which he commanded you; for now the LORD would have established your kingdom on Israel forever.

1SAMUEL 13: 14 But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought for himself a man after his own heart, and the LORD has appointed him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept that which the LORD commanded you."

Verse 14

The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart - That this man was David is sufficiently clear from the sequel. But in what sense was he a man after God's own heart? Answer:

1. In his strict attention to the law and worship of God.

2. In his admitting, in the whole of his conduct, that God was King in Israel, and that he himself was but his vicegerent.
3. In never attempting to alter any of those laws, or in the least change the Israelitish constitution.
4. In all his public official conduct he acted according to the Divine mind, and fulfilled the will of his Maker: thus was he a man after God's own heart. In reference to his private or personal moral conduct, the word is never used. This is the sense alone in which the word is used here and elsewhere; and it is unfair and wicked to put another meaning on it in order to ridicule the revelation of God, as certain infidels have done.

1SAMUEL 13: 15 Samuel arose, and went from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin. Saul numbered the people who were present with him, about six hundred men.

Verse 15

And Samuel arose - Though David, in the Divine purpose, is appointed to be captain over the people, yet Saul is not to be removed from the government during his life; Samuel therefore accompanies him to Gibeah, to give him the requisite help in this conjuncture.

About six hundred men - The whole of the Israelitish army at this time, and not one sword or spear among them!

1SAMUEL 13: 16 Saul, and Jonathan his son, and the people who were present with them, stayed in Geba of Benjamin: but the Philistines encamped in Michmash.

1SAMUEL 13: 17 The raiders came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies: one company turned to the way that leads to Ophrah, to the land of Shual;

Verse 17

The spoilers came out - The Philistines, finding that the Israelites durst not hazard a battle, divided their army into three bands, and sent them in three different directions to pillage and destroy the country. Jonathan profited by this circumstance, and attacked the remains of the army at Michmash, as we shall see in the succeeding chapter, 1 Samuel 14 (note).

1SAMUEL 13: 18 and another company turned the way to Beth Horon; and another company turned the way of the border that looks down on the valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness.

1SAMUEL 13: 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";

Verse 19

Now there was no smith found - It is very likely that in the former wars the Philistines carried away all the smiths from Israel, as Porsenna did in the peace which he granted to the Romans, not permitting any iron to be forged except for the purposes of agriculture: "Ne ferro, nisi in agricultura, uterentur." The Chaldeans did the same to the Jews in the time of Nebuchadnezzar; they carried away all the artificers, 2Kgs 24:14; Jer 24:1; Jer 29:2. And in the same manner did Cyrus treat the Lydians, Herod. lib. i., c. 145. See several examples in Calmet.

1SAMUEL 13: 20 but all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his ploughshare, mattock, axe, and sickle;

Verse 20

But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines - We find from this that they did not grant them as much as Porsenna did to the Romans; he permitted the people to manufacture the implements of husbandry.

1SAMUEL 13: 21 yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the ploughshares, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to set the goads.

Verse 21

Yet they had a file - The Hebrew פצירה *petsirah*, from פצר *patsar*, to rub hard, is translated very differently by the versions and by critics. Our translation may be as likely as any: they permitted them the use of files, (I believe the word means grindstone), to restore the blunted edges of their tridents, axes, and goads.

1SAMUEL 13: 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 who were with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found.

Verse 22

In the day of battle - these was neither sword nor spear - But if the Israelites enjoyed such profound peace and undisturbed dominion under Samuel, how is it that they were totally destitute of arms, a state which argues the lowest circumstances of oppression and vassalage? In answer to this we may observe, that the bow and the sling were the principal arms of the Israelites; for these they needed no smith: the most barbarous nations, who have never seen iron, have nevertheless bows and arrows; the arrow heads generally made of flint. Arrows of this kind are found among the inhabitants of the South Sea islands; and even axes, and different implements of war, all made of stone, cut and polished by stone, are frequent among them. The arms of the aboriginal Irish have been of this kind. I have frequently seen heads of axes and arrows of stone, which have been dug up out of the ground, formed with considerable taste and elegance. The former the common people

term thunderbolts; the latter, elf-stones. Several of these from Ireland, from Zetland, and from the South Sea islands, are now before me.

Now it is possible that the Israelites had still bows and arrows: these they could have without the smith; and it is as likely that they had slings, and for these they needed none. But then these were missiles; if they came into close fight, they would avail them nothing: for attacks of this kind they would require swords and spears; of these none were found but with Saul and Jonathan.

We see, in this chapter, Israel brought to as low a state as they were under Eli; when they were totally discomfited, their priests slain, their ark taken, and the judge dead. After that, they rose by the strong hand of God; and in this way they are now to rise, principally by means of David, whose history will soon commence.

1SAMUEL 13: 23 The garrison of the Philistines went out to the pass of Michmash.
