

1SAMUEL 14: 1 Now it fell on a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said to the young man who bore his armour, "Come, and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison, that is on the other side." But he didn't tell his father.

Jonathan and his armor-bearer purpose to attack a garrison of the Philistines, 1Sam 14:1. Saul and his army, with Ahiah the priest, tarry in Gibeah, 1Sam 14:2, 1Sam 14:3. Jonathan plans his attack of the Philistine garrison, 1Sam 14:4-10. He and his armor-bearer climb over a rock: attack and rout the garrison, 1Sam 14:11-15. Saul and his company, seeing confusion on the Philistine host, come out against them; as did the men who had hidden themselves; and the Philistines are defeated, 1Sam 14:16-23. Saul lays every man under a curse who shall eat food until the evening; in consequence of which the people are sorely distressed, 1Sam 14:24-26. Jonathan, not hearing the adjuration, eats a little honey, which he found on the ground, 1Sam 14:27-30. The Philistines being defeated, the people seize on the spoil, and begin to eat flesh without previously bleeding the animals, which Saul endeavors to prevent, 1Sam 14:31-34. He builds an altar there, 1Sam 14:35. Inquires of the Lord if he may pursue the Philistines by night, but receives no answer, 1Sam 14:36, 1Sam 14:37. Attributes this to some sin committed by some unknown person: makes inquiry by lot; and finds that Jonathan had tasted the honey, on which he purposes to put him to death, 1Sam 14:38-44. The people interpose, and rescue Jonathan, 1Sam 14:45. Saul fights against the Moabites, Ammonites, and Amalekites, 1Sam 14:46-48. An account of the family of Saul, 1Sam 14:49-52.

Verse 1

Come, and let us go over - This action of Jonathan was totally contrary to the laws of war; no military operation should be undertaken without the knowledge and command of the general. But it is likely that he was led to this by a Divine influence.

The armor-bearer is the origin of what we call esquire, from escu, old French, a shield; armiger is the Latin, from arma, weapons, and gero, I bear. In the times of chivalry, the armiger, or esquire, was the servant of the knight who went after him, and carried his lance, shield, etc. It is now (strange to tell!) a title of honor.

1SAMUEL 14: 2 Saul stayed in the uttermost part of Gibeah under the pomegranate tree which is in Migron: and the people who were with him were about six hundred men;

Verse 2

Under a pomegranate tree - Under Rimmon, which not only signifies a pomegranate tree, but also a strong rock, in which six hundred Benjamites took shelter, Jdg 20:45. Probably it was in this very rock that Saul and his six hundred men now lay hidden.

1SAMUEL 14: 3 and Ahijah, the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the priest of the LORD in Shiloh, wearing an ephod. The people didn't know that Jonathan was gone.

Verse 3

Ahiah, the son of Ahitub - Phinehas, son of Eli the high priests had two sons, Ahitub and I-chabod; the latter was born when the ark was taken, and his mother died immediately after. Ahiah is also called Ahimelech, 1Sam 22:9.

Wearing an ephod - That is, performing the functions of the high priest. This man does not appear to have been with Saul when he offered the sacrifices, 1Sam 13:9, etc.

1SAMUEL 14: 4 Between the passes, by which Jonathan sought to go over to the Philistines' garrison, there was a rocky crag on the one side, and a rocky crag on the other side: and the name of the one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh.

Verse 4

The name of the one was Bozez - Slippery; and the name of the other Seneh, treading down. - Targum.

1SAMUEL 14: 5 The one crag rose up on the north in front of Michmash, and the other on the south in front of Geba.

1SAMUEL 14: 6 Jonathan said to the young man who bore his armour, "Come, and let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised. It may be that the LORD will work for us; for there is no restraint on the LORD to save by many or by few."

Verse 6

Let us go over - Moved, doubtless, by a Divine impulse.

There is no restraint to the Lord - This is a fine sentiment; and where there is a promise of defense and support, the weakest, in the face of the strongest enemy, may rely on it with the utmost confidence.

1SAMUEL 14: 7 His armour bearer said to him, "Do all that is in your heart. Turn and, behold, I am with you according to your heart."

Verse 7

Behold, I am with thee - I shall accompany thee whithersoever thou goest, and share all thy dangers.

1SAMUEL 14: 8 Then Jonathan said, "Behold, we will pass over to the men, and we will reveal ourselves to them."

1SAMUEL 14: 9 If they say thus to us, 'Wait until we come to you!' then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up to them.

Verse 9

If they say thus unto us - Jonathan had no doubt asked this as a sign from God; exactly as Eliezer the servant of Abraham did, Gen 24:12.

1SAMUEL 14: 10 But if they say this, 'Come up to us!' then we will go up; for the LORD has delivered them into our hand. This shall be the sign to us."

1SAMUEL 14: 11 Both of them revealed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines: and the Philistines said, "Behold, the Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they had hidden themselves!"

1SAMUEL 14: 12 The men of the garrison answered Jonathan and his armour bearer, and said, "Come up to us, and we will show you something!"

Jonathan said to his armour bearer, "Come up after me; for the LORD has delivered them into the hand of Israel."

Verse 12

Come up to us, and we will show you a thing - This was the favorable sign which Jonathan had requested. The Philistines seem to have meant, Come, and we will show you how well fortified we are, and how able to quell all the attacks of your countrymen.

1SAMUEL 14: 13 Jonathan climbed up on his hands and on his feet, and his armour bearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan; and his armour bearer killed them after him.

Verse 13

Jonathan climbed up - It seems he had a part of the rock still to get over. When he got over he began to slay the guards, which were about twenty in number, these were of a sort of outpost or advanced guard to the garrison.

Slew after him - Jonathan knocked them down, and the armor-bearer despatched them. This seems to be the meaning.

1SAMUEL 14: 14 That first slaughter, which Jonathan and his armour bearer made, was about twenty men, within as it were half a furrow's length in an acre of land.

Verse 14

A half acre of land - The ancients measured land by the quantum which a yoke of oxen could plough in a day. The original is obscure, and is variously understood. It is probably a proverbial expression for a very small space.

1SAMUEL 14: 15 There was a trembling in the camp, in the field, and among all the people; the garrison, and the raiders, they also trembled; and the earth quaked: so there was an exceeding great trembling.

Verse 15

There was trembling in the host - They were terrified and panic-struck; the people in general round about, those in the garrison, the spoilers, and the whole country, were struck with terror; the commotion was universal and most extraordinary. The trembling of the earth is probably not to be taken literally, but as a metaphor for a great commotion in the country, though God might have interposed in an extraordinary manner, and produced a real earthquake; but their being panic-struck was sufficient to produce all the requisite confusion and dismay.

1SAMUEL 14: 16 The watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked; and behold, the multitude melted away, and scattered.

Verse 16

The watchmen of Saul - Those who were sent out as scouts to observe the motions of the army.

Melted away - There was no order in the Philistine camp, and the people were dispersing in all directions. The Vulgate has, *Et ecce multitudo prostrata*, "And behold the multitude were prostrate;" many lay dead upon the field, partly by the sword of Jonathan and his armor-bearer, and partly by the swords of each other, 1Sam 14:20.

1SAMUEL 14: 17 Then Saul said to the people who were with him, "Count now, and see who is missing from us." When they had counted, behold, Jonathan and his armour bearer were not there.

Verse 17

Number now - Saul perceived that the Philistines were routed, but could not tell by what means; supposing that it must be by some of his own troops, he called a muster to see who and how many were absent.

1SAMUEL 14: 18 Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring the ark of God here." For the ark of God was with the children of Israel at that time.

Verse 18

Bring hither the ark of God - He wished to inquire what use he should make of the present favorable circumstances, and to proceed in the business as God should direct.

1SAMUEL 14: 19 While Saul talked to the priest, the tumult that was in the camp of the Philistines went on and increased: and Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand!"

Verse 19

While Saul talked unto the priest - Before he had made an end of consulting him, the increasing noise of the panic-struck Philistines called his attention; and finding there was no time to lose, he immediately collected his men and fell on them.

1SAMUEL 14: 20 Saul and all the people who were with him were gathered together, and came to the battle: and behold, every man's sword was against his fellow: a very great confusion.

1SAMUEL 14: 21 Now the Hebrews who were with the Philistines as before, and who went up with them into the camp, from all around, even they also turned to be with the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan.

Verse 21

The Hebrews that were with the Philistines - We may understand such as they held in bondage, or who were their servants. Instead of Hebrews the Septuagint read, οἱ δούλοι, the slaves; from which it is evident that, instead of עִבְרִים Ibrim, Hebrews, they found in their text עֲבָדִים abadim, servants. But this reading is not countenanced by any other version, nor by any MS. yet discovered.

1SAMUEL 14: 22 Likewise all the men of Israel who had hidden themselves in the hill country of Ephraim, when they heard that the Philistines fled, even they also followed hard after them in the battle.

Verse 22

The men - which had hid themselves - See 1Sam 13:6.

The Vulgate and the Septuagint add here, And there were with Saul about ten thousand men; but this is supported by no other authority.

1SAMUEL 14: 23 So the LORD saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over by Beth Aven.

1SAMUEL 14: 24 The men of Israel were distressed that day; for Saul had adjured the people, saying, "Cursed is the man who eats any food until it is evening, and I am avenged of my enemies." So none of the people tasted food.

Verse 24

Saul had adjured the people - He was afraid, if they waited to refresh themselves, the Philistines would escape out of their hands, and therefore he made the taking any food till sunset a capital crime. This was the very means of defeating his own intention; for as the people were exhausted for want of food, they could not continue the pursuit of their enemies: had it not been for this foolish adjuration, there had been a greater slaughter of the Philistines, 1Sam 14:30.

1SAMUEL 14: 25 All the people came into the forest; and there was honey on the ground.

Verse 25

There was honey upon the ground - There were many wild bees in that country, and Judea is expressly said to be a land flowing with milk and honey.

1SAMUEL 14: 26 When the people had come to the forest, behold, the honey dropped: but no man put his hand to his mouth; for the people feared the oath.

Verse 26

The honey dropped - It seems to have dropped from the trees on the ground. Honey dews, as they are called, are not uncommon in most countries; and this appears to have been something of this kind. I have seen honey in considerable quantity on the trees and long grass in the fields, and have often eaten of it.

1SAMUEL 14: 27 But Jonathan didn't hear when his father commanded the people with the oath: therefore he put out the end of the rod who was in his hand, and dipped it in the honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened.

Verse 27

His eyes were enlightened - Hunger and fatigue affect and dim the sight; on taking food, this affection is immediately removed. This most people know to be a fact.

1SAMUEL 14: 28 Then one of the people answered, and said, "Your father directly commanded the people with an oath, saying, 'Cursed is the man who eats food this day.'" The people were faint.

1SAMUEL 14: 29 Then Jonathan said, "My father has troubled the land. Please look how my eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey.

1SAMUEL 14: 30 How much more, if perhaps the people had eaten freely today of the plunder of their enemies which they found? For now has there been no great slaughter among the Philistines."

1SAMUEL 14: 31 They struck of the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon. The people were very faint;

Verse 31

They smote the Philistines - from Mishmash to Aijalon - The distance Calmet states to be three or four leagues.

1SAMUEL 14: 32 and the people flew on the plunder, and took sheep, and cattle, and calves, and killed them on the ground; and the people ate them with the blood.

Verse 32

The people did eat them with the blood - They were faint through hunger, and did not take time to bleed the cattle on which they fed. This was another bad effect of Saul's rash adjuration.

1SAMUEL 14: 33 Then they told Saul, saying, "Behold, the people are sinning against the LORD, in that they eat meat with the blood."

He said, "You have dealt treacherously. Roll a large stone to me this day!"

Verse 33

Roll a great stone unto me - Probably this means that they should set up an altar to the Lord, on which the animals might be properly slain, and the blood poured out upon the earth; and a large stone was erected for an altar.

1SAMUEL 14: 34 Saul said, "Disperse yourselves among the people, and tell them, 'Bring me here every man his ox, and every man his sheep, and kill them here, and eat; and don't sin against the LORD in eating meat with the blood.'" All the people brought every man his ox with him that night, and killed them there.

1SAMUEL 14: 35 Saul built an altar to the LORD. This was the first altar that he built to the LORD.

Verse 35

Saul built an altar - And this we are informed was the first he had built; Samuel, as prophet had hitherto erected the altars, and Saul thought he had sufficient authority to erect one himself without the prophet, as he once offered sacrifice without him.

1SAMUEL 14: 36 Saul said, "Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and take plunder among them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them." They said, "Do whatever seems good to you." Then the priest said, "Let us draw near here to God."

Verse 36

Then said the priest - It is evident that Ahiah doubted the propriety of pursuing the Philistines that night; and as a reverse of fortune might be ruinous after such a victory, he wished to have specific directions from the Lord.

1SAMUEL 14: 37 Saul asked counsel of God, "Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will you deliver them into the hand of Israel?" But he didn't answer him that day.

Verse 37

He answered him not that day - Why was this answer delayed? Surely Jonathan's eating the honey was no sin. This could not have excited God's displeasure. And yet the lot found out Jonathan! But did this argue that he had incurred guilt in the sight of God? I answer: It did not; for Jonathan was delivered, by the authority of the people, from his father's rash curse; no propitiation is offered for his supposed transgression to induce God to pardon it; nor do we find any displeasure of God manifested on the occasion. See below.

1SAMUEL 14: 38 Saul said, "Draw near here, all you chiefs of the people; and know and see in which this sin has been this day.

1SAMUEL 14: 39 For, as the LORD lives, who saves Israel, though it is in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die." But there was not a man among all the people who answered him.

1SAMUEL 14: 40 Then he said to all Israel, "You be on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side." The people said to Saul, "Do what seems good to you."

1SAMUEL 14: 41 Therefore Saul said to the LORD, the God of Israel, "Show the right." Jonathan and Saul were chosen; but the people escaped.

Verse 41

Lord God of Israel, Give a perfect lot - Both the Vulgate and Septuagint add much to this verse: And Saul said to the Lord God of Israel, Lord God of Israel, give judgment. Why is it that thou hast not answered thy servant to-day? If the iniquity be in me, or Jonathan my son, make it manifest. Or if this iniquity be in thy people, give sanctification.

1SAMUEL 14: 42 Saul said, "Cast lots between me and Jonathan my son." Jonathan was selected.

Verse 42

And Jonathan was taken - The object of the inquiry most evidently was, "Who has gone contrary to the king's adjuration today?" The answer to that must be Jonathan. But was this a proof of the Divine displeasure against the man? By no means: the holy oracle told the truth, but neither that oracle nor the God who gave it fixed any blame upon Jonathan, and his own conscience acquits him. He seeks not pardon from God, because he is conscious he had not transgressed. But why did not God answer the priest that day? Because he did not think it proper to send the people by night in pursuit of the vanquished Philistines. Saul's motive was perfectly vindictive: Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and spoil them unto the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them; that is, Let us burn, waste, destroy, and slay all before us! Was it right to indulge a disposition of this kind, which would have led to the destruction of many innocent country people, and of many Israelites who resided among the Philistines? Besides, was there not a most manifest reason in the people why God could not be among them? Multitudes of them were defiled in a very solemn manner; they had eaten the flesh with the blood; and however sacrifices might be offered to atone for this transgression of the law, they must continue unclean till the evening. Here were reasons enough why God would not go on with the people for that night.

1SAMUEL 14: 43 Then Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have done!" Jonathan told him, and said, "I certainly did taste a little honey with the end of the rod that was in my hand; and behold, I must die."

1SAMUEL 14: 44 Saul said, "God do so and more also; for you shall surely die, Jonathan."

Verse 44

And Saul answered - thou shalt surely die, Jonathan - To save thy rash oath! So must John Baptist's head be taken off at the desire of an impure woman, because a Herod had sworn to give her whatever she might request! Unfeeling brute! However, the king was Judge. But what said the people, who were the Jury?

1SAMUEL 14: 45 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 rescued Jonathan, that he didn't die.

Verse 45

And the people said - "Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid! As the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground." Here was a righteous and impartial jury, who brought in a verdict according to the evidence: No man should die

but for a breach of the law of God; but Jonathan hath not broken any law of God; therefore Jonathan should not die. And because he should not, therefore he shall not.

He hath wrought with God this day - God has been commander-in-chief; Jonathan has acted under his directions.

So the people rescued Jonathan - And God testified no displeasure; and perhaps he permitted all this that he might correct Saul's propensity to rashness and precipitancy.

1SAMUEL 14: 46 Then Saul went up from following the Philistines; and the Philistines went to their own place.

1SAMUEL 14: 47 Now when Saul had taken the kingdom over Israel, he fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines: and wherever he turned himself, he defeated them.

Verse 47

So Saul took the kingdom - The Targum appears to give the meaning of this expression: "Saul prospered in his government over Israel." And the proofs of his prosperity are immediately subjoined.

Fought against all his enemies - Of the wars which are mentioned here we have no particulars; they must have endured a long time, and have been, at least in general, successful.

1SAMUEL 14: 48 He did valiantly, and struck the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of those who plundered them.

Verse 48

Smote the Amalekites - This war is mentioned in the following chapter.

1SAMUEL 14: 49 Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, and Ishvi, and Malchishua; and the names of his two daughters were these: the name of the firstborn Merab, and the name of the younger Michal:

Verse 49

Now the sons of Saul - We do not find Ishbosheth here. Calmet says it was "because he was too young, and did not go with him to the war, for he mentions only those who were with him." Why then mention his daughters and his wife? Did they go with him to the war?

1SAMUEL 14: 50 and the name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam the daughter of Ahimaaz. The name of the captain of his army was Abner the son of Ner, Saul's uncle.

1SAMUEL 14: 51 Kish was the father of Saul; and Ner the father of Abner was the son of Abiel.

1SAMUEL 14: 52 There was severe war against the Philistines all the days of Saul: and when Saul saw any mighty man, or any valiant man, he took him to him.

Verse 52

When Saul saw any strong man - This was very politic. He thus continued to recruit his army with strong and effective men.