
1SAMUEL 29: 1 Now the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek: and the Israelites encamped by the spring which is in Jezreel.

The Philistines gather their armies together against Israel, and encamp at Aphek; while the Israelites encamp at Jezreel, 1Sam 29:1. The lords of the Philistines refuse to let David go to battle with them, lest he should betray them, 1Sam 29:2-5. Achish expresses his confidence in David; but begs him to return, 1Sam 29:6-10. David and his men return, 1Sam 29:11.

Verse 1

To Aphek - This was a place in the valley of Jezreel, between Mounts Tabor and Gilboa.

Pitched by a fountain - To be near a fountain, or copious spring of water, was a point of great importance to an army in countries such as these, where water was so very scarce. It is supposed, as William of Tyre says, that it was at this same fountain that Saladin pitched his camp, while Baldwin, king of Jerusalem, pitched his by another fountain between Nazareth and Sephoris; each being anxious to secure that without which it was impossible for their armies to subsist.

1SAMUEL 29: 2 The lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds, and by thousands; and David and his men passed on in the rear with Achish.

Verse 2

By hundreds, and by thousands - They were probably divided, as the Jewish armies, by fifties, hundreds, and thousands; each having its proper officer or captain.

1SAMUEL 29: 3 Then the princes of the Philistines said, "What about these Hebrews?" Achish said to the princes of the Philistines, "Isn't this David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, who has been with me these days, or rather these years, and I have found no fault in him since he fell away to this day?"

Verse 3

These days, or these years - I suppose these words to mark no definite time, and may be understood thus: "Is not this David, who has been with me for a considerable time?"

1SAMUEL 29: 4 But the princes of the Philistines were angry with him; and the princes of the Philistines said to him, "Make the man return, that he may go back to his place where you have appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he become an adversary to us. For with what should this fellow reconcile himself to his lord? Should it not be with the heads of these men?"

Verse 4

The princes of the Philistines were wroth - It is strange that they had not yet heard of David's destruction of a village of the Geshurites, Gezrites, and Amalekites, 1Sam 27:8, 1Sam 27:9. Had they heard of this, they would have seen much more cause for suspicion.

1SAMUEL 29: 5 Is not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances, saying, 'Saul has slain his thousands, David his ten thousands?'"

1SAMUEL 29: 6 Then Achish called David, and said to him, "As the LORD lives, you have been upright, and your going out and your coming in with me in the army is good in my sight; for I have not found evil in you since the day of your coming to me to this day. Nevertheless, the lords don't favour you."

Verse 6

Thou hast been upright - So he thought, for as yet he had not heard of the above transaction; David having given him to understand that he had been fighting against Israel.

1SAMUEL 29: 7 Therefore now return, and go in peace, that you not displease the lords of the Philistines."

1SAMUEL 29: 8 David said to Achish, "But what have I done? What have you found in your servant so long as I have been before you to this day, that I may not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?"

Verse 8

David said - what have I done? - Dr. Chandler and others may say what they will to make David act a consistent part in this business; but it is most evident, whatever his intentions might be as to the part he was to take in the approaching battle, he did intend to persuade Achish that he would fight against Israel; and affects to feel his reputation injured by not being permitted on this occasion to show his fidelity to the king of Gath.

It was in the order of God's gracious providence that the Philistine lords refused to let David go with them to this battle. Had he gone, he had his choice of two sins - First, If he had fought for the Philistines, he would have fought against God and his country. Secondly If he had in the battle gone over to the Israelites, he would have deceived and become a traitor to the hospitable Achish. God, therefore, so ordered it in his mercy that he was not permitted to go to a battle in which he was sure to be disgraced, whatever side he took, or with what success soever he might be crowned.

1SAMUEL 29: 9 Achish answered David, "I know that you are good in my sight, as an angel of God. Notwithstanding the princes of the Philistines have said, 'He shall not go up with us to the battle.'

Verse 9

As an angel of God - There is some reason to think that Achish had actually embraced or was favourably disposed towards the Jewish religion. He speaks here of the angels of God, as a Jew might be expected to speak; and in 1Sam 29:6 he appeals to, and swears by Jehovah; which, perhaps, no Philistine ever did. It is possible that he might have learned many important truths from David, during the time he sojourned with him.

1SAMUEL 29: 10 Therefore now rise up early in the morning with the servants of your lord who have come with you; and as soon as you are up early in the morning, and have light, depart.”

Verse 10

With thy master's servants - Who were these? has been very properly asked; and to this question there can be but two answers: -

1. The six hundred Israelites which were with him; and who might still be considered the subjects of Saul, though now residing in a foreign land.

2. The servants of achish; i.e., David's men thus considered; because on his coming to Gath, he had in effect given up himself and his men to Achish. But Saul may be the master to whom Achish refers, and the words convey a delicate information to David that he is no vassal, but still at liberty.

1SAMUEL 29: 11 So David rose up early, he and his men, to depart in the morning, to return into the land of the Philistines. The Philistines went up to Jezreel.
