

CHAPTER 13

INTRODUCTION TO FIRST SAMUEL 13

This chapter relates how Saul disposed of his army, (^{<ORIG>}1 Samuel 13:1,2) that Jonathan his son smote a garrison of Philistines, which provoked them to come out with a large army against them, to the great terror of the Israelites, many of whom fled to secret places, and to distant parts, (^{<ORIG>}1 Samuel 13:3-7), that Saul tarried at Gilgal waiting for Samuel, but he not coming so soon as expected, offered sacrifice himself, (^{<ORIG>}1 Samuel 13:8-10) for which Samuel, when he came, reprov'd him, and told him the kingdom should not continue with him, but be given to another man, (^{<ORIG>}1 Samuel 13:11-14) on which Saul departed to Gibeah, where he continued, the Philistines being encamped at Michmash, (^{<ORIG>}1 Samuel 13:15,16) from whence went out spoilers, in three companies, into the land of Israel, where they met with no opposition; for there were no weapons in the hands of any but Saul and Jonathan, the Philistines having taken care that there should be no smith in the land of Israel to make them any, so that they were defenceless, (^{<ORIG>}1 Samuel 13:17-23).

Ver. 1. *Saul reigned one year*, etc.] “Or the son of a year in his reigning”^{f239}; various are the senses given of these words: some interpret them, Saul had a son of a year old when he began to reign, Ishbosheth, and who was forty years of age when his father died, (^{<ORIG>}2 Samuel 2:10), others, who understand the words of Saul himself, think there is an “ellipsis” or defect of the number, and that it may be supplied, that Saul was the son of thirty or forty years, or whatsoever age he may be supposed to be at when he began his reign; others take the words in a figurative sense, that he was like a child of a year old, for purity and innocence; so the Targum,

“as the son of a year, in whom there are no faults, so was Saul when he reigned;”

or he was but a year old, reckoning from the time he was turned into another man, and had another heart, which was immediately after he was anointed king at Ramah by Samuel; or he was but a year old with respect to his kingdom: the inauguration of a king is “natalis imperil”, the birthday

of his kingdom, and therefore the words are well enough rendered by us, “Saul reigned one year”; which is to be reckoned either from his unction at Ramah, or rather from his election at Mizpeh, to the renewal of the kingdom at Gilgal:

and when he had reigned two years over Israel; which the Jewish chronologers ^{f240} make to be the whole of his reign, which is not probable, considering the many things done in his reign, the many battles he fought with all his enemies on every side of him, and his long persecution of David; and there were no less than three high priests in his reign; Josephus says ^{f241} he reigned eighteen years in the lifetime of Samuel, and twenty two years after his death, in all forty; which agrees with (~~4132~~ Acts 13:21). Some interpret it he reigned two years well, and the rest in a tyrannical way; or that at the end of two years, when David was anointed, the kingdom was not reckoned to him, but to David; and to this purpose Dr. Lightfoot writes, that he had been king one year from his first anointing by Samuel at Ramah, to his second anointing by him at Gibeah (Gilgal I suppose he means); and he reigned after this two years more, before the Lord cast him off, and anointed David; and the time he ruled after that was not a rule, but a tyranny and persecution ^{f242}; but the sense Ben Gersom gives is best of all, that one year had passed from the time of his being anointed, to the time of the renewal of the kingdom at Gilgal; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, then he did what follows, chose 3000 men, etc. In the first year of his reign was done all that is recorded in the preceding chapter; and when he had reigned two years, not two years more, but two years in all, then he did what is related in this chapter.

Ver. 2. *Saul chose him three thousand men of Israel*, etc.] Out of the 300,000 that went with him to fight the Ammonites, and returned with him to Gilgal, where he now was, and had stayed as may be supposed about a year, since now he had reigned two years. These 3000 men some of them doubtless were appointed as a guard about his person, and the rest were a standing army to preserve the peace of the nation, to protect them from their enemies, to watch the motions of the Philistines, and to be ready on any sudden invasion:

whereof two thousand were with Saul in Michmash, and in Mount Bethel; “Michmash”, according to Bunting, ^{f243} was four miles from Gilgal. Jerom ^{f244} says, in his time it was shown a large village on the borders of Aella, or Jerusalem, retaining its ancient name, nine miles distant from it, near the

village Rama. Adrichomius ^{f245} says it is now called Byra, and Mr. Maundrell ^{f246} observes that it is supposed by some to be the same with Beer, whither Jotham fled after he had delivered his parable, (^{<002>}Judges 9:21). Michmash is in the Misnah ^{f247} celebrated for the best wheat being brought from it; and near to it, as appears from hence, was Bethel, and the mount of that name; and so Jerom ^{f248} speaks of Bethel as over against Michmash; and this mount very probably is the same said to be on the east of Bethel, where Abraham built an altar, (^{<0128>}Genesis 12:8) for Michmash lay to the east of Bethel:

and one thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin; the native place of Saul, and this Jonathan was the son of Saul, (^{<0316>}1 Samuel 13:16). According to Bunting ^{f249}, Gibeah, where Jonathan was stationed, was eight miles from Michmash:

and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent; to their own houses; or, as the Targum, to their cities; these were they that came at his summons, and were numbered at Bezek, and went with him to the relief of Jabeshgilead, and had been with him ever since, and now dismissed.

Ver. 3. *And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba*, etc.] Not the same with Gibeah of Benjamin, as Jarchi; for it can hardly be thought that Jonathan should place himself with his thousand men where the Philistines had a garrison; or that if this was the same with that in the preceding verse, that it should be called by another name in this; but Gibeah and Geba were two places, as Kimchi observes, both indeed in the tribe of Benjamin, and it is very probable not far from one another; (see ^{<0524>}Joshua 18:24,28). This seems to be the same with the hill of God, where was a garrison of the Philistines, (^{<0105>}1 Samuel 10:5), who after their defeat by Samuel contented themselves with some strong holds and garrisons in some parts of the land to keep Israel in awe; the Targum understands this of a single person, a governor of the Philistines in this place, whom Jonathan slew, and so Jarchi; and according to R. Isaiah he was one that was appointed to gather the tax for them:

and the Philistines heard of it, which alarmed them, and made them prepare for war:

and Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land; not he in person, for he was at Gilgal, as the next verse shows; but he ordered it to be blown, being aware of the preparations the Philistines were making to attack him:

saying, let the Hebrews hear; both what his son had done, and what the Philistines were doing.

Ver. 4. *And all Israel heard say that Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines*, etc.] For though it was smitten by Jonathan, yet it was by the order of Saul, and so ascribed to him; it seems to be a concerted thing to fall upon the garrisons of the Philistines, and get them out of their hands, and so deliver Israel entirely from them; but it was not wise for Saul, if he had such a scheme in his head, to disband his large army, as he had lately done:

and that Israel also was had in abomination with the Philistines; who were highly incensed against them by this action, and vowed revenge; the name of an Israelite was abhorred by them; and perhaps this action might be attended with much craft and cruelty; and if these garrisons were held by agreement, they might charge them with perfidy, with breach of articles, and so their name was made to stink among them, as the word signifies:

and the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal; by sound of trumpet.

Ver. 5. *And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel*, etc.] To prevent their further encroachments on them, and designs against them; for they perceived they intended to cast off their yoke, and free themselves entirely from them:

thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen; it may seem incredible that so small a people as the Philistines were, who only were possessed of five cities, or lordships, with the villages belonging to them, except what they had taken from Israel; and even if assisted by the Tyrians, the author of Sirach in the Apocrypha says:

“And he destroyed the rulers of the Tyrians, and all the princes of the Philistines.” (Sirach 46:18)

though he seems to have respect not to this time, but when Samuel discomfited them, (^{<4070>}1 Samuel 7:10). I say it may seem incredible that they should bring such a number of chariots into the field; wherefore this must either be understood of 30,000 men that fought in chariots, as Lyra interprets it, and in which sense it is plain and certain the word chariots is sometimes used, as in (^{<4008>}2 Samuel 10:18 ^{<4221>}1 Kings 20:21 ^{<4398>}1 Chronicles 19:18), or else of some sort of carriages, not chariots of war, at

least not all of them; but what were brought to carry the baggage of their infantry, which was very large, and to carry away the goods and substance of the Israelites; some have thought that there is a mistake of the copier, who instead of çl ç , “three”, read μyçl ç , “thirty”: so Capellus; and the rather because in the Arabic and Syriac versions it is only “three thousand”; but even this is too great a number, understood of chariots of war; for never any people in the world was known to have so many chariots of war; Pharaoh in his large host had but six hundred, (^{<1247>}Exodus 14:7) Jabin king of Canaan had indeed nine hundred, (^{<0048>}Judges 4:3) and David took from the king of Zobah one thousand chariots; but whether they were all chariots of war is not certain, (^{<1004>}2 Samuel 8:4). Solomon indeed had one thousand and four hundred chariots, but they do not appear to be chariots of war, but some for use, and some for state and grandeur. Wherefore, if a mistake in the copy is admitted of, and this can be confirmed by some MSS, yet we must recur to one or other of the above senses; some of them must be understood of other sort of carriages, or of men that fought in these chariots; and allowing ten men to a chariot, which seems to be the usual number by comparing (^{<1008>}2 Samuel 10:18) with (^{<1398>}1 Chronicles 19:18) then 3000 men would fill three hundred chariots, which are as many as it can well be thought the Philistines had Zerah the Ethiopian, who brought into the field an army of million men, had no more than three hundred chariots, (^{<1449>}2 Chronicles 14:9), and no more had Antiochus Eupator in his army,

“And with him Lysias his protector, and ruler of his affairs, having either of them a Grecian power of footmen, an hundred and ten thousand, and horsemen five thousand and three hundred, and elephants two and twenty, and three hundred chariots armed with hooks.” (2 Maccabees 13:2)

Darius in his vast army had but two hundred ^{f250}, and in the very large one which Mithridates brought against the Romans there was but one hundred; and now 3000 men in three hundred chariots were but a proportion to 6000 horsemen, which in those times and countries was a large cavalry:

and the people as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude; the infantry was so large as not to be numbered; however, the phrase denotes a great multitude of them; Josephus says ^{f251} there were 300,000 footmen:

and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Bethaven; where Saul, before he went to Gilgal, had his quarters, (^{<0932>}1 Samuel 13:2).

Bethaven was a place near Bethel, on the east of it, (^{<1000>}Joshua 7:2) though Bethel itself was afterwards so called when Jeroboam had set up the worship of the calves there, (^{<2005>}Hosea 4:15) it signifying the house of vanity or iniquity.

Ver. 6. *When the men of Israel saw they were in a strait, for the people were distressed,* etc.] By reason of the vast army that the Philistines brought into the field, greatly superior to theirs, and were likely to be encompassed by them on every side; so that nothing but destruction was expected, which gave them the utmost anxiety and uneasiness; though Abarbinel refers this last clause, not to the people of Israel, but to the people of the Philistines, and takes it in this sense,

for the people drew nigh; the army of the Philistines was approaching, and got near to them; and so they were in great danger of being quickly attacked by them, and destroyed, their numbers being so great:

then the people did hide themselves in caves; of which there were many in the land of Judea, capable of receiving a large number, as the cave of Adullam, the cave of Engedi, etc. and such as the Israelites made to hide themselves when oppressed by the Midianites, (^{<1000>}Judges 6:2)

and in thickets; woods and forests, or among thorns, as Jarchi; where there was a very great number of brambles and thorn bushes; some, as Kimchi, interpret the word of munitions, garrisons, and fortified places, to which they betook themselves:

in rocks, and in high places, and in pits; in the holes of rocks and mountains, particularly in Mount Ephraim; (see ^{<0942>}1 Samuel 14:22) and where there were any pits or ditches, high or deep places, where they might be out of sight, and be sheltered from their enemies.

Ver. 7. *And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead,* etc.] As far off as they could from the Philistines, who lay on the west of the land of Israel, and these countries were to the east. Kimchi observes, that the land of Reuben is not mentioned, which was on the other side Jordan also; because that was nearer to it than what was inhabited by Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh; and therefore they chose to go further, thinking themselves there safer:

as for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal; where he stayed till Samuel should come to him, as directed, (^{<0908>}1 Samuel 10:8) to have his advice and counsel:

and all the people followed him trembling; all that were with him, the army as distinct from the common people; they abode by him, and were at his command, and were ready to go where he should direct them; but with trembling hearts when they saw the pain of the people, fleeing into holes and corners, and considered what a huge host the Philistines were coming upon them with, and Samuel their prophet not with them to encourage and counsel them.

Ver. 8. *And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed*, etc.] He tarried to the seventh day, but not to the end of it, or towards the close of it, as he should have done:

but Samuel came not to Gilgal; so soon as Saul expected:

and the people were scattered from him; many deserted him, the Philistines drawing nigh, and Samuel not coming, as Saul expected, and had given the people reason to expect.

Ver. 9. *And Saul said*, etc.] Being impatient, and seeing the people deserting him apace, and unwilling to engage in a battle without first sacrificing to God, and imploring his help and assistance:

bring hither a burnt offering to me; that is, a creature for a burnt offering, a bullock, sheep, goat, or lamb:

and peace offerings; which also were either of the herd, or of the flock:

and he offered the burnt offering; either he himself, or by a priest. In this unsettled time, while the tabernacle, altar, and ark, were at different places, and not yet fixed, it is thought that such who were not priests might offer, and that in high places, and where the tabernacle and altar were not.

Ver. 10. *And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burn offering*, etc.] And before he could offer the peace offerings:

behold, Samuel came; and it was told Saul that he was come:

and Saul went out to meet him; left off sacrificing, and would proceed no further, leaving the rest for Samuel and out of respect to him, and to prevent a chiding of him, he went forth to meet him:

that he might salute him, or “bless him”^{f252}; congratulate him on his coming, ask of his health and welfare, and wish him all peace and prosperity.

Ver. 11. *And Samuel said, what hast thou done?* This question he put to bring him to a confession of what he had done, otherwise he guessed at it by his countenance; or rather, by the prophetic spirit he was endowed with, he knew it certainly that he had offered the sacrifices without waiting for him:

and Saul said because I saw the people were scattered from me; they were deserting, and he feared, if he stayed any longer, they would all leave him; this was one reason of doing what he did:

and that thou camest not within the days appointed; seven days were appointed, and because the seventh day was come, though it was not gone, he concluded Samuel would not come at all; and that was another reason why he did what he did; and by this would have laid the blame on Samuel, as if he did not keep his time; whereas it was Saul’s impatience that hurried him to this action:

and that the Philistines gathered themselves together to Michmash; where his station before was, and from thence he might quickly expect them at Gilgal; and this was another reason why he hastened the sacrifice.

Ver. 12. *Therefore said I.* etc.] That is, within himself:

the Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal; on a sudden, unprepared for them, especially in a religious way:

and I have not made supplication to the Lord; for his direction and assistance, and for success in the war; which it seems went along with sacrifices, or was implied in them:

I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering; it was reluctant to him, it was against his will as well as the command of Samuel, to offer before he came, he suggests; but such were the circumstances he was in, that he was obliged to it; these are the reasons or excuses he made, and some of them have a specious appearance in them.

Ver. 13. *And Samuel said to Saul, thou hast done foolishly*, etc.] Not by intruding himself into the priest’s office, with that he is not charged, but not waiting the full time till Samuel came; which showed his impatience,

disregard to Samuel, and distrust of God; and though he thought he had acted wisely, and taken the proper precautions in his circumstances, yet he acted foolishly; and though a king, Samuel being a prophet of the Lord, and in his name, spared not to tell him so:

thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee; by his prophet, that he should wait seven days for his coming, who would then offer sacrifices, and tell him what he should do; and not to keep the commandment of God was acting a foolish part:

for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever; that is, for a long time, on his son, and son's son; and then, according to promise and prophecy, it would come to one of the tribe of Judah; but now seeing he had acted such a part, it should not continue long in his family, no longer than his own life, and quickly come into other hands.

Ver. 14. *But now thy kingdom shall not continue*, etc.] That is, in his family, nor in his tribe, but be removed to another:

the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart: who was David; though as yet Samuel knew him not, he knew by divine revelation that there was another one chosen, to whom the kingdom would be given; a man every way agreeable to the will of God, and who would fulfil his will, though he knew not particularly who he was:

and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people; that is, had appointed him to be king over Israel. God's decrees have the force of a law in them, and must be fulfilled; and cannot be resisted so as to be frustrated:

because thou hast not kept that which the Lord hath commanded thee; it matters not whether the thing commanded is greater or less, it is disobedience to the command that is the sin, and is resented: this might seem a small thing, since to offer the sacrifice was not criminal; but doing it before the time, a little before it should have been done, not waiting long enough for the prophet; yet it being against the command of God, or in neglect of it, it was sinful, and severely chastised; and the rather, that it might be an example to all succeeding kings how they offended, or broke the least of God's commandments; and this being the first king of Israel, he was made an example of to the rest.

Ver. 15. *And Samuel arose*, etc.] Seemingly in wrath and displeasure, not staying to offer up the peace offerings which remained; and though no mention is made of Saul's going with him, yet it seems as if he did, or at least quickly followed him, as appears from the next verse:

and got him up from Gilgal unto Gibeah of Benjamin; the native place of Saul, thereby directing Saul where he should go, and which might be a stronger place than Gilgal; or however where he might expect to be joined by more persons of his own tribe, as well as in the first place protect and defend that; and it looks by Samuel's going thither, though he was displeased with Saul, yet that he did not intend to forsake him directly and entirely:

and Saul numbered the people that were present with him, about six hundred men: which was done either before he left Gilgal, or as soon as he came to Gibeah; so great a desertion was there from him, that of the 3000 first chosen by him, and of the people after called and gathered to him at Gilgal, only six hundred remained with him; a small number indeed to encounter so large an army the Philistines had brought into the field, and which therefore Saul could not face.

Ver. 16. *And Saul, and Jonathan his son*, etc.] Who were now joined to their men, on Saul's coming to Gibeah:

and the people that were present with them; the six hundred men before numbered: abode in Gibeah of Benjamin; being perhaps a strong fortified place, not choosing to go forth to meet the army of the Philistines, so vastly superior to them:

but the Philistines encamped at Michmash; the old quarters of Saul before he went to Gilgal, (^{OR}1 Samuel 13:2).

Ver. 17. *And the spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies*, etc.] Saul not daring to come out to fight them, and there being none throughout the land to oppose them, they sent out three companies of soldiers to ravage and spoil the country; of so little use and service was a king to Israel, they were so extremely desirous of; and this was suffered, to convince them of their vain confidence in him, and that their trust ought to be in the Lord their God; never was their country more exposed to rapine and violence than now:

one company turned unto the way that leadeth to Ophrah; a city in the land of Benjamin, of which (see ^{<61823>}Joshua 18:23) and lay southwest from Michmash, where the army of the Philistines were:

unto the land of Shual: which the Targum paraphrases,

“the land of the south;”

it seems to have had its name from the multitude of foxes in it, Shual signifying a fox.

Ver. 18. *And another company turned the way to Bethhoron*, etc.] Of which name there were two cities, the upper and nether, and both in the tribe of Ephraim, of which (see ^{<61813>}Joshua 16:3,5) this lay northwest from the camp of the Philistines at Michmash; eight miles from it, according to Bunting ^{f253}:

and another company turned to the way of the border, that looketh towards the valley of Zeboim, toward the wilderness; some take this to be the Zeboim which was destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah; and the wilderness, the wilderness of Jordan; but as that, so the valley in which it stood, was turned into a bituminous lake; this seems to be a city in the land of Benjamin, (^{<61813>}Nehemiah 11:34) near to which was a valley, and this towards the wilderness of Jericho, and so lay eastward; the Targum calls it the valley of vipers, perhaps from its being infested with many; and so David de Pomis ^{f254} says it is the name of a place where plenty of serpents were found, and which he says were called so because of the variety of colours in them; with which agrees Kimchi’s note on the place; they seem to mean serpents spotted ^{f255}, as if they were painted and dyed of various colours, as the Hebrew word which is thus paraphrased signifies: according to Bunting ^{f256}, it was eight miles from Michmash.

Ver. 19. *Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel*, etc.] The Philistines, when they ruled over them, having removed them into their own country, and forbid any to learn or exercise that trade in Israel:

for the Philistines said, lest the Hebrews make swords or spears: this they did to prevent their having arms, and the use of them, that they might not rebel against them, and fight with them, and overcome them; it was a piece of policy to keep them subject to them; so Nebuchadnezzar, when he conquered the Jews and carried them captive, took care particularly to carry away their smiths, and left none but the poorest sort of people in the

land, (²²⁴⁴2 Kings 24:14 ²²⁰¹Jeremiah 24:1) and Porsena, king of the Etrusci, when he made a covenant with the Romans, upon the expulsion of their kings, made this a condition of peace with them, that they should use no iron but in husbandry^{f257}. When this course was taken by the Philistines with the Israelites, and how long it had continued is not certain; it is probable it might be in the space of forty years they ruled over Israel, in which Samson was born, for we never read of any sword or spear that he made use of; and though there were two battles in the times of Eli, in both which Israel were beaten, they might make use only of bows and arrows, slings, and stones, clubs, etc, as also in the battle of Saul with the Ammonites; and as for the defeat of the Philistines in the time of Samuel, it was by thunder; and though the Philistines were then subdued, yet, as Samuel grew old, they regained their power in a good measure, and the Israelites had not spirit enough to oppose them, nor diligence and industry to learn and revive the trade of smiths among them; not even for what was necessary to husbandry, as the following verse shows.

Ver. 20. *But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines,* etc.] Were obliged to go into Palestine, into some one or other of the cities of the Philistines, or to their garrisons, where the trade of a smith was exercised:

to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter; which are the parts of the plough made of iron, with which the earth is cut and thrown up:

and his axe and his mattock; or pick axe; with the one wood is felled and cut, and with the other stones are dug; and each of these for their several uses needed sharpening; and when they did, they were obliged to go to the Philistines to have them done, they having no smiths among them.

Ver. 21. *Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes,* etc.] Those that would not go to the Philistines, or were not able, or thought it too much trouble, these kept files by them to sharpen those several instruments with upon occasion; though the words are by some rendered in connection with the preceding, to this sense, that they went to the Philistines to sharpen them, when the mouths, or edges, of the mattocks, coulters, etc. were dull; or “blunt”^{f258}; and so needed sharpening; and even

to sharpen the goads; with which they pricked and pushed on the oxen in ploughing, when sluggish and remiss.

Ver. 22. *So it came to pass in the day of battle,* etc.] When that drew near, and they were called to it, and obliged to fight or flee, or surrender:

that there were neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan: which was not owing to their leaving them behind in the camp, or casting them away from them through fear, as they followed Saul with trembling, but to the cause now mentioned. In what manner some preceding battles were fought with the Philistines and Ammonites, notwithstanding, have been accounted for on (^{<0139>}1 Samuel 13:19), but it is strange that the Israelites did not furnish themselves with the arms of the Philistines at the defeat of them in Ebenezer, (^{<0170>}1 Samuel 7:10,11) and with the arms of the Ammonites at Jabeshgilead, (^{<0111>}1 Samuel 11:11) and that such a warlike prince as Saul appeared at his first setting out to be should not in the first place take care to provide armour for his men by some means or another; for that those that left him should have arms, and not those that abode with him, does not seem reasonable. It may be the Benjamites, being expert in slinging, were indifferent to and neglected the use of any other weapon, or method of fighting:

but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found; swords and spears, and with them only.

Ver. 23. *And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the passage of Michmash.*] According to Jarchi, these two places, Michmash where the Philistines were, and Gibeah where Saul and Jonathan were, lay on two hills over against each other, and there was a valley between them; and the garrison of the Philistines drew nigh to the passage of Michmash, which led to the side of Gibeah, to the valley between them, either with an intention to besiege Gibeah, or to dare Israel to come out and fight them: but rather it seems to be some strong pass between the rocks near Michmash, where the garrison placed themselves to guard and keep against any sudden surprise; (see ^{<0144>}1 Samuel 14:4). The Targum is,

“the governor of the Philistines went out to the ford or passage of Michmash;”

and Kimchi interprets it of the princes or generals of the army; these might go to mark out a camp, and pitch upon a proper place to draw up in a line of battle.