

CHAPTER 29

INTRODUCTION TO FIRST SAMUEL 29

This chapter gives an account of David's going forth with the armies of the Philistines, (^{<0201>}1 Samuel 29:1,2); of his being objected to by the princes of the Philistines, who insisted upon his being sent back, (^{<0203>}1 Samuel 29:3-5); of the report Achish made of it to David, and the discourse that passed between them upon it, (^{<0206>}1 Samuel 29:6-10); whereby David had a way unexpectedly opened for him to be freed from this service, which he gladly embraced, (^{<0211>}1 Samuel 29:11).

Ver. 1. *Now the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek,* etc.] Not the city in the tribe of Judah of that name, (^{<0153>}Joshua 15:53); where the Philistines had a camp in the time of Samuel, (^{<0101>}1 Samuel 4:1); but rather that in the tribe of Asher, (^{<0130>}Joshua 19:30); unless there was one of this name in the tribe of Issachar, not mentioned, since it seems to have been near Jezreel and Shunem, which were both in that tribe, (^{<0118>}Joshua 19:18);

and the Israelites pitched by a fountain which is in Jezreel; in the valley of Jezreel; of which (see Gill on "^{<0118>}Joshua 19:18") and (see Gill on "^{<0105>}Hosea 1:5").

Ver. 2. *And the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds, and by thousands,* etc.] Not that there were so many lords, for there were but five of them; but these marched, some at the head of hundreds with them, and others at the head of thousands:

but David and his men passed on in the rereward with Achish; who being the generalissimo brought up the rear, and David, whom he had appointed captain of his bodyguards, attended him with his men, which in point of gratitude he could not refuse; and yet was in the greatest strait and difficulty how to act, it being both against his conscience and his interest to fight against Israel, and was waiting and hoping for some appearance of Providence to deliver him out of this dilemma, and which was quickly seen; but Abarbinel thinks David had no other notion in going to the battle, but of being the bodyguard of Achish, and accompanying him, and that he

should not fight against Israel, nor for the Philistines: neither harm the one, nor help the other.

Ver. 3. *Then said the princes of the Philistines*, etc.] To Achish; not those of the court of Achish, who were his subjects, but the confederate princes with him in this war, the lords of the other principalities, as appears by the freedom they took with him, (¹⁰²⁰1 Samuel 29:4);

what [do] these Hebrews [here]? or Jews, as the Targum; what hast thou to do with them, or they to be with thee? men of another nation and religion, and known enemies to the Philistines:

and Achish said unto the princes of the Philistines; in order to soften them, and reconcile them to these men, and their being with him:

[is] not this David the servant of Saul the king of Israel; between whom there had been a quarrel, and the former had fled from the latter to him:

which hath been with me these days, or these years; had been with him many days, and he might say years, as he had been with him one whole year, and part of another, (see ¹⁰²¹1 Samuel 27:7); and he might have known him longer, if he was the same Achish David first fled to; Kimchi interprets it, that he knew him as well as if he had been with him as many years as days:

and I have found no fault in him since he fell [unto me] unto this day? the affair of David's going against the Geshurites, etc. not being yet known by him, or, if it was, he approved of it, they being enemies of his; this shows that David behaved with a great deal of prudence to have such a character as this from a king of the Philistines.

Ver. 4. *And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him*, etc.] With Achish, for giving such a character of David, and taking his part, in order to detain him, if possible:

and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, make this fellow return; they speak of him with contempt, and insist on it that Achish order him to turn back, and go no further with them:

that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him; to Ziklag, the place that Achish had given him for his residence, (¹⁰²²1 Samuel 27:6); they did not desire to have him sent to his own country, and to Saul,

since should a reconciliation be made between them, he would be of great service to Saul against them:

and let him not go down with us to battle; into the valley of Jezreel, where the Israelites had pitched:

lest in the battle he be an adversary to us: and fall upon them behind, being in the rear, while they were engaging in the front with Israel:

for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? to Saul he had offended, and fled from:

[should it] not [be] with the heads of these men? the Philistines; or unless by the heads of these men^{f552}; he had no other way of making his peace with his master but by cutting off the heads of the Philistines; and therefore he was a dangerous man to take with them into the battle.

Ver. 5. *[Is] not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances,* etc.] Long ago:

saying, Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands; so that he is an old sworn enemy of ours; and the more valiant and victorious he has been, the less is he to be trusted, (see ^{<0987>}1 Samuel 18:7 21:11).

Ver. 6. *Then Achish called David,* etc.] Being so near him, that he could call unto him himself, or he sent some person to him, to require his presence with him:

and said unto him, surely, [as] the Lord liveth; or “Jehovah liveth”; an oath by the true God, of whom Achish might have some knowledge, as he also had of angels, from his conversation with David; though the Heathens had a notion of a supreme Being, and yet worshipped other gods, and whom they called Jove, from this name of Jehovah. Kimchi observes, that all confess a first cause; and therefore when he swore to David, he swore by him in whom David believed, perhaps out of complaisance to him, or that David might pay the greater regard to his oath:

thou hast been upright; sincere, honest, faithful, and just in all his deportment; yet not so sincere as he thought him to be, witness the road he pretended he had taken against the south of Judah, (^{<0920>}1 Samuel 27:1-12);

and thy going out and thy coming in with me in the host [is] good in sight; his behaviour in the army, attending him as the keeper of his head, or

captain of his bodyguard, was exceeding agreeable to him, and he could wish to have him continued:

for I have not found evil in thee, since the day of thy coming unto me unto this day; whatever he had done before to the Philistines, having greatly afflicted and distressed them in his wars with them, of which this seems to be an exception:

nevertheless, the lords favour thee not; or thou art not acceptable to them, yea, very offensive and disagreeable.

Ver. 7. *Wherefore now return*, etc.] To Ziklag:

and go in peace; not only in a peaceable manner, easy and satisfied, as David was at his very heart to hear this, but all prosperity and happiness attend thee; the Jews^{f553} distinguish between wishing persons to go in peace, and to go to peace; the former they observe has not issued happily, when the other has, and they instance in the wish of Jethro to Moses, and of David to Absalom;

that thou displease not the lords of the Philistines: and what would be the consequence of that he could not say, but suggests it would be most for his peace and safety to depart.

Ver. 8. *And David said unto Achish, what have I done?* etc.] This question is anticipated by the speech of Achish, who had declared he had found no evil in him; but David must say something to put on an appearance of concern for being dismissed, when he was heartily glad of it:

and what hast thou found in thy servant, so long as I have been with thee unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies of my lord the king? which cannot be excused of great dissimulation, since nothing was more foreign from his heart, and against his will, than fighting against the Israelites, and which he determined to avoid if possible; and glad at heart he was to be thus excused, and freed from the straits and difficulties he was involved in; but that the Philistines might have no cause of suspicion of him, and that he was warmly attached to their interest among whom he was still to continue, he put on these airs. Abarbinel is of opinion that the lords of the Philistines were only afraid of David, but not of his men, and therefore were not solicitous about their going, but his, which gave David a concern; and since he was particularly singled out, he desired to know what special evil had been found in him; but when he understood, by the

following answer of Achish, that his servants were to go with him, he was content, and said no more; but the princes asked, “what do these Hebrews here?” (~~QMB~~ 1 Samuel 29:3).

Ver. 9. *And Achish answered and said unto David*, etc.] In reply to the questions:

I know that thou [art] good in my sight as an angel of God: for his great wisdom, and graceful behaviour, and inoffensive carriage:

notwithstanding the princes of the Philistines have said, he shall not go up with us to the battle; though Achish had so good an opinion of him, and had declared it in council, yet an order had passed there that he should not go to battle with them; there were but five of them, and Achish was one of the five, so that there were four to one for the dismissing him; and Achish, though a king, was obliged to submit.

Ver. 10. *Wherefore now rise up early with thy master’s servants that are come with thee*, etc.] Meaning his six hundred men, who were considered as the servants and subjects of Saul, though with David: and which tacitly carried in it the objection of the Philistine lords unto them, that since they were the servants and subjects of Saul, they were not to be trusted in a battle with him; lest finding an opportunity, they should seize it, and thereby ingratiate themselves into his favour again:

and as soon as ye be up early in the morning, and have light, depart; he advises them to get away as soon as they could, lest the Philistines should fall upon them, and force them, and he could not say what mischief might befall them; wherefore for their safety it was best to depart as soon as they could see their way.

Ver. 11. *So David and his men rose up early to depart in the morning*, etc.] Being as willing and ready to go as the Philistines were desirous they should:

to return into the land of the Philistines; for now they were in the land of Israel, at Aphek, near Jezreel, from whence they went back to Ziklag, which was within the principality of Gath; and, according to Bunting^{f554}, was eighty eight miles from the place where the army of the Philistines was; but it seems not very likely that it should be so far off:

and the Philistines went up to Jezreel; where the army of the Israelites lay encamped, in order to fight them. By the dismissal of David from the army of the Philistines, he was not only delivered from a sad plight he was in, either of acting an ungrateful part to Achish, or an unnatural one to Israel; but also, by the pressing charge of Achish to get away as early as possible in the morning, he came time enough to rescue the prey the Amalekites had taken at Ziklag his city, as in the following chapter; and the providence of God in this affair is further observable, as by some represented, since if David had stayed in the camp of the Philistines, it would not have been so easy for him, on the death of Saul, to have got from them, and succeed in the kingdom, as he could and did from Ziklag.