

1Samuel 13:1 ¶ Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel,

1Samuel 13:2 Saul chose him three thousand *men* of Israel; *whereof* two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent.

Verse 1 is certainly different when you read through different translations. Most of them indicate that the first phrase is a reference to his Saul's age; some leave it blank, many say 30 and at least one said 40.

Two years after becoming king, Saul had chosen 3000 men of Israel to be part of his full-time military. He kept 2000 men with him in the north in Michmash and mount Bethel and sent 1000 with Jonathan, his son, to Gibeah in the land of Benjamin in the south. All other men were allowed to return home.

1Samuel 13:3 And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that *was* in Geba, and the Philistines heard *of it*. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear.

1Samuel 13:4 And all Israel heard say *that* Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines, and *that* Israel also was had in abomination with the Philistines. And the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal.

Either Jonathan decided or Saul had commanded him to attack the Philistine garrison at Geba. When Saul had the victory announced by the trumpet to declare the victory throughout Israel, the people realized that this would anger the Philistines. Saul evidently knew that too and called for a gathering of the people at Gilgal.

It should be noted that Saul took all the credit for the victory. Already becoming evident is his growing pride that will eventually grow to include great jealousy. He has already forgotten that his success is only assured when he acknowledges the LORD as the victor.

The Hebrew for "garrison" also indicates that it could have been some kind of monument representing Philistine authority. Its destruction would have been a declaration of rebellion once the Philistines heard of it. Because of the use of the word in verse 23 (in Hebrew the words are different but are from the same root with the same meaning) I tend to believe it was a contingent of soldiers.

I liked the application that Guzik made regarding the relationship between the Philistines and Israel. "We don't war against armies of Philistines; our enemies are *principalities . . . powers . . . the rulers of the darkness of this age . . . spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places* (Ephesians 6:12). But our spiritual enemies have the same attitude as the Philistines. As long as we are weak and subjected to our spiritual enemies, they don't mind us at all. They may even kind of like us. But as soon as we show some boldness and courage against the LORD's enemies, our spiritual foes consider us an abomination."

1Samuel 13:5 And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which *is* on the sea shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Bethaven.

1Samuel 13:6 When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed,) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits.

1Samuel 13:7 And *some of* the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he *was* yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

The Philistines immediately responded by preparing to attack Israel and gathered a force of 30,000 chariots, 6000 horsemen and a vast multitude of soldiers on foot. They made camp in Michmash on the east side of Bethaven.

I should note that some translations say 3000 chariots as supported by other very old translations. i.e., the Syriac and Arabic. Either way, the number would have been overwhelming to the Israelites who had none.

The vast size of the Philistine army caused great fear among the men of Israel. Many of the people hid in caves, crevices in the earth, in rocky fortress-like areas, in high places and in old wells or cisterns. Some of them crossed the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead to seek refuge.

Saul stayed in Gilgal with his troops who were all afraid.

1Samuel 13:8 ¶ And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel *had appointed*: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.

1Samuel 13:9 And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering.

From verse 8 we can infer that Samuel had communicated in some way with Saul and told him to wait seven days for him to meet him at Gilgal. Samuel still had not come by the seventh day, and his troops were deserting. So Saul determined that he could wait no longer and decided to make his own burnt and peace offerings before the LORD.

It should be noted that Saul did not even wait for the seventh day to pass before choosing to take matters into his own hands. This evidences a lack of faith that led to disobedience.

1Samuel 13:10 And 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 salute him.

1Samuel 13:11 And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and *that* thou camest not within the days appointed, and *that* the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash;

1Samuel 13:12 Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.

As soon as Saul had made the burnt offering, Samuel showed up. Saul went out to meet him as a way of honoring him. Samuel, however, immediately questioned Saul as to what he had done. Saul knew that he was talking about the sacrifice. He explained to Samuel that his troops were deserting, and he had not showed up in the time that he had said he would. The Philistines were gathered at Michmash and he did not want to face them without making supplication to the LORD, so he felt compelled to offer the burnt offering himself.

1Samuel 13:13 And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. **1Samuel 13:14** But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept *that* which the LORD commanded thee.

Samuel immediately rebuked Saul and told him he had acted foolishly by disregarding the LORD's commandment. Samuel was recognized as God's prophet that declared God's word, and Saul had disobeyed that word.

He went on to explain that he had now forfeited the kingship and the LORD had sought for a man after His own heart to be king, a man that would honor the LORD as his King.

At this point I was reminded of the following verse from Proverbs.

Proverbs 16:25 "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

We know that the man God chose was the shepherd boy David. Though one might think from the reading that David would become king very soon, that was not to be. He was still a growing boy both physically and spiritually. He would not become king until the LORD had grown his faith through the fires of affliction, and that would be over 30 years later.

Acts 13:21 "And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years."

1Samuel 13:15 ¶ And Samuel arose, and gat him up from Gilgal unto Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people *that were* present with him, about six hundred men.

1Samuel 13:16 And Saul, and Jonathan his son, and the people *that were* present with them, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin: but the Philistines encamped in Michmash.

After rebuking Saul, Samuel left and headed to Gibeah where Jonathan and his men were located. Saul counted how many men he had left and found there were about 600. Saul and Jonathan and their troops made camp at Gibeah in the land of Benjamin, and the Philistines established their camp at Michmash.

1Samuel 13:17 And the spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies: one company turned unto the way *that leadeth to Ophrah*, unto the land of Shual:

1Samuel 13:18 And another company turned the way *to Bethhoron*: and another company turned *to the way of the border that looketh to the valley of Zeboim* toward the wilderness.

“Spoilers” is a term that references groups of soldiers that go out as destroyers hoping to collect the spoils of victory. The Philistines sent out three groups of spoilers. One group headed to Ophrah (going north), another to Bethhoron (going west) and the last toward the valley of Zeboim and the wilderness (going southeast), the major path to the Jordan Valley.

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:

1Samuel 13:20 But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock.

1Samuel 13:21 Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the 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 that *were* with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found.

1Samuel 13:23 And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the passage of Michmash.

Point is made that the Philistines had not allowed the Israelites to have their own blacksmiths capable of making weapons. They had to go to the Philistines when they needed to sharpen their farm instruments.

Once again we encounter a translation difficulty with verse 21. Many translations, including the CJB, reference the prices the Israelites had to pay for getting their equipment sharpened. If correct, the commentators note that the prices charged were very high.

1 Samuel 13:21 “The price was two thirds of a shekel for sharpening plowshares and mattocks, and a third of a shekel for sharpening forks and axes and for repointing goads.” (NIV)

Others allow that it denotes that they had files that could sharpen their smaller farm tools. Again, these differences are insignificant.

When the time came to fight, none of the Israelites possessed a sword or spear except Saul and Jonathan.

The “garrison” of Philistines took up their position at the pass at Michmash. The IVP Commentary adds this note: “The Micmash pass is the strategic pass that leads from the north into the region of Jerusalem across the deep canyon of the Wadi Swenit....The site was surrounded by the hills which formed the north side of the wadi. Micmash was inaccessible except for the pass which linked it to Gibeah/Geba.”

The odds against Israel were overwhelming.

It seems that no matter when Israel faces their enemies in battle, the odds are usually stacked against them, often significantly. This is especially true since once again joining the family of nations in May of 1948. I believe that every they achieve over such odds is a result of God’s hand at work on their behalf. He is determined to fulfill His covenants with Abraham and David—and even more importantly to His Son Jesus.

Galatians 3:16 “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.”