

1Samuel 14:1 ¶ Now it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison, that *is* on the other side. But he told not his father.

The record seems to indicate that Jonathan, son of Saul, was quite a brave man of independent spirit. He made a plan with his armor bearer to go check out the garrison of the Philistines on the other side of the valley. However, he did not tell his father of his plan.

1Samuel 14:2 And Saul tarried in the uttermost part of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree which *is* in Migron: and the people that *were* with him *were* about six hundred men;

1Samuel 14:3 And Ahiah, the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD'S priest in Shiloh, wearing an ephod. And the people knew not that Jonathan was gone.

Saul and his 600 men were encamped outside the city of Gibeah, a place marked by a pomegranate tree in Migron. Also with him was Ahiah, a descendant of Eli through Phinehas, the Lord's priest in Shiloh, who was in possession of the ephod.

No one in the camp realized that Jonathan was gone.

1Samuel 14:4 And between the passages, by which Jonathan sought to go over unto the Philistines' garrison, *there was* a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one *was* Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh.

1Samuel 14:5 The forefront of the one *was* situate northward over against Michmash, and the other southward over against Gibeah.

There were two sharp rock cliffs (lofty strongholds from the Hebrew) that marked the sides of the passage to the Philistine garrison encampment—one was called Bozez and the other Seneh. One cliff was on the north toward Michmas, the other on the south toward Gibeah.

1Samuel 14:6 And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for *there is* no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few.

1Samuel 14:7 And his armourbearer said unto him, Do all that *is* in thine heart: turn thee; behold, I *am* with thee according to thy heart.

1Samuel 14:8 Then said Jonathan, Behold, we will pass over unto *these* men, and we will discover ourselves unto them.

1Samuel 14:9 If they say thus unto us, Tarry until we come to you; then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them.

1Samuel 14:10 But if they say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up: for the LORD hath delivered them into our hand: and this *shall be* a sign unto us.

Jonathan gives evidence of a healthy faith in the LORD. He believed that the

LORD was capable of giving Israel the victory whether they numbered many or few. He was well aware of this New Testament truth.

Luke 1:37 "For with God nothing shall be impossible."

Romans 8:31 "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Jonathan encouraged his armor bearer to go with him to the camp of the "uncircumcised" Philistines to see if the LORD wanted to use them against the enemy. The armor bearer basically said, "I am with you all the way." The term "uncircumcised" was a derogatory term denoting a lack of respect.

Jonathan's plan was to reveal their presence to the Philistine guards. If the guards told them to wait while they came down, they would stay put. If, however, they told them to come up to them, they would go up because that was a sign that the LORD had delivered the enemy into their hands.

Personally, I think that type of faith is a gift from the LORD that He provides to any of His children at any given time according to His purpose.

1Samuel 14:11 And both of them discovered themselves unto the garrison of the Philistines: and the Philistines said, Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of the holes where they had hid themselves.

1Samuel 14:12 And the men of the garrison answered Jonathan and his armourbearer, and said, Come up to us, and we will shew you a thing. And Jonathan said unto his armourbearer, Come up after me: for the LORD hath delivered them into the hand of Israel.

1Samuel 14:13 And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armourbearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan; and his armourbearer slew after him.

1Samuel 14:14 And that first slaughter, which Jonathan and his armourbearer made, was about twenty men, within as it were an half acre of land, *which a yoke of oxen might plow.*

1Samuel 14:15 And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling.

The two men revealed themselves to the Philistines. The Philistines made a remark about their coming out of hiding and told them to come up so they could show them something. JFB made a practical observation: "As it could not occur to the sentries that two men had come with hostile designs, it was a natural conclusion that they were Israelite deserters. And hence no attempt was made to hinder their ascent, or stone them."

Jonathan basically told his armor bear, "Let's go; the LORD has given the enemy into our hands." He didn't hesitate or second-guess himself; he immediately acted in faith to his conviction.

So, they climbed up the cliff; not an easy task since it required the use of both

their hands and feet. The Philistines fell back when they reached the top, and Jonathan and his armor bearer killed about 20 men on that half-acre of land.

Once the main army and the groups of spoilers realized what had happened, they began to tremble in fear. The LORD also sent an earthquake at that time that terrified them even more.

1Samuel 14:16 ¶ **And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked; and, behold, the multitude melted away, and they went on beating down *one another*.**

1Samuel 14:17 **Then said Saul unto the people that *were* with him, Number now, and see who is gone from us. And when they had numbered, behold, Jonathan and his armourbearer *were* not *there*.**

Saul's lookout in Gibeah saw that the Philistine troops were fleeing in confusion and panic, trampling over one another. It seems that Saul's troops had not felt the earthquake—a miracle in itself in such close proximity. Saul suspected someone from his camp was responsible and numbered everyone to see who was missing. It revealed that Jonathan and his armor bearer were missing.

1Samuel 14:18 **And Saul said unto Ahiah, Bring hither the ark of God. For the ark of God was at that time with the children of Israel.**

1Samuel 14:19 **And it came to pass, while Saul talked unto the priest, that the noise that *was* in the host of the Philistines went on and increased: and Saul said unto the priest, Withdraw thine hand.**

Saul called for Ahiah the priest to bring the ark of God because it was with them at that time. The Septuagint declares that the priest only had the ephod.

As Saul was talking to the priest, the noise from the fleeing Philistines continued to get louder.

“Withdraw thine hand” – Some commentators assume that this implies that the priest had lifted his hands in prayer, and Saul was telling him there was no longer any need. It seems to me that since the ephod was noted, it meant that the priest had prepared to pull out the Urim or Thummim to seek the LORD's direction, and Saul decided against it.

1Samuel 14:20 **And Saul and all the people that *were* with him assembled themselves, and they came to the battle: and, behold, every man's sword was against his fellow, *and there was* a very great discomfiture.**

1Samuel 14:21 **Moreover the Hebrews *that were* with the Philistines before that time, which went up with them into the camp *from the country* round about, even they also *turned* to be with the Israelites that *were* with Saul and Jonathan.**

1Samuel 14:22 **Likewise all the men of Israel which had hid themselves in mount Ephraim, *when* they heard that the Philistines fled, even they also followed hard after them in the battle.**

1Samuel 14:23 **So the LORD saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over**

unto Bethaven.

Saul and his troops gathered together and headed out to join the battle. What they encountered were all the Philistines in a state of confusion fighting against each other. The Israelites that were a part of the Philistine army for whatever reason (probably as slaves or servants) defected and joined the troops of Saul and Jonathan. When all the men in hiding in the caves and crevices of the hills of Ephraim heard that the Philistines were running away, they too came out to join the battle. They fought all the way to Bethaven.

So, the LORD saved Israel that day. Yes, He allowed the men of Israel to have a part in the victory; but they would never have won without His empowerment.

1Samuel 14:24 ¶ And the men of Israel were distressed that day: for Saul had adjured the people, saying, Cursed *be* the man that eateth *any* food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies. So none of the people tasted *any* food.

1Samuel 14:25 And all *they* of the land came to a wood; and there was honey upon the ground.

1Samuel 14:26 And when the people were come into the wood, behold, the honey dropped; but no man put his hand to his mouth: for the people feared the oath.

The troops of Israel suffered greatly that day because Saul had forbidden anyone to eat anything until the evening after he had punished his enemies. He then pronounced a curse on anyone that chose to disobey him. There is no indication that this directive had anything to do with spiritual fasting.

The IVP Commentary notes: "...the act of fasting is designed as a process leading to purification and humbling oneself before God (Ps 69:10). This would be a normal procedure to use in rituals preparing for battle but is incomprehensible as a requirement during the battle. The emphasis Saul places on the fast is for the sake of his own vengeance rather than for the sake of consecration to the Lord."

When the troops came into an area that had honeycombs on the ground, they did not eat any for fear of the curse that Saul had pronounced even though they were so weak and hungry.

JFB provides this insight: "The honey is described as "upon the ground," "dropping" from the trees, and in honeycombs — indicating it to be bees' honey. "Bees in the East are not, as in England, kept in hives; they are all in a wild state. The forests literally flow with honey; large combs may be seen hanging on the trees as you pass along, full of honey" [ROBERTS]."

1Samuel 14:27 But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath: wherefore he put forth the end of the rod that *was* in his hand, and dipped it in an honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened.

1Samuel 14:28 Then answered one of the people, and said, Thy father straitly charged the people with an oath, saying, Cursed *be* the man that eateth *any* food this day. And the people were faint.

1Samuel 14:29 Then said Jonathan, My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey.

1Samuel 14:30 How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely to day of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?

Jonathan, however, did not know about his father's directive and curse. He ate some of the honey, and his eyes reflected the good it did for him. One of the men explained to Jonathan that his father had pronounced a curse on anyone that ate any food that day, and that is why the people were so weak. I liked the NLT version of the last two verses: "*My father has made trouble for us all!*" Jonathan exclaimed. "*A command like that only hurts us. See how much better I feel now that I have eaten this little bit of honey. If the men had been allowed to eat freely from the food they found among our enemies, think how many more we could have killed!*"

Jonathan's only wrongdoing in this episode was that he showed public disrespect to his father the king with his words.

1Samuel 14:31 And they smote the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon: and the people were very faint.

1Samuel 14:32 And the people flew upon the spoil, and took sheep, and oxen, and calves, and slew *them* on the ground: and the people did eat *them* with the blood.

1Samuel 14:33 Then they told Saul, saying, Behold, the people sin against the LORD, in that they eat with the blood. And he said, Ye have transgressed: roll a great stone unto me this day.

1Samuel 14:34 And Saul said, Disperse yourselves among the people, and say unto them, Bring me hither every man his ox, and every man his sheep, and slay *them* here, and eat; and sin not against the LORD in eating with the blood. And all the people brought every man his ox with him that night, and slew *them* there.

The men of Israel had fought the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon, and they were very tired. When the fighting had ended, the men swooped down to take the spoil of sheep, oxen and calves. They began to kill the animals and eat the raw meat because they were so hungry.

Some of the men informed Saul that the troops were sinning against the LORD by eating bloody meat. After rebuking their sin, Saul asked them to bring a very large stone to him. He then sent messengers among the troops telling them to bring the animals to the rock to kill them and drain the blood so that they did not sin against the LORD, and they did.

1Samuel 14:35 And Saul built an altar unto the LORD: the same was the first altar that he built unto the LORD.

Saul built his first altar to the LORD at this spot.

1Samuel 14:36 ¶ And Saul said, Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and spoil them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them. And they said, Do whatsoever seemeth good unto thee. Then said the priest, Let us draw near hither unto God.

1Samuel 14:37 And Saul asked counsel of God, Shall I go down after the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into the hand of Israel? But he answered him not that day.

After the men had eaten (seems to be implied), Saul decided that they should continue their attack on the Philistines that night and take as much spoil as they could before dawn. He told them not to leave even one Philistine alive. The troops agreed to the plan.

The priest reminded Saul that they should seek God's direction. Saul asked God two questions: 1) Shall I go down after the Philistines, and 2) Will you deliver them into our hands? But God gave him no answer that day.

1Samuel 14:38 And Saul said, Draw ye near hither, all the chief of the people: and know and see wherein this sin hath been this day.

1Samuel 14:39 For, as the LORD liveth, which saveth Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die. But *there was* not a man among all the people *that* answered him.

1Samuel 14:40 Then said he unto all Israel, Be ye on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side. And the people said unto Saul, Do what seemeth good unto thee.

1Samuel 14:41 Therefore Saul said unto the LORD God of Israel, Give a perfect *lot*. And Saul and Jonathan were taken: but the people escaped.

1Samuel 14:42 And Saul said, Cast *lots* between me and Jonathan my son. And Jonathan was taken.

1Samuel 14:43 Then Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what thou hast done. And Jonathan told him, and said, I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that *was* in mine hand, *and*, lo, I must die.

1Samuel 14:44 And Saul answered, God do so and more also: for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan.

1Samuel 14:45 And the people said unto Saul, 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; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not.

Saul suspected that God had not answered him because there was sin in the camp. He told his leaders to gather all the men together so that they could find out who was responsible. Saul declared that whoever was responsible, even if it were his own son, would be put to death. No one revealed what Jonathan had done.

Saul then made a division between himself and Jonathan and the rest of the

troops. Saul asked the LORD to reveal the truth through the casting of the lot (probably using the Urim and Thummim), and Saul and Jonathan were taken. When the lot was cast between Saul and his son, Jonathan was taken. Saul asked Jonathan what he had done, and Jonathan told them that he had tasted some honey from the end of the rod and so must die. Saul swore his intent to execute Jonathan. The people, however, would not allow that to happen. They declared that Jonathan was responsible for Israel's victory and that he had in no way wronged the LORD; in fact, he had acted with the LORD's blessing. Saul yielded to the will of the people. I believe he knew that Jonathan was innocent of any sin regarding his oath.

It's significant to note that although Jonathan was not aware of the oath of his father, his father was still ready to hold him accountable to it and Jonathan was ready to die for violating it. I'm not sure I understand either of them. Saul's oath is similar to the one made by Jephthah, except that he declared it before all the troops—except the two not present—and required obedience based on knowledge. I guess the fact that he emphasized the serious consequences of disobedience by declaring Jonathan as accountable as anyone else and invoking the LORD in the process, they felt they had no choice. I think the fact that the LORD continued to give the Israelites the victory over their enemies as shown in the following verses affirms that the LORD considered Jonathan guiltless as well.

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

Saul evidently changed his mind about continuing the attack on the Philistines, and both armies returned home.

1Samuel 14:47 ¶ So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and 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 whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed *them*.

1Samuel 14:48 And he gathered an host, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them.

Saul was firmly established as the king in Israel and went to battle against all their enemies—Moab, Ammon, Edom, the kings of Zobah and the Philistines—and gained victories over them all. He also attacked the Amalekites with a large military force and delivered Israel from their constant attacks on the people to steal from them.

1Samuel 14:49 Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, and Ishui, and Melchishua: and the names of his two daughters *were these*; the name of the firstborn Merab, and the name of the younger Michal:

1Samuel 14:50 And the name of Saul's wife *was* Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz: and the name of the captain of his host *was* Abner, the son of Ner, Saul's uncle.

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

This section tells us about Saul's family. He had three sons, Jonathan, Ishui and Melchishua, and two daughter, Merab, the oldest, and Michal. Saul's wife was Ahinoam, daughter of Ahimaaz. The leader of Saul's military was his cousin Abner, son of his uncle Ner. Saul's father, Kish, and his uncle, Ner, were the sons of Abiel.

We are told in Chronicles that Saul actually had four sons.

1 Chronicles 8:33 "And Ner begat Kish, and Kish begat Saul, and Saul begat Jonathan, and Malchishua, and Abinadab, and Eshbaal."

I believe that Abinadab and Ishui are the same. Eshbaal is also known as Ishbosheth. I don't know why he was not included here.

2 Samuel 2:8 ¶ But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim;

1 Samuel 14:52 And there was sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul: and when Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto him.

The Israelites were at war with the Philistines during the whole reign of Saul. Any time Saul saw a strong or valiant man, he made him a part of his military force.

Once again we see the truth of Samuel's words before giving the people a king.

*1 Samuel 8:11&16 "And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: **He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself....And he will take your menservants, and your maid servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work."***