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# Isra'el without Weapons
# First Samuel 13: 15b-23

**Isra'el without weapons DIG: What are the signs of Sha'ul's failure as a leader? How did Sha'ul's army compare with Gideon's? How extensive was the Philistines' influence over Isra'el? How did their weapons compare? Who was in the Iron Age? Bronze Age? What did it mean for Isra'el to be "the pupil of God's eye?"**

**REFLECT: What has Ha'Shem given us so we can win our spiritual battles? What must we do to receive this aid from God? In what specific ways do you have your weakness and "unsharpened swords?" Which of your inferior tools will you entrust to God for sharpening and for His use today, so that His power may be seen?**

**There was no blacksmith to be found throughout all the land of Isra'el, for the Philistines were afraid that the Israelites would make swords and spears.**

**A dwindling army (13:15b-16):** As **Sha'ul** departed from **Samuel** and returned to **his** modest **army** (**to see link click Cc – Samuel Rebukes Sha'ul**), the scene was one of despair. Everything had gone wrong, especially **Sha'ul's** misguided attempt to honor **ADONAI**. **Samuel's** departure was symbolic of the breach between **himself** and **Sha'ul**, who was abandoned without any guidance on how to defeat **the Philistines**, and, with the sacrificial offerings not accepted by **God**, **he** was left to **his** own devices.[287] **When the king counted how many men were still there with him** to face **the Philistine** army**,** the wholesale defections had reduced **his troops** to **about 600 (13:15b).** Meaning **about 1,400 men** had deserted **him** since **13:2**.

**The Philistines assembled themselves an army as large as the number of sand grains on the seashore (13:5)**, a simile also used for **the army** that **Gideon** faced **(Judges 7:12)** – and **Sha'ul's army** was twice as large as **Gideon's**! But the difference wasn't so much in the size of **the army** as the

strength of the leader's faith. **Gideon** trusted **ADONAI** for victory and **He** honored **him**, while **Sha'ul** was punished for disobedience. **Sha'ul** had previously mustered **his** large **army** by means of fear **(11:7)**, so when **his men** began to fear **the enemy** more than **the king**, **they** began to desert the camp and go to places of safety. **Jonathan** knew that **the LORD** didn't need great numbers to accomplish **His** purposes **(14:6)**, but **He** did honor great faith.[288] **Sha'ul, his son Jonathan, and the men with them took up quarters at Geba of Benjamin** (which had been taken by **Jonathan** back in **13:3**)**,** separated from **the Philistines** by a deep ravine that acted as a barrier between them **(13:16).** From **their** vantage point, it was easy for **the Israelites** to keep track of every move of **the enemy**.[289]

**A threatened army (13:17-18 and 23): The Philistines** repeatedly sent our **raiding parties** to protect the roads and passes that **the Jews** might use if **they** attacked, and at the same time **the Philistines** kept any residents from helping **the Jewish army**. **Then raiding parties started to continually come out from the camp of the Philistines, three of them: one group turned** north **toward the road leading to 'Ophrah in the territory of Shu'al; another group took the** west **road toward Beth-Horon; and another company took the** east **road toward the desert through the territory overlooking Valley of Zeboim (13:17-18). A** fourth **garrison of the Philistines had gone** south **out to the pass of Micmash** toward **Gibeah** to prevent the Jewish **army** from moving up to **Geba (13:23).** With all those **Philistine** soldiers moving about in the area, what hope was there for **the Jews**? No matter which way **Isra'el** turned, **they** would meet **the enemy**! And yet **the LORD** was going to use **Jonathan** and **his armor-bearer** to win a great victory (see **Ce – Jonathan Attacks the Philistines**), for with **God**, nothing is impossible.[290]

**A deprived army (13:19-22):** It was bad enough that **Sha'ul** lacked men, but it was even worse that the **men he** did have were not properly equipped. This parenthetical note explains how **the Israelites** were at a huge disadvantage because **the Philistines** would not allow **them** to manufacture iron. **The Philistines** had apparently learned sophisticated methods of working with iron from the Hittites or other Anatolian peoples with whom they had come into contact as part of the Sea People's migration from the Aegean Sea area to Canaan around 1200 BC. As a result, **Isra'el** had to depend on **the Philistines** for iron tools.[291] So, while **the Philistines** were in the Iron Age, **the Israelites** were still in the Bronze Age. **Now there was no blacksmith to be found throughout all the land of Isra'el** for **the Philistines** were afraid that **the Israelites** would **make swords**

**and spears** and rise up against **them (13:19).** This describes **a people** who had been reduced to serfdom. **They** couldn't even repair **their** farm tools. We can imagine, in such a state of humiliation, the miserable jeers directed at **Sha'ul** for **his** pitiful attempt to obey **God's** command. As a result, the nation was in a far worse condition than ever, and **God's** honor was even more disgraced.



**The Israelites** even had to pay inflated prices to have **their** farm tools **sharpened**. **So, whenever any of the people of Isra'el wanted to sharpen his hoe, plowshare, axe or pick, he had to go down to the Philistines, where the exorbitant prices were two-thirds of a shekel for filing a pick or plowshare and one-third of a shekel for filing an axe or setting an ox goad in its handle.** As the chapter ends, **Sha'ul** is cornered **at Geba** that **he** had taken, the nation was utterly subjugated once again, and **the people** were deprived of any chance of resistance, for **no one in the army of Sha'ul and Jonathan was equipped with either sword or spear; although Sha'ul and Jonathan did have them (13:20-22).**[292]

**The Benjamites** were skilled at using **slings (Judges 20:15-16)**, but **slings** were not practical in close combat, and what about the vast number of **Philistine chariots**? **The Jewish army** was small in number and had small supplies of weapons, but **they** had a great **God**, if only **they** would trust **Him**.[293] Little did **Sha'ul** imagine how near the help of **Ha'Shem** was, and how soon it would be before **God** struck out against **the oppressors** to save **His people**. **Sha'ul** may have failed **the LORD**, but **he** was still **the king of Isra'el**, however illegitimate, and **Isra'el** was still **the people of ADONAI**. As **ADONAI-Tzva'ot** would say to a later generation of **Israelites, "Whoever injures you injures the very pupil of My eye" (Zechariah 2:8). The rabbis say that the world is like a human eyeball; the white of the eye is like the ocean surrounding the world; the**

**iris is the continent; the pupil is Jerusalem, and the image of the pupil is the Holy Temple (Talmud, Derech Eretz Zuta 9).** And as **the apostle Paul** discovered in **his** own time of need, **God** says: **My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness (Second Corinthians 12:9).**[294]

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for being wonderful, wise and loving! How awesome it is that who wins the battle is not due to a physical strength, nor due to who has the sharpest weapons for war, the outcome of battles is in **Your** hand.* ***Thus ADONAI says to you, "Do not be afraid or be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's" (Second Chronicles 20:15b-c).***

*May **Your** children follow the example of **king Jehoshaphat**, **bowing down** in worship, and then praising **You**.* ***Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before ADONAI to worship ADONAI. Levites, from the sons of Kohath and the sons of Korah, stood up to praise ADONAI, the God of Isra'el, with a very loud voice. Early in the morning they arose and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. As they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, O Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in ADONAI your God and you will be confirmed. Trust in His prophets and you will succeed." After consulting with the people, he appointed singers to Adonai praising the splendor of His holiness, as they went out before the army saying, "Praise ADONAI, for His mercy endures forever." As they began singing and praising, ADONAI set ambushes against the children of Ammon, Mo'ab, and Mount Seir who had come against Judah, and they were defeated (Second Chronicles 20:18-22).***

*Please help me to always remember that **You** are greater than any situation, greater than any enemy. **You** live within those who **love You**.* ***Yeshua answered and said to him: If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him (John 14:23).*** *So, **You** are always there to help and to guide me. Thank **You** for being so wonderful! In **Messiah** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection Amen.*