

-Save This Page as a PDF-

## Isra'el Routs the Philistines

### First Samuel 14: 15-23

**Isra'el routs the Philistines DIG:** How did ADONAI help Jonathan when he attacked the Philistines? Why do you think Sha'ul asked for the Ark? What is meant by Sha'ul's command to the high priest? What did that action reveal about Sha'ul? How did Sha'ul hurt himself? Who is credited with the victory?

**REFLECT:** On a scale of 1 (trusting self) to 10 (trusting God), how would an impartial observer rate your current trust level? What story lies behind that rating? How committed are you to worldwide missions, church planting, Jewish evangelism (Romans 1:16), Isra'el, and to the peace of Jerusalem?

**One man with God is always in the majority.**



**Contagious faith (14:15-22):** How could the success of **Jonathan's** commando raid be explained (**to see link click [Ce](#) - Jonathan Attacks the Philistines**)? It might be explained by entirely human factors: one well-trained and well-armed attacker comes by a

difficult route, springs on his enemies and gains an immediate advantage. Of course, **Jonathan** would have none of it. **His** theological perspective was immediately reinforced by more dramatic help from **the LORD**. **And there was panic in the field camp among all the Philistines; likewise, the garrison and the raiding party panicked. ADONAI Himself** had intervened! **Besides all this, there was an earthquake; thus it grew into panic caused by God (14:15).** This was **God** at work with **Jonathan**, just as **He** had been with **Gideon** before (see the commentary on [Judges Bb - Gideon's Victory Over the Midianites](#)), clouding the minds of **Isra'el's** foes and driving **them** away in **panic** and fear.<sup>301</sup>

**Jonathan's** faith was contagious and succeeded in rallying the failing hearts of all **Isra'el**, so that **the nation** was inspired to action. With this in mind, the scene returns to **Sha'ul's** camp. **Sha'ul** and **his 600 men** were back at **Gibeah** where **Sha'ul** lived, and the watchmen on the walls could see **the Philistine** forces retreating and couldn't explain why. **Sha'ul's lookouts at Gibeah of Benjamin saw the enemy camp scattering and running in all directions (14:16).** Did part of **the Israeli** army plan a sneak attack without **Sha'ul's** permission? **Then Sha'ul said to the men who were with him, "Muster the forces and see who is missing." When they did, they realized that Jonathan and his armor-bearer were not present (14:17).** This was the second time that **Jonathan** had acted on **his** own (13:3), and it probably irritated **Sha'ul** that **his** own **son** should be independent. As we study the life of **Sha'ul**, we can see more and more evidence that **he** was what some people call a "control freak." **He** envied other people's success, **he** was suspicious of any strategy **he** didn't come up with **himself**, or at least approve, and **he** was ruthless when it came to removing people who challenged **his** leadership or exposing **his** foolish actions.<sup>302</sup>

**Sha'ul** told **Ahijah**, "Bring the ephod of God here" (see [Exodus Fz - Make the Ephod of Gold, Blue and Purple Yarn](#)) so **you** can determine **God's** will for the battle by casting **the Urim and Thummim** (see [Exodus Gb - The Urim and Thummim: The Means of Making Decisions](#)); for at that time the ephod of God was with the people of **Isra'el** (14:18). The Ark was at the house of **Abinadab** (see [Bl - The Ark at Abinadab's House](#)), at least a day's journey away. **Sha'ul** didn't have that kind of time. **So Ahijah** never got the chance to determine **God's** will, for **while Sha'ul was talking to the priest, the uproar in the camp of the Philistines continued and kept getting louder.** Once again, **Sha'ul's** impatience got the best of **him**, and **he** acted without knowing **God's** will or receiving **His** blessing. So, **Sha'ul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand down,"** meaning **he** was to stop seeking divine guidance (14:19). **Sha'ul** was desperately anxious to prove **himself** as good a soldier as **Jonathan**, and **he** badly wanted to **avenge himself**

against **his enemies (14:24)**. The point was that **his purpose** was to fulfill **his** own personal ego, not to honor **YHVH**, that **he** rushed into the battle spiritually unprepared. What a contrast there was between **Sha'ul's** fake religion and **Jonathan's** bold faith!

But even **Sha'ul's** royal incompetence was not enough to stem the tide of victory for **the Israelites** that day. **Sha'ul's** confidence was rallied by **Jonathan's** contagious faith. There was nothing orderly about the ensuing battle. **Then Sha'ul and all his men assembled and went to battle, but they found all the Philistines turning on each other with their swords (Judges 7:22) in utter panic and confusion (14:20).**

**Jonathan's** faith had brought **the LORD's** help.

As **Sha'ul** and **his army** moved toward the battlefield, **they** were joined by **Israelites** who had **deserted to the enemy camp. Likewise, on hearing that the Philistines were fleeing, all the men of Isra'el who had hidden themselves in the hills of Ephraim joined the battle in hot pursuit (14:21-22).** We wonder what kind of **soldiers** those quitters turned out to be. But the fact that **Sha'ul** accepted **them** may indicate that **he** was trusting in **his army** and not trusting in **ADONAI**. **Six hundred soldiers** don't make a large **army**, so **he** welcomed even the weakest of **the deserters**. Yet in a few hours, **Sha'ul** would be willing to **kill his own son** for **eating** some **honey** and breaking **his father's** foolish **vow** (see [Ch - Sha'ul's Foolish Oath](#))! **Sha'ul's** emotional unbalance will show up again and again, and do great harm to the kingdom. **One day he would rush ahead like a horse, and the next day he would hold back like a mule (Psalm 32:9).**

So we must remember that it was not **Sha'ul** and **his army** who won the battle, but **the LORD** who used **Jonathan** and **his armor-bearer (14:23)**. **The Israelite army** followed **the Philistines** for **the next fifteen miles** from **Micmash** to **Bethel**, and **ADONAI** enabled **them** to defeat **the enemy**. But **Sha'ul** had joined the battle so late, and **his men** were so weak and famished, that **they** couldn't achieve the kind of victory that would have been decisive against **the Philistines (14:30)**.<sup>303</sup> As a result, **Sha'ul's** poor leadership would ultimately cost **Sha'ul his** life (see [Dk - Sha'ul Takes His Own Life](#)).

**One person with God (14:23):** The passage concludes with the postscript: **So ADONAI delivered Isra'el that day, and the battle spread as far as Bethel.** While the praise rightly belonged to **ADONAI** alone – for who authored **Jonathan's** faith if not **the LORD**; who answered **his** prayer, and who used **his** otherwise suicidal assault to rout **the whole Philistine army?** – We are nonetheless invited to reflect on the faith of young **Jonathan**. Do we believe, as **he** believed, that circumstances do not determine outcomes when **God** is involved? Do we believe in the possibility of **God's** acting in our circumstances: opening

doors for evangelism, providing resources for ministry, offering **His** might to give success where otherwise there would be only failure? If we believe these things, then we will not sit in idle hopelessness as the Adversary's forces hostile to **the Kingdom of God** sweep our generation. We will not play the part of **Sha'ul** in **his** inaction or in **his** pragmatic, unprincipled religion. Rather, if we are inspired by **Jonathan's** contagious faith, we will do as **Jonathan** did in offering ourselves to **the Lord's** service, stepping out into the scene of the action, praying for **YHVH** to give openings and strength, and leaping into the opportunities that **Ha'Shem** provides, confident of **His** grace to empower and multiply our efforts.

One man who stood out for **the Lord** in his generation was John Knox. An early follower of the Reformation Gospel in Scotland, Knox joined forces with the persecuted band of Gospel preachers, narrowly escaping with his life. Exiled to Geneva, he grew strong in faith under the ministry of John Calvin, seeing firsthand the power of **God** to transform a whole society. Returning to his homeland, he boldly advanced the Reformation cause, sending out the Gospel message and aggressively opposing the religious perversions that dominated in the land. Under his leadership, Scotland emerged from the darkness of medieval Roman Catholicism. How did John Knox accomplish so much? His own answer was given in memorable words, recalling the words of faithful **Jonathan**! Knox declared that "one man with **God** is always in the majority." So it was for **Jonathan**: one man, accompanied by only one comrade, but aided by the thunder of almighty **God**, routed a vast army set against **his people**.

What will **ADONAI** do today through men and women who stand in the power of **God** for the cause of the Gospel truth and grace in our times? We will never know unless we, like **Jonathan**, step forward into the world, offering ourselves to **God**, believing that **He** can save with a few just as well as with many, saying: **Maybe ADONAI will do something for us (14:6a)**, as **He** has so often worked for **His** daring people before. **Jonathan's** example challenges us to be daring in giving and bold in our commitment to worldwide missions, church planting, **Jewish** evangelism (**Romans 1:16**), **Isra'el**, and to the peace of **Jerusalem**. Let us not sit under a **pomegranate tree (14:2a)**, despondent over the evil around us. But go forth in faith, knowing that with **God** we will certainly be a majority, for if it is **His** gracious will, **nothing can hinder ADONAI from saving, whether by many or by few (14:6b)**.<sup>304</sup>

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** that having **Your** power is something that cannot be bought by any amount of money, nor by saying any number of superstitious chants, nor can it be obtained by having a religious object. The answer to how to obtain your power is very*

important. **Your** power is obtained by loving and trusting in **You (John 1:12)** so that **You** come to live within me **(John 14:23)**. **You** are **Almighty** power. **You** give **Your** fantastic power to me because I love **You**, and **You** have promised to 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).**

Having a relationship of love with **You** is the most important thing to have in the world. Things, homes, clothes, food, parties will someday all be gone. Trials and problems, frustrations and anxious situations will also someday be gone forever, but the relationship of loving **You** will last throughout all eternity! **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18).** Thank you so very much for offering to be my heavenly Father. **But whoever did receive Him, those trusting in His name, to these He gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12).** I am so thrilled to have **You** as their heavenly **Father**! I want to please **You** in all I do, and I am looking forward to praising **You** throughout all eternity! In **Yeshua's Name**, my holy **Messiah**, and through **His** power of resurrection. Amen