

Chapter 13

- v.1 “Some Greek manuscripts give Saul’s age when he began to reign as 30 years.” (ESV) “Paul in his address [in Acts 13.21] distinctly teaches...that Saul reigned for 40 years, no doubt a round number but probably close to the actual figure.” (Missler)
- v.3 “Jonathan’s assassination of the prefect...is an act of rebellion and initiates the long war between Philistia and Israel that continues throughout Saul’s lifetime.” (McCarter)
- v.5 “The Israelites did not acquire chariots until the time of Solomon.” (NIV) “The Hebrew words for ‘30,000’ and for ‘3,000’ look almost alike” (Missler).
- v.8 “The seven day delay heightened the fear of the Israelite soldiers.” (NIV)
- v.13 “Saul violated a fundamental requirement of his theocratic office. His kingship was not to function independently of the law and the prophets.” (NIV) “The cries of popular acclamation for Saul have hardly subsided before his kingship is censured by Yahweh’s prophet.” (McCarter)
- v.17 “The purpose of these Philistine contingents was not to engage the Israelites in battle, but to plunder the land and demoralize its inhabitants.” (NIV)
- v.19 “A Philistine monopoly on the technology of iron production placed the Israelites at a great disadvantage in the fashioning and maintenance of agricultural implements and military weapons.” (NIV) “The Philistines had apparently learned sophisticated metallurgy from the Hittites or other Anatolian peoples with whom they had come in contact as part of the Sea People’s migration from the Aegean Sea re to Canaan around 1200 B.C.” (Missler)
- v.22 “The Israelites fought with bow and arrow and slingshot.” (NIV)

Question: How often do we ourselves rush God’s timetable? (*cf.* Psalm 127.1-2)

Chapter 14

- v.3 Saul’s chaplain [Ahijah] is the great-grandson of Eli, priest of Shiloh.” (McCarter)
- v.6 Compare Jonathan’s faith and reliance on God versus his father’s fear. See also Gideon in **Judges 7.2** and Judas Maccabaeus in **1 Macc 3.18ff**).

“Saul’s armies, deployed in the hills around Bethel, represent an organized resistance force.... The human agent of Yahweh’s victory in this case is Jonathan. It was he who provoked the crisis in the first place, and it is he who starts the fight and ignites the Israelite troops.” (McCarter)

v.18 “In his confusion Saul summons his chaplain and commands him to seek divine guidance by means of the ephod or rather the Urim and Thummim contained in it. But he does not carry the intention through: in the heat of the moment he interrupts the consultation and marches precipitately into battle. This is another example of the fatal impetuosity that every part of the tradition attributes to Saul.” (Mccarter)

v.24 “Following the account of the great victory that the Lord had given, the author relates Saul’s actions that strikingly illustrated his lack of fitness to be king. This foolish curse before the battle brought ‘distress’ to the army and as Jonathan tellingly observed, ‘made trouble for the country’ rather than contributing to the victory.” (NIV) *cf.* the vow of the Jews to neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul (**Acts 23.12ff**). See also Jephthah rash oath (**Judges 11.29ff**).

“Saul, in the rash, headstrong manner that characterizes everything he does, has bound the people by oath to a fast for the duration of the battle, evidently hoping that such a gesture will be pleasing to Yahweh and ensure his support for Israel’s cause.” (McCarter)

“Saul perceives the conflict with the Philistines more as a personal vendetta than as a battle for the honor of the Lord and the security of the Lord’s people.” (NIV)

vv. 32-34 “Saul’s army was so hungry they ate the meat without draining the blood (Lev 17.1-14), which was even worse than breaking the vow.... This so alarmed Saul that he hastily built an altar on which to offer a propitiatory sacrifice to the Lord.” (Missler)

v.35 The fact that this is the first time Saul as Israel’s king had built an altar to the Lord shows his lack of devotion.

v.41 Urim and Thummim “refer to the counters of the lottery, the two possible results of each cast—thus *urim*, ‘accursed, condemned,’ and *thummim*, ‘pronounced whole, acquitted.’ They were kept in the ‘breastpiece of judgment’ of the priest’s ephod. Their form and appearance are unknown (pebbles, dice, sticks and arrows have all been proposed).” (McCarter)

Questions:

What was wrong with Saul’s call for a fast? When is it ok to fast?

What was wrong with Saul’s vow?