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Courage And Folly (1 Sam. 14:1-30)

Jonathan Decides To Act (1 Sam. 14:1-3)

1 Now it happened one day that Jonathan the son of Saul said to the young man who bore his armor, "Come, let us go over to the Philistines' garrison that is on the other side." But he did not tell his father. 2 And Saul was sitting in the outskirts of Gibeah under a pomegranate tree which is in Migron. The people who were with him were about six hundred men. 3 Ahijah the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the LORD's priest in Shiloh, was wearing an ephod. But the people did not know that Jonathan had gone.

- Why hadn't the Philistines moved against Israel in strength?
- Notice that Jonathan again is taking the initiative, while Saul remains passive. Only Jonathan and his armor-bearer move against the enemy.
- It is significant that Jonathan doesn't tell Saul what he is about to do. It would seem from how the situation turned out that he had really heard from the Lord, but was this a wise course of action?
- Saul is back in Gibeah and as far as we can tell, fear has prevented anyone from coming to join him.
- Saul was actually in the extremity of Gibeah, possibly behind the city. However, Jonathan was not even afraid to take the fight to the enemy. What a contrast!

- Mixture is visible in Saul yet again: he is sitting under a pomegranate tree, a symbol of fruitfulness, even luxury. Contrast this with Deborah’s palm tree!
- Samuel seems to be absent, and Saul is now traveling with Ahijah, a priest and the brother of Ichabod. These reminders of lost glory, and of the doomed line of Eli are not good signs.
- Ahijah was wearing an ephod, probably the special ephod that contained the Urim and Thummim to determine the will of Yahweh. Perhaps in the absence of Samuel, Saul still wanted to be able to seek the Lord.
- It’s very interesting that nobody notices Jonathan has gone missing. This is another instance of bad leadership.

Jonathan’s Faith (1 Sam. 14:4-10)

4 Between the passes, by which Jonathan sought to go over to the Philistines’ garrison, there was a sharp rock on one side and a sharp rock on the other side. And the name of one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh. 5 The front of one faced northward opposite Michmash, and the other southward opposite Gibeah.

6 Then Jonathan said to the young man who bore his armor, “Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the LORD will work for us. For nothing restrains the LORD from saving by many or by few.” 7 So his armorbearer said to him, “Do all that is in your heart. Go then; here I am with you, according to your heart.”

8 Then Jonathan said, “Very well, let us cross over to these men, and we will show ourselves to them. 9 If they say thus to us, ‘Wait until we come to you,’ then we will stand still in our place and not go up to them. 10 But if they say thus, ‘Come up to us,’ then we will go up. For the LORD has delivered them into our hand, and this will be a sign to us.”

- Jonathan is seemingly hidden where no lookouts can see him.
- Calling the Philistines uncircumcised was an insult, meant to show their disgust at the heathen nations that surrounded them, although not all Gentiles were uncircumcised. The term is meant to highlight the fact that the Israelites are in covenant with Yahweh. David will use it in the story of Goliath.
- Jonathan moves out in faith in courage without prophetic direction, just knowing that God is with Israel, and how He had delivered them in the past.
- His beautiful line about how *nothing hinders God from saving by many or by few* makes us recall the story of Gideon. God used Gideon’s little army of 300, and here is Jonathan, willing to take on a whole outpost with two men.
- The armor-bearer also has great faith. Faith and courage are contagious. The armor-bearer literally says, “I [am] with you like your heart [is with you].”
- Jonathan chooses the harder option to be his sign from the Lord. He’s thinking that this would mean God had given them into their hands. This sounds like it’s actually a play on his name (“given by God”).

Hebrews Out Of Their Holes! (1 Sam. 14:11-14)

11 So both of them showed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines. And the Philistines said, “Look, the Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden.” 12 Then the men of the garrison called to Jonathan and his armorbearer, and said, “Come up to us, and we will show you something.”

Jonathan said to his armorbearer, “Come up after me, for the LORD has delivered them into the hand of Israel.” 13 And Jonathan climbed up on his hands and knees with his armorbearer after him; and they fell before Jonathan. And as he came after him, his armorbearer killed them. 14 That first slaughter which Jonathan and his armorbearer made was about twenty men within about half an acre of land.

- They invite Jonathan and the armor-bearer to come up. Jonathan says this is the sign! It was such a difficult ascent that they must climb on their hands and knees.
- The two men are apparently empowered by the Spirit of God, and kill some 20 men in a small space of ground.

The Lord Saves Israel (1 Sam. 14:15-19)

15 And there was trembling in the camp, in the field, and among all the people. The garrison and the raiders also trembled; and the earth quaked, so that it was a very great trembling. 16 Now the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked, and there was the multitude, melting away; and they went here and there. 17 Then Saul said to the people who were with him, “Now call the roll and see who has gone from us.” And when they had called the roll, surprisingly, Jonathan and his armorbearer were not there. 18 And Saul said to Ahijah, “Bring the ark of God here” (for at that time the ark of God was with the children of Israel).

19 Now it happened, while Saul talked to the priest, that the noise which was in the camp of the Philistines continued to increase; so Saul said to the priest, “Withdraw your hand.”

- Notice the supernatural effect, as God sends an earthquake which everyone can feel. Verse 15 says the trembling is very great, lit., a *trembling of Elohim*.
- God also supernaturally caused the Philistines to be seized by terror. Saul’s lookouts are watching the Philistines melting away, fleeing in different directions.
- Deuteronomy 28:7 says: *The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways.*
- Saul’s reaction is disturbing and perhaps more concerned for his own glory.

- Now Saul wants to inquire of the Lord, perhaps wanting the priest to use Urim and Thummim in the immediate presence of God in the Ark.
- Would Saul finally do the right thing? No!
- His reaction, telling the priest not to bother, was extremely carnal. Later on, David would learn to seek God even though he knew how to proceed.
- Saul also violated the Law, because God had commanded them that the priest should speak to them and encourage them when they were outnumbered. (Deut. 20) Again, Saul feels himself above the Law.

A Great Reversal (1 Sam. 14:20-23)

20 Then Saul and all the people who were with him assembled, and they went to the battle; and indeed every man's sword was against his neighbor, and there was very great confusion. 21 Moreover the Hebrews who were with the Philistines before that time, who went up with them into the camp from the surrounding country, they also joined the Israelites who were with Saul and Jonathan. 22 Likewise all the men of Israel who had hidden in the mountains of Ephraim, when they heard that the Philistines fled, they also followed hard after them in the battle. 23 So the LORD saved Israel that day, and the battle shifted to Beth Aven.

- Israel could see the Philistines were fighting each other. This seems to be a “favorite tactic” of Yahweh (see Gideon in Judges 7, and Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20). This will even happen at the Battle of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 38: “I will call for a sword against Gog throughout all My mountains,” says the Lord GOD. “Every man's sword will be against his brother.” (Ezekiel 38:21)
- The Israelites who have been with them, maybe collaborating with them, now also turn on them and fight for the cause of Israel again.

- And the Israelites who had fled come back and chase them also.
- The phrase *The Lord saved Israel that day* reminds us of the Exodus.

A Foolish Oath (1 Sam. 14:24-30)

24 And the men of Israel were distressed that day, for Saul had placed the people under oath, saying, “Cursed is the man who eats any food until evening, before I have taken vengeance on my enemies.” So none of the people tasted food. 25 Now all the people of the land came to a forest; and there was honey on the ground. 26 And when the people had come into the woods, there was the honey, dripping; but no one put his hand to his mouth, for the people feared the oath. 27 But Jonathan had not heard his father charge the people with the oath; therefore he stretched out the end of the rod that was in his hand and dipped it in a honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his countenance brightened. 28 Then one of the people said, “Your father strictly charged the people with an oath, saying, ‘Cursed is the man who eats food this day.’” And the people were faint.

29 But Jonathan said, “My father has troubled the land. Look now, how my countenance has brightened because I tasted a little of this honey. 30 How much better if the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found! For now would there not have been a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?”

- Notice: (1) a foolish oath, and setting up own commandments; (2) Saul speaks of vengeance, calling the Philistines **his** enemies.
- Jonathan says something very ominous: that Saul has **troubled** the land. Centuries before, Joshua had used this word in speaking to Achan, who had troubled Israel by hiding contraband in his tent, causing Israel to be defeated.
