

FIRST SAMUEL

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 29

- Vv. 1-7 *David challenged by the lords of the Philistines.* The lords of the other cities of the Philistines doubted that David would fight against his own people when they actually went into battle. These men requested that Achish, the king of Gath, send David back and not allow him to go into the conflict. Achish was not convinced that David would betray him in the heat of battle, but he yielded to the will of the other Philistine leaders and sent David back from the battlefield.
- Vv. 8-11 *David departs from Achish.* The Philistine lords of such towns as Ekron, Lachish, Gaza and Gath had met at Aphek along the Mediterranean coast as they prepared to go into battle. David departed from this point and returned toward Ziklag. The Philistines went on to battle near Jezreel.

LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. "All things work together for good to those who love God" (Romans 8:28). David must have been in great mental anguish as he found himself in a position where he might be forced to fight against his own people. He had pretended to wage little skirmishes against the south of Judah, but he had not actually done this. He had indicated that he would be loyal to Achish, the king of Gath, who had befriended him and allowed him to dwell in the Philistine city of Ziklag. It is hard for us to believe that David would actually fight against his people and he must have been glad when the Philistine lords insisted that he be sent back from the battlefield. This is apparently the good providence of God that

STUDIES IN SAMUEL

keeps His chosen servants from going too far in the wrong direction.

2. "*Lest haply we be found even to fight against God*" (Acts 5:39 b). In the days when the apostles were threatened by the Jewish leaders one of them had the good common sense to urge his colleagues not to go too far in persecuting Christians lest they themselves be found to fight against God. When we fight against God's people, we fight against God. We are glad that David did not have to fight against his own people. We should be careful that we do not put ourselves in a position where we fight against God's chosen men.

David Challenged by the Lords of the Philistines. 29:1-7

Now the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek: and the Israelites pitched by a fountain which is in Jezreel.

2 And the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds, and by thousands: but David and his men passed on in the rearward with Achish.

3 Then said the princes of the Philistines, What *do* these Hebrews *here*? And Achish said unto the princes of the Philistines, *Is* not this David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, which hath been with me these days, or these years, and I have found no fault in him since he fell *unto me* unto this day?

4 And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him; and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? *should it not be* with the heads of these men?

5 *Is* not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances, saying, Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands?

6 Then Achish called David, and said unto him, Surely, as the Lord liveth, thou hast been upright, and thy going out and thy coming in with me in the host *is* good in my sight: for I have not found evil in thee since the day of thy coming unto me unto this day: nevertheless the lords favor thee not.

7 Wherefore now return, and go in peace, that thou displease not the lords of the Philistines.

1. *Where was Aphek?* 29:1

At least four different locations bear the name of Aphek. One is a city mentioned in Joshua 13:4. The context indicates that this was north of Sidon, and is often identified as *Asqa*, the ancient *Aphaca*, some twenty-three miles on beyond Beirut. Another is a town in the tribe of Asher, which the Israelites failed to occupy (Joshua 19:30; Judges 1:31). This Aphek has been identified with Tell Kurdaneh, some six miles southeast of Accho. A third location is a town in the Plain of Sharon, about eleven miles northeast of Joppa. This is the present *Ras-el-'Ain*. The Philistines were camped here on their way to Shiloh to attack Israel at Ebenezer (I Samuel 4:1-12). A fourth location is a spot about four miles east of the Sea of Galilee in the land of Manasseh east. This spot is on the highway between Damascus and a plain of Esdraelon and is known as the present-day *Afik* (I Kings 20:26; II Kings 13:17). Still another site is posited as not only possible but probable from the reference of the location of the armies in Shunem and Jezreel (I Samuel 28:4; 29:1, 11; 31:3). It seems doubtful that the Philistines would be assembling their troops at this far northern point. The Aphek described here must be the town in the Plain of Sharon. To place it farther north would make it too far away for David and his men to reach Ziklag on the third day after he was discharged from Achish's service (I Samuel 30:1).

2. Why did the Philistines send David away? 29:3

All the various armies of the Philistine governors were being assembled at Aphek for the great push against Saul, when the rulers of the Philistines spied David and his army in the company of Achish. Having recognized him as David, the servant of Saul, they demanded that he not be allowed to go into the battle with the Philistine armies. Achish regretfully informed David of this decision; and in accordance with Achish's admonition, David returned the next morning to Ziklag. No doubt he was very light of heart praising God for having so graciously rescued him out of the disastrous situation into which he had been brought and that not altogether without some fault of his own.

3. How did the Philistines know Israel's songs? 29:5

The song that the women sang as David came back from battle was a very popular song. It is first mentioned in the period following David's victory over Goliath (I Samuel 18:7). This was the song which had stirred Saul's jealousy because the song ascribed but thousands to him while ascribing ten thousands to David. The Philistines had heard it before the time when David fled from Saul and went to Achish at Gath (I Samuel 21:11). Evidently these songs were sung on a number of occasions and the Philistines may have been present to hear it. If they had not heard it in a time of peace, they may have heard it as their armies were encamped close enough together for sounds to carry back and forth.

4. Why did Achish regret discharging David? 29:6

Achish had not realized the truth of the activity of David. He thought he had been making attacks on the south of Judah and took this as evidence of his complete severance from the tribes of Israel (27:12). Achish was forced to discharge David because this was the majority decision of the lords of the Philistines—the king of Ekron, Lachish, Gaza, Ashdod, and others nearby. Achish thought

that David would be a valiant soldier, for indeed he had a reputation of being a capable military man. It is quite doubtful that David would have fought against Saul. He had refused to harm him on a number of occasions, and he would certainly have rebelled against any personal combat between Saul and himself.

David Departs from Achish. 29:8-11

8 And David said unto Achish, But what have I done? and what hast thou found in thy servant so long as I have been with thee unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies of my lord the king?

9 And Achish answered and said to David, I know that thou *art* good in my sight, as an angel of God; notwithstanding the princes of the Philistines have said, He shall not go up with us to the battle.

10 Wherefore now rise up early in the morning with thy master's servants that are come with thee: and as soon as ye be up early in the morning, and have light, depart.

11 So David and his men rose up early to depart in the morning, to return into the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

5. Why did David protest? 29:8

David was playing the part to the hilt. His words are ambiguous, and he does not expect that Achish will be able to make any charge against him. As he said that he would go and fight against the enemies of his lord the king, he does not make the reference personal. He could have been saying that he would fight against the Philistines, since he was really still loyal to Saul. Achish in his gullibility, took the statement of David to be a declaration of allegiance to him and assured David still more earnestly that he was firmly convinced of his honesty and integrity.

6. *Why did Achish compare David to an angel of God?*
29:9

This idiom is used quite often by people who want to show their deep respect for others. The comparison of the king to an angel of God was made by the woman of Tekoah, who came up to see David at the invitation of Joab (II Samuel 14:17 and 20). In the case of the Israelites they would look to their monarch as God's vice-regent; but in the case of Achish, the idiom is probably no more than a way for him to say that he had the strongest conviction that David had behaved himself well. He was as faultless as an angel in the sight of Achish.

CHAPTER 29 IN REVIEW

1. Where were the Philistines gathering together? _____
2. Where were the Israelites encamped? _____
3. With whom was David going into battle? _____
4. Who objected to David's presence? _____
5. By what name did the Philistines describe David and his men? _____
6. What title did the Philistines use to describe David's relationship to Saul? _____
7. Quote the song which the Philistines knew which referred to Saul and David. _____
8. To what heavenly being did Achish compare David? _____
9. When did David leave the Philistine camp? _____
10. Towards what place did the Philistines go? _____