

FIRST SAMUEL

Chapter 29

The Philistines Reject David

Now the Philistines had gathered all their forces at Aphek. And the Israelites were encamped by the spring that is in Jezreel. 2 As the lords of the Philistines were passing on by hundreds and by thousands, and David and his men were passing on in the rear with Achish, 3 the commanders of the Philistines said, "What are these Hebrews doing here?" And Achish said to the commanders of the Philistines, "Is this not David, the servant of Saul, king of Israel, who has been with me now for days and years, and since he deserted to me I have found no fault in him to this day." 4 But the commanders of the Philistines were angry with him. And the commanders of the Philistines said to him, "Send the man back, that he may return to the place to which you have assigned him. He shall not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he become an adversary to us. For how could this fellow reconcile himself to his lord? Would it not be with the heads of the men here? 5 Is not this David, of whom they sing to one another in dances, 'Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands?'" 6 Then Achish called David and said to him, "As the LORD lives, you have been honest, and to me it seems right that you should march out and in with me in the campaign. For I have found nothing wrong in you from the day of your coming to me to this day. Nevertheless, the lords do not approve of you. 7 So go back now; and go peaceably, that you may not displease the lords of the Philistines." 8 And David said to Achish, "But what have I done? What have you found in your servant from the day I entered your service until now, that I may not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?" 9 And Achish answered David and said, "I know that you are as blameless in my sight as an angel of God. Nevertheless, the commanders of the Philistines have said, 'He shall not go up with us to the battle.'" 10 Now then rise early in the morning with the servants of your lord who came with you, and start early in the morning, and depart as soon as you have light." 11 So David set out with his men early in the morning to return to the land of the Philistines. But the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

29:1 *The Philistines gathered all their forces.* The narrative flow broken at 28:2 is resumed. (CSB)

Flashback, to set the order of the battle (cf 28:4). (TLSB)

Aphek. A place in the vicinity of Shunem (28:4), to be distinguished from another place of the same name referred to in 4:1 (see 1Ki 20:26, 30; 2Ki 13:17). (CSB)

C 40 mi short of their destination, Shunem, from which they will prepare for the battle on the plain around Jezreel. (TLSB)

spring. At this time, the Israelite forces were at Jezreel, at the Spring of Harod at the foot of Mount Gilboa, upon which the Israelites would encamp. (TLSB)

29:2 *Philistine rulers.* Kings of the five Philistine city-states, leading their own contingents of troops in military formations. (TLSB)

in the rear. David and his men marched along with the troops of the city-state Gath, at the rear of the column. (TLSB)

29:3 *these Hebrews.* While Saul visited the medium at Endor (ch 28), the Philistine commanders debated about the presence of David and his troops. Although David fooled Achish, the Philistine

commanders were not fooled, perhaps remembering that these were the same Hebrews whose “gods” had delivered them from Egyptian bondage (4:5–9). (TLSB)

I have found no fault in him. David’s tactics described in 27:10–12 were highly successful. (CSB)

29:4 *the place you assigned him.* Princes argued that David could make himself acceptable to Saul and to Israel by changing sides in the middle of the battle, presenting to Saul another gruesome gift (cf 18:27). (TLSB)

he become an adversary to us. The Philistines had experienced just such a reversal on a previous occasion (see 14:21). (CSB)

29:6 *As surely as the LORD lives.* Achish swears by the God of Israel apparently as a means of proving his sincerity to David. (CSB)

Israelite oath formula is unexpected from a Philistine. Achish compels David by swearing in the name of David’s God, showing that Achish recognized David’s continued allegiance to Yahweh. (TLSB)

29:7 *go peaceably.* Achish acknowledges that David had a right to protest. It was embarrassing for Achish to have to dismiss the man he had appointed as his bodyguard. He tried hard not to offend David. (TLSB)

29:8 *But what have I done?* David pretends disappointment in order to keep intact his strategy of deception. In reality this turn of events rescued David from a serious dilemma. (CSB)

that I may not go? David again uses an ambiguous statement (see 28:2). To whom was he referring as “my lord the king”—Achish or Saul or the Lord? (CSB)

David protested as though he were suffering an injustice. He may well have planned to do just what the Philistine princes feared, to turn the battle in Israel’s favor. In such case, his words were again very clever, having in mind the enemies of King Saul, while Achish was led to think that he was referring to his own enemies as lord and king of the Philistines. (TLSB)

29:9 *as an angel of God.* A common simile. (CSB)

Blessing and success resulted from David’s presence in their midst. The same phrase is used of David again in 2Sm 14:17 in reference to his skill as a judge of right and wrong. (TLSB)

29:10 *rise early in the morning.* Achish wishes to avoid further contention. (TLSB)

29:11 *return to the land of the Philistines.* Having been honorably dismissed, David and his men part company with the Philistines, who were traveling to Jezreel. David’s army would be the only fighting men remaining in the land. (CSB)

Ch 29 As the Philistine army moves northward to battle, David’s difficult situation within the army is resolved when he is removed from the battlefield. Once again, God looked after David’s welfare. We, too, can get ourselves into some pretty tight spots as a result of our own decisions or deceptions. God will not condone our sinfulness, which is often what prompts the decisions we make. Yet, He still looks after our welfare, making all things work together for good in Christ (Rm 8:28). • O Lord, we thank You for Your patience and kindness toward us as we live out our days on this earth. Amen. (TLSB)