

# 1 SAMUEL 31

## 1Samuel 31:1–13

## Saul and his Sons Die in Battle

### Outline of Chapter 31:

- vv. 1–3     **The Philistine Army is Defeating Saul’s Army in Battle**
- vv. 4–6     **Saul and his Armor-bearer Commit Suicide During this Battle**
- vv. 7–10    **The Philistines Defeat the Israelites and Display the Dead Bodies of Saul and his Sons**
- vv. 11–13   **Brave Men from Jabesh-gilead Retrieve and Bury the Bodies of Saul and his Sons**

### Charts, Short Doctrines and Maps:

- Introduction   **Who Observed and Wrote Down the Events of 1Samuel 31?**
- Introduction   **1Samuel 28–31 in Chronological Order**
- v. 2           **Why Does God Allow Jonathan to be Killed in Battle?**
- v. 4           **Saul’s Failures**
- v. 4           **A Summary of the Doctrine of Suicide**
- v. 9           **A Summary of the Pagan God Dagon**
- v. 10          **A Summary of the Doctrine of Beth-Shan**
- v. 13          **A Summary of the Doctrine of Fasting**
- v. 13          **The Contrast Between David and Saul**

Scriptural Excursions			
<b>1Chronicles 10</b>			
Doctrines Covered		Doctrines Alluded To	
<b>Suicide</b>	<b>Beth-shan</b>	<b>The Pagan God Dagon</b>	<b>Fasting</b>

**Introduction:** We have reached the final chapter in the book of 1Samuel, 1Sam. 31 (however, in the Hebrew, this is simply the book of Samuel and this chapter would be a little more than midway through). This final chapter deals with the final battle of Saul, which is probably coterminous with David’s defeat of the Amalekites of the previous chapter. As we have already studied, Saul had gone to a psychic necromancer, who, surprising herself, brought up Samuel from the dead. Saul had several questions for Samuel, but these questions had already been answered. All that was left for Saul to do was to go meet his fate—he had no other choice. This chapter is the fate of Saul, a result of his bad decisions.

Interestingly enough, even though it is clear that Saul is suffering from mental illness, probably associated with demonic influence over him, not one time is this presented as a mitigating factor. Saul is held responsible for his actions, despite his diminished capacity. On the other hand, God allowed Saul to live for a relatively long time before punishment was administered to him. Contacting the dead through a necromancer appears to have been the final straw (although judgment had been passed at least a decade previously).

We begin this chapter with the Philistines warring against the Israelites and winning. The Israelites had positioned themselves at the foot of Mount Gilboa and were apparently retreating back into Mount Gilboa (1Sam. 31:1). Saul

and his sons were unable to get away from the Philistine onslaught, and the Philistines kill Saul's three sons (1Sam. 31:2). Furthermore, their archers had found Saul (1Sam. 31:3—although most translations indicate that they struck Saul, that is not what the Hebrew text tells us). Saul knew that it was only a matter of minutes before the Philistines would kill him, so he commits suicide, his aide being unwilling to kill him (1Sam. 31:4). His armor bearer, seeing that Saul was dead, kills himself (1Sam. 31:5). Israelite armies continued to retreat, and those who were living in cities in this general area abandoned those cities; and the Philistines came and took over the cities in central Israel (1Sam. 31:7). The day after this momentous battle, the Philistine army began to examine the bodies of the slain, looking specifically for Saul and his sons. When their bodies were found, they cut off Saul's head and apparently carry it into Philistia to celebrate their victory (1Sam. 31:9). One of the cities taken over by the Philistines is Beth-shan, and the Philistines hang the bodies of Saul and his sons on the exterior wall of Beth-shan (1Sam. 31:10). Some brave Israelites from the other side of the Jordan, in Jabesh-Gilead, come at night and take the bodies of Saul and his sons, and bury them properly (1Sam. 31:11–13).

It might be interesting to speculate, *just who observed this event?* Although God could supernaturally reveal information to any author of Scripture, there is no reason to assume that this was the approach which God took. Over and over again, when authorship is discussed in any way in the Bible, the writing of that portion of Scripture appears to be very natural, as one would write of events which one observed or had information about. The only exceptions to this are (1) much of the book of Genesis, which I believe was handed down verbally for awhile (this is one of the few places I would suggest that the oral tradition actually existed); and (2) some of the Mosaic books are dictated to Moses (the latter half of Exodus and portions of Leviticus). However, in most cases, there is no reason to assume that there was some supernatural operation by which an event was recorded—and Scripture does not record anyone supernaturally writing down information that was unavailable to them.

### Who Observed and Wrote Down the Events of 1Samuel 31?

Possible Author	Pros and Cons
Abner	Saul's high-ranking general escaped alive to the other side of the Jordan, as we will see in 2Sam. 2. Although he could have observed Saul's death and escaped, somehow managing to locate Saul's son, Ishbosheth, and then take him and an army into eastern Israel, this seems unlikely. Saul knows that he will die and he knows that Israel will be defeated in this battle. My theory is, Saul, the morning of this battle, dispatched Abner and a small army to get Ishbosheth and to go east of the Jordan. This would explain how it is possible for Abner and a son of Saul's to escape and to set up a kingdom east of the Jordan.
A Philistine	Some Philistines definitely observed this battle, and, specifically, Saul's death. It appears as though some of them were moving in on Saul after Saul had been struck (probably with arrows); and that they probably arrived just as Saul and his armorbearer commit suicide (an event recorded at the end of this chapter).  The Philistines would have broadcast news of this battle far and wide; however, we do not know how accurately they would have presented the events. Would they tell that Saul committed suicide? Would they not rather tell that they personally killed Saul?  So, the problem with this theory is twofold: (1) Philistines did observe this event and no doubt, recorded the incident in their own annals. However, did they record the events accurately? (2) How did David gain access to these records, assuming that David recorded these chapters at a later date? Neither problem is insurmountable; but I try to present the pros and cons.

### Who Observed and Wrote Down the Events of 1Samuel 31?

Possible Author	Pros and Cons
The Amalekite who comes to David in 2Sam. 1	This Amalekite will give a phoney eyewitness account of Saul’s death in 2Sam. 1:3–10. Based upon his account (where he claims to be the man who dispatched Saul), David will order his execution. He expected a reward; he did not expect to be executed. My thinking is, this man began to tell David the real story prior to his execution. This is pure speculation on my part, but I think the most reasonable explanation.
Some other witness	We are speaking of a pretty incredible battle here; it is hard to imagine that there were witnesses standing around watching how things played out. It is even less likely that such an eyewitness could survive this battle.

As is no doubt obvious, I lean toward the Amalekite as being the source of the accurate account of the first half of this chapter, even though he initially lies to David about this event.

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

What might be helpful, before we get into this chapter, is to go back and review the previous chapters chronologically. The Hebrew mind of that day did not think primarily in terms of chronology, as we tend to, but more in a topical way. Therefore, in the previous several chapters, we have several individual incidents which did not occur in the order that they are presented. For instance, the Philistines gather in Aphek first (1Sam. 29:1) before they go up north to Shunem (1Sam. 28:4). Going from Shunem, which is directly across the valley from the gathered Israelites, down south to Aphek, roughly 40 miles away, makes very little sense.

Now, this does not mean that there is any sort of contradiction buried here in these chapters as to where these cities are and where everyone is gathered. The only author of Scripture who makes a concerted effort to lay out historical events in a chronological manner is Luke (Luke 1:3), which we might reasonably assume continues through the book of Acts. However, there is no such chronological promise made for the book of Samuel. Events in this book are roughly in chronological order—we go from Eli to Samuel to Saul to David—however, the individual chapters and the events found therein are not necessarily in chronological order. This is particularly true of 1Sam. 27–31 (well, actually, chapters 27 and 31 are proper chronological bookends, but what falls in between them needs to be sorted out for our minds).

So, I am not trying to clear up an supposed contradiction; I am simply taking the events of the previous chapters, along with their bookends, and placing them in some sort of order.

Note that events found in the same row occur at approximately the same time. Events in the columns proceed from the past to the future, the order in which we are accustomed. Events which take up an entire row are those which are not actions of any of the three armies specifically.

### 1Samuel 28–31 in Chronological Order

David and his Men	Saul and his Troops	Achish and his Army
Samuel has died and is buried in Ramah. Saul has removed (almost) all of the spiritists and mediums from Israel. 1Sam. 28:3		
David flees Israel to Achish of Gath because he is afraid that Saul will eventually kill him (1Sam. 27:1–3).		Achish greets David, and apparently allows him to stay for a short time in or around Gath (1Sam. 27:3).
	Because David is reported to be in Gath, Saul no longer pursues David as a personal threat (1Sam. 27:4).	Achish grants David asylum in Ziklag, a city considerably south of Gath (1Sam. 27:5–6).

### 1Samuel 28–31 in Chronological Order

David and his Men	Saul and his Troops	Achish and his Army
David and his men move to Ziklag, where he begins to raid traditional heathen enemies of Israel, completely wiping them out (1Sam. 27:8–9, 11). David reports to Achish periodically, but lies to him about who he is raiding (1Sam. 27:10).		Achish is led to believe that David is attacking and plundering his own people and concludes that David will be his servant forever (1Sam. 27:12).
		Achish and the other kings of Philistia gather to discuss another attack on Israel, given that David is no longer their enemy. Although Achish informs them of David's desertion from Israel and possibly his attacks against Israel, he does not suggest that David join them in the attack. This is conjecture and not recorded in Scripture.
David is summoned to Gath (we assume) and is made Achish's bodyguard. When asked about joining the forces of Philistia against Israel, David gives an intentionally vague answer (1Sam. 28:2).		The Philistines begin to muster their troops for war. Achish summons David (probably to Gath) and informs him of Philistia's intention to war against Israel, and his expectation that David will join him (1Sam. 28:1).
David and his men travel up with Achish, as his rear guard (1Sam. 29:2).	Saul apparently hears that the Philistines plan to attack and begins to gather his troops in Jezreel, which is at the foot of Mount Gilboa, to the north (1Sam. 28:4b 29:1b).	The Philistine armies meet first in Aphek. Achish arrives there with David and his men (1Sam. 29:1a).
The other Philistine generals (or kings) heartily object to David joining them to war against Israel (1Sam. 29:3–5). While this is going on, about 30 miles south of them, Amalekites attack an unprotected Ziklag, carry off all of possessions and families of David and his men, and burn what remains to the ground (1Sam. 30:1–2).		
David, at the request of Achish, proceeds south back to Ziklag with his men (1Sam. 29:11).		Achish apologizes to David, and again assures him of his personal trust, and then frees David from his wartime obligations to Philistia (1Sam. 29:6–10). Achish and the other Philistine generals proceed north to Shunem (1Sam. 28:4).

### 1Samuel 28–31 in Chronological Order

David and his Men	Saul and his Troops	Achish and his Army
David and his men come to Ziklag to discover that their camp has been plundered and all of their families and things are missing. They all begin crying and some call for the stoning of David, blaming him for this. 1Sam. 30:3–5	Saul has his troops gathered by a spring near Jezreel as the situation becomes more ominous (1Sam. 29:1b). Saul becomes more and more afraid (1Sam. 28:5). He calls out to God, but God does not answer him (1Sam. 28:6)	Philistine forces begin to gather in great numbers in Shunem (1Sam. 29:1a).
After getting back into fellowship, David and his men pursue the Amalekites and kill all but about 400 of them, who escaped the melee (1Sam. 30:6–20).	Saul and two of his men go to Endor to a witch, and God allows them to bring back Samuel from the dead. Saul is told that he and his sons will die in battle, and he becomes almost inconsolable (1Sam. 28:11–25).	
David sends much of this spoil to the elders and leaders of various cities in Judah (1Sam. 30:26–31).	Saul and his soldiers begin to fight the Philistines. They are hit so fiercely, they begin to retreat to Mount Gilboa (1Sam. 31:1).	The Philistines kill Saul's sons. Saul and his armor bearer commit suicide (1Sam. 31:3–5).

The Israelites in central and northern Israel will flee their cities and the Philistines will move into them. The Philistines will take the bodies of Saul and his sons and hang them on a wall in Bethshan. Men of Jabesh Gilead will hear about this and retrieve these bodies. They cremate their bodies and bury their bones (1Sam. 31:7–13).

History is an odd thing, and difficult to really present linearly, as what happens in one country a week ago, may have a direct affect on the history of another country right now. Therefore, what we found in these chapters are fairly neat individual sets of events; however, these events have an effect on one another, and what happens in one country sets in motion events in another.

One more thing that I should add: what we are going to find in this chapter is very little disagreement with respect to the text. In previous chapters, we ran into many difficulties—none of which substantially changed any major doctrines of the Church Age or of the Age of Israel; but we had problems now and again; and we even ran into passages whose complete meaning confounded us. However, that will not be the case in this chapter. You will find fewer modern translations listed; you will find very little by way of textual criticism; for those who cringe when we delve into the Hebrew, cringe no more—well, not at least for this chapter. You may wonder, *why the heck is that?* I think that part of the reason is, we find a check for this chapter in 1Chron. 10, which is almost word for word, tense for tense, identical to 1Sam. 31. For that reason, no matter what the problem might exist with a manuscript, one could always double check one's work with the book of Chronicles. There may be a second reason as well: the emotional impact of this chapter. Israel's first king (well, more or less, Israel's first king) will die in this chapter and Israel will be soundly defeated by the Philistines. What could grab the attention of a scribe more than this? We will find the same kind of emotional impact at the end of Chronicles when the Israelites are led into slavery.

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to the Chart Index](#)

### The Philistine Army is Defeating Saul's Army in Battle

*1Chronicles 10:1–3*

Slavishly literal:

Moderately literal:

And Philistines are fighting in Israel and so flee men of Israel from faces of Philistines. And so fall slain [men] in a mountain of Gilboa.

1Samuel  
31:1

Now the Philistines were fighting against Israel and the soldiers of Israel fled from before the Philistines. The slain [men of Israel] fell [dead] on Mount Gilboa.

As the Philistines advanced against Israel, the Israeli soldiers began to retreat. Slain men of Israel fell dead on Mount Gilboa during the retreat.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	And Philistines are fighting in Israel and so flee men of Israel from faces of Philistines. And so fall slain [men] in a mountain of Gilboa.
Septuagint	And the Philistines fought with Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and they fall down wounded in the mountain in Gelbue.

Significant differences: None.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Meanwhile, the Philistines were fighting Israel at Mount Gilboa. Israel's soldiers ran from the Philistines, and many of them were killed.
The Message	The Philistines made war on Israel. The men of Israel were in full retreat from the Philistines, falling left and right, wounded on Mount Gilboa.
NLT	Now the Philistines attacked Israel, forcing the Israelites to flee. Many were slaughtered on the slopes of Mount Gilboa.
REB	The Philistines engaged Israel in battle, and the Israelites were routed, leaving their dead on Mount Gilboa.

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>God's Word™</i>	When the Philistines were fighting against Israel, the men of Israel fled from the Philistines and were killed in battle on Mount Gilboa.
JPS (Tanakh)	The Philistines attacked Israel, and the men of Israel fled before the Philistines and [many] fell on Mount Gilboa.

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

HCSB	The Philistines fought against Israel, and Israel's men fled from them. Many were killed on Mount Gilboa.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	And the Philistines are fighting against Israel, and the men of Israel flee from the face of the Philistines, and fall wounded in mount Gilboa.

**What is the gist of this verse?** The Israelites retreat back into Mount Gilboa in the face of the Philistines.

As has been pointed out, this is essentially a continuation of 1Sam. 29:1–11.

## 1Samuel 31:1a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
P <sup>h</sup> ilish <sup>tîy</sup> (פִּלִּשְׁתִּי) [pronounced <i>p<sup>e</sup>-lish-TEE</i> ]	transliterated <i>Philistines</i>	masculine plural gentilic adjective (acts like a proper noun)	Strong's #6430 BDB #814
lâcham (לָחַם) [pronounced <i>law-KHAHM</i> ]	<i>to engage in battle, to engage in war, to wage war; to fight, to battle</i>	masculine plural, Niphal participle	Strong's #3898 BDB #535

In the parallel passage, 1Chron. 10:1, this verb is in the perfect tense, indicating either a completed action or a look at the action as a whole. The author of 1Chron. 10:1 looks back at this battle as an historical event, the details of which he may be recording from some old document. Therefore, we would expect to find this verb in the perfect tense in Chronicles. On the other hand, I believe that much of the book of Samuel was authored by David, even though it is possible that an editor played some part in the final product. Therefore, David approaches this event as more contemporaneous; with an action better viewed as an action in progress. David puts us into the very midst of battle by using this participle.

I will only note a couple of the differences in our study of 1Sam. 31; I will note each and every difference in the exegesis of 1Chron. 10.

b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
Yis <sup>ra</sup> ʾêl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced <i>yis-raw-ALE</i> ]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975

**Translation:** [Now the Philistines were fighting against Israel...](#) These chapters set up parallel, but related events. David was about to join the Philistines and go to war against Israel, but he was turned away. When he returned to his camp, he found all of his women, children and things missing. David went after the Amalekites who had done this to him.

Here, the Philistines have gone to war against Israel and they are clearly defeating Saul's army, which is taking heavy casualties. We really don't know the specifics of why the Philistines were able to overpower the Israelites. I suspect that there were a great many more Philistines and that they felt a great confidence in this war. The Israelites however, in looking to Saul, received no such confidence from him. He had just spent the night with a necromancer being told by Samuel himself that he would die and that Israel would be defeated (1Sam. 28:19); so Saul has no confidence whatsoever in this war.

## 1Samuel 31:1b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253

## 1Samuel 31:1b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
nûwç (נוּחַ) [pronounced noose]	<i>to flee, to flee from, to escape, to depart, to hasten quickly [away]</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5127 BDB #630
ʿîysh (אִישׁ) [pronounced eesh]	<i>men; inhabitants, citizens; companions, soldiers, companions</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #376 BDB #35
Yisʿrâʾêl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced yis-row-ALE]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975
min (מִן) [pronounced min]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
pânîym (פָּנִים) [pronounced paw-NEEM]	<i>face, faces; presence</i>	masculine plural construct (plural acts like English singular)	Strong's #6440 BDB #815
Together, mipânîym mean <i>from before your face, out from before your face, from one's presence</i> . However, together, they can also be a reference to the cause, whether near or remote, and can therefore be rendered <i>because of, because that</i> .			
Pʿlishʿtîy (פְּלִשְׁתִּי) [pronounced p <sup>e</sup> -lish-TEE]	transliterated <i>Philistines</i>	masculine plural gentilic adjective (acts like a proper noun)	Strong's #6430 BDB #814

**Translation:** ...and the soldiers of Israel fled from before the Philistines. The war got so intense, that the Israelite soldiers were unable to withstand the force of the Philistines, and they began to retreat. Although Israel covered a much greater territory than did the Philistines, the Philistines appear to be much more fierce in battle. As the battle raged, the Israeli soldiers retreated. In my opinion, the Israelites retreated early on in this battle. Saul knew that he and his sons would be killed, so he probably hung back and even hid himself as much as possible. Whatever Saul did, it was probably not brave and heroic (which, at one time, he was). We are never told anything about Jonathan; in fact, not since his last meeting with David. We do not know what has happened to him over the years; we do not know if he knew of Saul's secret meeting and the outcome and we do not know how he performed in battle. No matter how Jonathan and his brothers performed, we know that Saul had absolutely no confidence in battle, and that men would look to him for guidance and direction, and he inspired little or no confidence.

There is another factor which I should speak to, even though it is speculation: Abner, his army, and Saul's son Ishbosheth. These will survive this war (2Sam. 8, 12). How does something like this just happen? How does one of Saul's greatest generals, one of his sons, and a portion of his army survive in tact? One of the things which is not revealed in Scripture is just exactly how this happened; however, let me suggest that, after Samuel told Saul that he and his sons would die in battle and that Israel would be defeated, Saul met with Abner and gave him instructions to either hang back and quietly retreat; or to quietly break camp and go back across the river Jordan.

In other words, there are a number of things in play at this time, none of which are recorded for us in Scripture. However, given all that we know, and what we may reasonably deduce, we may conclude that whatever contested battle that occurred was short, and that Israel retreated early on.



## 1Samuel 31:1c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
nâphal (נָפַל) [pronounced <i>naw-FAHL</i> ]	<i>to fall, to lie, to die a violent death, to be brought down, to settle, to sleep deeply</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5307 BDB #656
châlâl (חָלַל) [pronounced <i>chaw-LAWL</i> ]	<i>slain, fatally wounded, wounded, pierced; from a verb which means to bore, to pierce</i>	masculine plural noun (or adjective)	Strong's #2491 BDB #319
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
har (הַר) [pronounced <i>har</i> ]	<i>hill; mountain, mount; hill-country</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #2042 (and #2022) BDB #249
Gil <sup>e</sup> bbô <sup>a</sup> (גִּלְבּוֹא) [pronounced <i>gil-BOH-ahg</i> ]	transliterated <i>Gilboa</i>	proper noun; location	Strong's #1533 BDB #162

**Translation:** **The slain [men of Israel] fell [dead] on Mount Gilboa.** Of course, during the retreat, Israel took a great many casualties. The slain here are specifically identified as being Israeli soldiers from the previous phrase.

That we have Israelites dying on Mount Gilboa gives us an idea as to the troop movement. The Israelites met the Philistines in the Valley of Jezreel, which lies between Shunem and Mount Gilboa (see 1Sam. 28:4). The Philistine army had advanced north from Aphek and probably went past the Israeli army and struck them coming from a northeasterly position. This puts the army of Israel with their backs to Mount Gilboa. If they retreat south, they do not know if there will be a Philistine contingent waiting there for them. So, their retreat is into the forest of Mount Gilboa, where they had been camped out, waiting for this battle. Even though retreat would be slower, there would be more cover and a better opportunity for survival in the woods.

**And so follow hard Philistines Saul and his sons. And so strike down Philistines Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchishua, sons of Saul.**

1Samuel  
31:2

**The Philistines followed closely after Saul and his sons. The Philistines struck down Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchishua, the sons of Saul.**

**The Philistines followed closely behind Saul and his sons. They killed the sons of Saul—Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchishua.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

##### Masoretic Text

And so follow hard Philistines Saul and his sons. And so strike down Philistines Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchishua, sons of Saul.

##### Peshitta

And the Philistines overtook Saul and his sons; and the Philistines struck down Jonathan and Jeshui and Melchishua, Saul's sons.

Septuagint And the Philistines press closely on Saul and his sons, and the Philistines strike down Jonathan, and Aminadab, and Melchisa son of Saul.

Significant differences: There is the minor difference of spelling of Saul's second son. You have no doubt noticed some difference in the spelling of certain names previously. This is because, for instance, the Greek does not have an equivalent to the letter *h* so, whenever such a letter might be found in the Hebrew, it must be changed when bringing it into the Greek (the Greeks did have a rough breathing at the beginning of some words which began with vowels and that rough breathing sounded like an *h*). In the Peshitta, you will note a big difference in the name of Saul's second son. The Latin, by the way, is in complete agreement with the Hebrew.

**Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

CEV The Philistines closed in on Saul and his sons, and they killed his sons Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua.  
 The Message The Philistines caught up with Saul and his sons. They killed Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malki-Shua, Saul's sons.  
 NLT The Philistines closed in on Saul and his sons, and they killed three of his sons—Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malkishua.

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

God's Word™ The Philistines caught up to Saul and his sons. They killed Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul's sons.  
 JPS (Tanakh) The Philistines pursued Saul and his sons, to the Philistines struck own Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchi-shua, sons of Saul.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

NRSV The Philistines overtook Saul and his sons; and the Philistines killed Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchishua, the sons of Saul.  
 WEB The Philistines followed hard on Saul and on his sons; and the Philistines killed Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchishua, the sons of Saul.  
 Young's Updated LT And the Philistines follow Saul and his sons, and the Philistines strike down Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchishua, sons of Saul.

**What is the gist of this verse?** The Philistines advance against the Israelites and kill Saul's three sons, Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchishua.

1Samuel 31:2a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	and so, and then, then, and	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
dâbaq (דָּבַק) [pronounced daw <sup>b</sup> -VAHK]	to cause to adhere, to make to cleave; to follow hard; to come upon, to reach, to be caused to reach	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #1692 BDB #179
The idea is, they follow so closely behind, it is almost as though they are attached to those they follow.			

## 1Samuel 31:2a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
P <sup>h</sup> lish <sup>t</sup> îy (פְּלִשְׁתִּי) [pronounced p <sup>h</sup> -lish-TEE]	transliterated <i>Philistines</i>	masculine plural gentilic adjective (acts like a proper noun)	Strong's #6430 BDB #814
ʿêth (אֵת) [pronounced ayth]	generally untranslated; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
Shâ'ûwl (שָׂאֻל) [pronounced shaw-OOL]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿêth (אֵת) [pronounced ayth]	generally untranslated; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
bên (בְּנֵי) [pronounced bane]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine plural noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #1121 BDB #119

**Translation:** [The Philistines followed closely after Saul and his sons](#). Although it was clear that the Philistines were defeating the Israelites, as the Israelites were retreating; what we focus in on are the Philistines chasing after Saul and his sons. These are the potential leaders and leader of Israel. To the Philistine's way of thinking, get rid of the head and you kill the body, which is often true. Saul and his sons were the heads of Israel; the first priority of the Philistine army was to kill them, and to make certain that all of Israel knew they were dead.

All this being said, it will be interesting that, once these men are killed, the Philistines don't stop to admire what they have just done. They do not collect their bodies right away. My guess is, the men who killed Saul's sons probably knew the import of what they were doing. However, they did not stop to do a victory dance in the end zone. They did not plant a flag where their bodies lay nor did they stop to quickly strip their bodies of some royal souvenir. These Philistine soldiers were well-trained. In killing Saul's sons, their victory was assured. However, the Philistines did not stop there. You will note how they were just the opposite of Saul's army when they defeated the Amalekites. Saul's army stopped and noticed what great stuff the Amalekites had, and started to pick through it before the Amalekites had been completely wiped out, as was God's directive. They decided, *these Amalekites are history; we've taken them out; now let's see what CD's and DVD's they left behind*. This shows a total lack of military discipline; and a fault which can be placed soundly on the shoulders of Saul, whose orders should have been clear and unequivocal. However, not only did Saul not issue such an order, but he clearly issued orders which were exactly the opposite. No one in his army should have thought about doing anything other than killing every Amalekite they could find, and then burning everything that they owned, as God had ordered Saul (this is all found in 1Sam. 15, by the way).

## 1Samuel 31:2b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וּ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253

## 1Samuel 31:2b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
nâkâh (נָכַח) [pronounced <i>naw-KAWH</i> ]	<i>to smite, to assault, to hit, to strike, to strike [something or someone] down, to defeat</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Hiphil imperfect	Strong #5221 BDB #645
P <sup>h</sup> lish <sup>tîy</sup> (פְּלִשְׁתִּי) [pronounced <i>p<sup>e</sup>-lish-TEE</i> ]	transliterated <i>Philistines</i>	masculine plural gentilic adjective (acts like a proper noun)	Strong's #6430 BDB #814
ʿêth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	generally untranslated; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
Y <sup>h</sup> ôwnâthân (יֹונָתָן) [pronounced <i>y<sup>e</sup>-hoh-naw-THAWN</i> ]	alternate spelling; transliterated <i>Jonathan</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3083 (& #3129) BDB #220

**Translation:** [The Philistines struck down Jonathan,...](#) We know very little about Saul's sons, apart from Jonathan. He would have been easy to select as the leader of Israel. He was brave, God-centered, and probably possessed many of the physical characteristics of his father that made him look like a leader. He treated David fairly and stood up to his father when his father would flip out about David.

We have a few years where Jonathan's life is unknown to us. We do not know if he retrogressed; we do not know if his staying with Saul as one of Saul's generals was the right idea; but, what we do know about Jonathan is that he was a great man. Whether any of that had been lost is unknown to us. The fact that he is killed here is obviously part of God's plan—there cannot be two men who equally deserve to rule over Israel like Jonathan and David. The fact that Jonathan is killed does not mean that he was under discipline; nor does it mean that he had done anything wrong by staying with Saul. He was simply a part of the losing team.

As far as we know, Jonathan was innocent; he was a just man and a good friend to David. Even he recognized that David would be king over Israel. This leads us to ask....

### Why Does God Allow Jonathan to be Killed in Battle?

1. No believer is assured of continuous life on this earth; even if he lives an exemplary existence.
2. Even though Moses died at an old age, God did not allow him to cross over the Jordan into the Land of Promise with the men he had led for 40 years. We know in retrospect the gravity of his sin, even though, at that time, it was really just a matter of being upset with the 2,000,000 Jews who seemed unable to trust God after seeing many miracles at His hand.
3. Even though Jonathan clearly acknowledged that David would become king, and had even gotten assurances from David that he would not be persecuted for his father's name, he would always be a viable candidate for king—there would always be the possibility that the people of Israel would push him to follow Saul as king.
4. When Saul became king, it was a result of the demand of the people, as well as the guidance of Samuel, who was far and wide recognized as the spiritual leader of Israel. We do not have the same situation paving the way for David. The only recognized leadership, Saul and his sons, are clearly antagonistic toward David. Even though the people desire a king, this does not mean that they would naturally gravitate toward David—especially in the event of a great man like Jonathan being available.
5. Bear in mind that Saul began humbly; when chosen by God to be king, he hid, because he was so shy and taken aback by this turn of events. However, once he assumed power, there was a point at which his

## Why Does God Allow Jonathan to be Killed in Battle?

behavior got more and more out of control. He began by trying to kill David in the palace with his own sword. We do not know what the end of Jonathan would have been. We have seen him as a great man throughout the latter half of the book of 1Samuel. We don't know that he would have continued that way for the remainder of his life.

6. My father died at an early age. As a father and a husband, he was a great man in my eyes—I feel as though I come up short time and time again in comparison to him. I don't know what would have happened to him in the latter half of his life; I can't say that he would have continued with the same integrity as he had. People do change, as Saul did. Therefore, we have to trust God when he takes someone from us at such and such a time, even if we view God's timing as being far too premature. God knows what He is doing.
7. God has perfect timing. We have to trust this. God knows all there is to know and He knows all of the possibilities. We have to trust this as well. Therefore, when God takes anyone out of this life, then it is clearly his time to go. For anyone to remain even a minute after God's timing would be wrong and would not serve the purposes of God.
8. For a believer, death is a blessing; for a mature believer, death is a promotion.

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to the Chart and Map Index](#)

I want you to bear one additional thing in mind: had God not turned David away from this war in 1Sam. 29, David and Jonathan would have found themselves on opposite sides of this battle. One of the troubling things about war is there are times when believers might be found on opposite sides of a war—this incident here let's us know that God is in control, no matter what.

### 1Samuel 31:2c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿêth (תָּא) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	generally untranslated; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
ʿăbîynâdâb (אֲבִינָדָב) [pronounced <i>u<sup>b</sup>-vee-naw-DAWB</i> ]	<i>my father is noble</i> and is transliterated <i>Abinadab</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #41 BDB #4
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿêth (תָּא) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	generally untranslated; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
mal <sup>q</sup> kîyshûwâ <sup>r</sup> (מַלְכֵי־שׁוֹאֲהָ) [pronounced <i>mah<sup>l</sup>-kee-SHOO-ahg</i> ]	<i>my king is opulence</i> and is transliterated <i>Malchishua</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #4444 BDB #575
bên (בָּנִי) [pronounced <i>bane</i> ]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119

## 1Samuel 31:2c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Shâ'ûwl (לַוּאֵל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i> ]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982

**Translation:** ...Abinadab and Malchishua, the sons of Saul. We know much less about Abinadab and Malchishua, Saul's other two sons. Saul had at least four sons (Jonathan, Abinadab, Malchishua and Ishbosheth—who is probably equivalent to Eshbaal) and two daughters, Merib and Michal (1Sam. 14:49 1Chron. 8:33). We also know that Jonathan has a son, Mephibosheth, who is still alive, as we will meet up with him in 2Sam. 9. Furthermore, one of Saul's sons is still alive—Ishbosheth (2Sam. 2:8).

Abinadab was a common name at that time; this was also the name for one of David's older brothers (1Sam. 16:8 17:13) and the name of the owner of the house where the Ark was kept (1Sam. 7:1). Abinadab ben Saul probably had the nickname Ishvi (1Sam. 14:49), as this is the first time he is referred to by the name Abinadab (he will be called by that name in the genealogy of Saul in 1Chron. 8–9). Apart from his place in Saul's line, we know nothing about Abinadab.

Malchishua is also only found in genealogical passages (apart from this one); so all we know about him is found here. He was a soldier in Saul's army and he died with his brothers in battle against the Philistines. Interestingly enough, God lets Saul live while his sons are slain.

There is a fourth son not found here: Ishbosheth (also known as Ishui). He is not too young to be at war along side his brothers (see 2Sam. 2:10). However, we don't find him here for the same reason that we don't find the president and vice president in the same place during times of crisis or during terrorist alerts. Saul had a bad feeling about all of this, as we could tell from his visit to the witch, and no doubt left his fourth son at home as a possible successor. It is likely that Saul did this for all the times he went out to war against the Philistines.

**And so great is the battle unto Saul and so find him the archers—men in the bow. And so he twists greatly from the archers.**

1Samuel  
31:3

**The battle was heavy against Saul and the archers—men with bows—came upon him. He trembled greatly [or, writhed in extreme pain] on account of the archers.**

**The battle went against Saul and the archers came upon him. He was in extreme fear of the archers [or, he was in extreme pain from being struck by their arrows].**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	And the whole weight of the battle was turned upon Saul: and the archers overtook him, and he was grievously wounded by the archers.
Masoretic Text	And so great is the battle unto Saul and so find him the archers—men in the bow. And so he twists greatly from the archers.
Peshitta	And the battle was intense against Saul, and the archers overtook him with bows, and he was exceedingly afraid of the archers.
Septuagint	And the battle prevails against Saul, and the shooters with arrows, even the archers find him, and he was wounded under the ribs.

Significant differences: The translations all vary somewhat as to the final sentence (or phrase). Only the Peshitta clearly suggests fear in Saul's heart, although the MT can be taken that way.

The Latin tells us that Saul was wounded; and the Greek tells us where he was wounded.

**Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

- CEV The Message The fighting was fierce around Saul, and he was badly wounded by enemy arrows. The battle was hot and heavy around Saul. The archers got his range and wounded him badly.
- NAB The battle raged around Saul, and the archers hit him; he was pierced through the abdomen.

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

- God’s Word™ The heaviest fighting was against Saul. When the archers got him in their range, he was badly wounded by them.
- JPS (1917) And the battle went sore against Saul, an the archers overtook him; and he was in great anguish by reason of the archers.
- JPS (Tanakh) The fighting grew fiercer around Saul; the archers came upon him, and he was severely wounded by the archers. [The last three words comes from v. 4].

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

- Updated Emphasized Bible And the battle clearly went against Saul, and the archers discovered him, —and he was terrified at the archers.
- HCSB When the battle intensified against Saul, the archers caught up with him and severely wounded him.
- WEB The battle went sore against Saul, and the archers overtook him; and he was greatly distressed by reason of the archers.
- Young’s Updated LT And the battle is hard against Saul, and the archers find him—men with bow—and he is pained greatly by the archers.

**What is the gist of this verse?** The battle goes against Saul and Philistine archers find him and possibly shoot him (this is unclear in the Hebrew). In any case, the archers cause Saul great pain—possibly emotion and possibly physical.

<b>1Samuel 31:3a</b>			
<b>Hebrew/Pronunciation</b>	<b>Common English Meanings</b>	<b>Notes/Morphology</b>	<b>BDB and Strong’s Numbers</b>
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong’s # BDB #253
kâbêd (כָּבֵד) [pronounced <i>kaw<sup>b</sup>-VADE</i> ]	<i>to honor, to glorify, to be great, to be vehement, to be heavy, weighty, burdensome</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong’s #3513 BDB #457
mil <sup>e</sup> châmâh (מִלְחָמָה) [pronounced <i>mil-khâw-MAW</i> ]	<i>battle, war</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong’s #4421 BDB #536
`el (עַל) [pronounced <i>e/</i> ]	<i>unto, in, into, toward, to, regarding, against</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong’s #413 BDB #39

## 1Samuel 31:3a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Shâ'ûwl (שׂוּל) [pronounced shaw-OOL]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982

**Translation:** [The battle was heavy against Saul...](#) This indicates that the war was going against Saul. He was unable to resist the Philistines; he was unable to escape. This general statement is an overview of the battle, which was being won by the Philistines.

## 1Samuel 31:3b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
mâtsâ' (מָצָא) [pronounced maw-TSAW]	<i>to attain to, to find, to detect, to happen upon, to come upon, to find unexpectedly, to discover</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #4672 BDB #592
yârâh (יָרָא) [pronounced yaw-RAWH]	<i>the shooters, the archers; the teachers, the instructors</i>	masculine plural, Hiphil participle; with the definite article	Strong's #3384 BDB #434

**Translation:** [...and the archers...came upon him.](#) The Philistine archers found him—they discovered him. Saul first was on the run during the battle; this indicates to us that he did some hiding as well—however, the archers of the Philistine army came across Saul—they discovered him. As we will come to note, what these archers do, is they shoot Saul. They may not even actually see that it is him or know that it is him; and they might even shoot him and move on—which appears to be the case (see v. 8). It is apparent by v. 8 that either Saul escapes or the archers do not realize that they hit him or they do not realize that Saul is the man that they have pierced. Let me suggest that they can see Saul on horseback with his servant, and they shoot some arrows in that direction. They may or may not know that it is Saul and they do not pursue him any further, as his dead body will not be discovered by the Philistines until the next day. Another possible scenario: Saul is escaping in the forest on Mount Gilboa. He is seen by the archers, who may not know who he is; and they shoot into the forested area and hit him. Or, let me offer an even more likely scenario; the archers knew who this was, they knew that they had killed Saul, but, these are dedicated and focused warriors. They continued pursuing the Israelite soldiers. At some point in time, they may have reported what they did—but, in any case, this was a situation where they did not stop, hold up Saul's dead body, and take in a Kodak moment.

There is another possibility: it is possible that these archers have not hit Saul, but have discovered where he was (whether they know or not who he actually is, is another discussion); and they are beginning to move in on him. Although, it is reasonable that he is riding a camel or something and they would be giving chase, the situation described herein sounds more like something which took place on the ground. My point (or one of them), in offering up several options as to what is happening is, too often, we get an exact scenario running through our heads of how this or that played out, when Scripture really does not tell us that. Sometimes, the result is, we find what we believe to be a contradiction. Here, we do not have that; I am simply offering up alternatives as to exactly the events which are taking place. Now, what I believe to be occurring is, Saul is on foot; he has been spotted by the archers, and he is in great fear, but not hit yet. He has about a minute before the archers get close enough to kill him. Commentators are divided on this, just as the translators are (although many translators, at this point, tell us that



the archers have *hit, pierced* or *struck* Saul—but the word means *to find, to discover, to come upon someone*. Most translators and commentators seem to believe that Saul has been actually hit with an arrow; but Keil and Delitzsch indicate that none of the words here can be taken to dogmatically mean that Saul has actually been wounded<sup>1</sup> (if you will look back at the Hebrew exegesis, you will see that this is true).

### 1Samuel 31:3c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾîysh (יִישׁ) [pronounced eesh]	<i>men; inhabitants, citizens; companions, soldiers, companions</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #376 BDB #35
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
qesheth (קֶשֶׁת) [pronounced KEH-sheth]	<i>bow; bowman, archer; strength, power; rainbow</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #7198 BDB #905

As far as I can tell, the gender of this noun is dependent upon the vowel points, as the consonants are identical (it is listed as a feminine singular noun in 1Sam. 18:4).

**Translation:** ... —men with bows— ... Since yârâh as a Hiphil participle in v. 3b can refer to *archers* or to *instructors*; just *who* the men are is emphasized here. These are *men with bows* (lit., *men with the bow*). Again, even though your translation may be clear on whether these men have struck Saul or not; it is not clear in the Hebrew.

### 1Samuel 31:3d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
chûwl (חָוַל) [pronounced khool]	<i>to turn, to turn around, to be twisted</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #2342 BDB #296

This word has a variety of Qal meanings, many of which proceed from the main meanings given (*to turn, to turn around, to be twisted*). Chûwl means ❶ *to dance [in a circle]*; ❷ *to be twisted, to be hurled [on or against something]*; ❸ *to twist oneself, to writhe, to writhe in pain* (used of giving birth—Isa. 26:17 45:10 51:2); ❹ *to bring forth [in birth]*; ❺ *to tremble* (probably from the palpitation of the heart—see 1Chron. 16:30, Psalm 96:9); ❻ *to be strong, to be firm*; ❼ *to wait, to stay, to delay*; ❽ *to spin, to rotate on an axis*. This latter meaning is closer to the basic meaning of the verb and is obviously very applicable to the planet earth (Psalm 114:7).

Although this is not an uncommon verb, it is found primarily in poetry. This is the only time we find this verb in 1Samuel. As far as the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles go, this verb is found once in 1 and 2 Samuel each and twice in Chronicles.

m <sup>e</sup> ôd (מְּוֹד) [pronounced m <sup>e</sup> -ODE]	<i>exceedingly, extremely, greatly, very</i>	adverb	Strong's #3966 BDB #547
---	--	--------	----------------------------

<sup>1</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; 1Sam. 31:2–6.

## 1Samuel 31:3d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i> ]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
yârâh (יָרְאוּ) [pronounced <i>yaw-RAWH</i> ]	<i>the shooters, the archers; the teachers, the instructors</i>	masculine plural, Hiphil participle; with the definite article	Strong's #3384 BDB #434

**Translation:** [He trembled greatly](#) [or, *writhed in extreme pain*] [on account of the archers](#). Although it does not say that Saul was actually struck with an arrow, this portion of v. 3 seems to indicate that he was. The verb probably indicates that Saul is twisting or writhing in great agony because of the archers, which indicates that he has been shot. All it takes is one well-placed arrow in order to cause this response in Saul. The other alternative is that Saul has not yet been hit with an arrow, but that he is desperately afraid. This verb could be understood in either sense. The Greek Septuagint, the Peshitta and the Latin Vulgate are early translations from the Hebrew into a more common language. As you see, Peshitta takes this verb to indicate that Saul is afraid because of the archers (who apparently are closing in fast on him—if great fear is the proper understanding of this verb). The Latin sees Saul as being mortally wounded by the arrows of the archers. The Greek actually indicates *where* Saul was hit; however, I do not have an explanation as to where that understanding came from.

I have gone into what you may consider to be too much detail concerning whether Saul had been hit with an arrow or not. The reason for this is, in the next book (2Sam. 1, which is not really a new book, but simply the next chapter in the book of Samuel), we have a very different explanation concerning Saul's death. We have to, in this chapter and the next, avoid making assumptions. In most of the translations—in probably the one that you use—it seems clear that Saul was wounded by these archers. However, if you use the 1917 JPS or the World English Bible, then it appears as though Saul is just twisted up with fear and trembling, which is a legitimate rendering of the Hebrew verb that we have here (see 1Chron. 16:30, Psalm 96:9).

Now I want you to recall what David said, when faced with the real option of killing Saul when Saul was helpless: [“As Jehovah lives, except Jehovah strike him, or his day shall come and he dies, or he goes down and is devoured in battle, far be it from me, by Jehovah, from putting forth my hand against the anointed of Jehovah. And now, please take the spear at his head-place, and the jar of water, and we will go”](#) (1Sam. 26:10–11). Even though Saul unjustly pursued David time and time again, David was able to put this in God's hands. When David said this, he could have killed Saul with a single blow; Saul was at his mercy. However, David had received no such guidance from God to remove this man who had become his enemy—therefore, he left it up to God to take Saul out of this life.

What does occur to me at this time is, how does David, who is probably the author of the book of Samuel, know the details of Saul's death? This requires some detective work. David will not immediately know the details of Saul's death from his Philistine sources; as we will find that out in 2Sam. 1. Someone will come to David and take responsibility for killing Saul, and David will take this man's word for it, and he will execute this man for killing Saul. Therefore, we need make certain that we do not take anything for granted in this chapter or the next, or the result will be a contradiction between the two adjacent chapters.

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to the Chart and Map Index](#)

## Saul and his Armor-bearer Commit Suicide During this Battle

1Chronicles 10:4–6

And so says Saul to [the one] bearing his articles “Draw out your sword and pierce me in her, lest come the foreskinned ones the these and pierce me and satisfy [their desire] in me.” And would not [the one] bearing his articles for he feared greatly. And so takes Saul the sword and so he falls upon her.

1Samuel  
31:4

Then said Saul to the one carrying his weapons, “Take out your sword and thrust me through with it, so that these uncircumcised [men] do not come and stab me and delight themselves because of me [or, *make sport of me*].” But his weapon carrier would not, because he was greatly afraid. So Saul then grabbed the sword and fell on it.

Saul then said to his armor bearer, “Take out your sword and kill me with it so that these uncircumcised Philistines do not take sport in killing me.” But his weapon bearer refused because he was afraid. Therefore, Saul grabbed the sword himself and fell on it.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	And so says Saul to [the one] bearing his articles “Draw out your sword and pierce me in her, lest come the foreskinned ones the these and pierce me and satisfy [their desire] in me.” And would not [the one] bearing his articles for he feared greatly. And so takes Saul the sword and so he falls upon her.
Peshitta	Then Saul said to his armorbearer, “Draw your sword and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised come and slay me and abuse me.” But his armorbearer would not; for he was exceedingly afraid. Thereupon, Saul took his sword and fell upon it.
Septuagint	And Saul said to his armour-bearer, “Draw your sword and pierce me through with it; lest these uncircumcised come and pierce me through, and mock me.” But his armour-bearer would not, for he feared greatly; so Saul took his sword and fell upon it.

Significant differences: None; except it is difficult to determine what Saul is worried about in the Hebrew, as the word allows for a couple of interpretations (which will be explained in the exegesis). In the Latin, his fear is that they would mock him.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Saul told the soldier who carried his weapons, "Kill me with your sword! I don't want those worthless Philistines to torture me and make fun." But the soldier was afraid to kill him. Saul then took out his own sword; he stuck the blade into his stomach, and fell on it.
The Message	Saul said to his weapon bearer, "Draw your sword and put me out of my misery, lest these pagan pigs come and make a game out of killing me." But his weapon bearer wouldn't do it. He was terrified. So Saul took the sword himself and fell on it.

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>God's Word</i> <sup>™</sup>	Saul told his armorbearer, "Draw your sword! Stab me, or these godless men will come, stab me, and make fun of me." But his armorbearer refused because he was terrified. So Saul took the sword and fell on it.
--------------------------------	--

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

HCSB

Then Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and run me through with it, or these uncircumcised men will come and run me through and torture me." But his armor-bearer would not do it because he was terrified. Then Saul took his sword and fell on it.

Young's Updated LT

And Saul says to the bearer of his weapons, "Draw your sword, and pierce me with it, lest they come—these uncircumcised—and have pierced me, and rolled themselves on me;" and the bearer of his weapons has not been willing, for he is greatly afraid, and Saul takes the sword, and falls upon it.

**What is the gist of this verse?** Saul asks his armor bearer to kill him before the uncircumcised Philistines come and do whatever their lust moves them to do. Saul's armor bearer is unwilling to do this, so Saul takes the sword falls upon it himself.

### 1Samuel 31:4a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
ʾamar (אמר) [pronounced aw-MARH]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
Shâ'ûwl (שׂוּל) [pronounced shaw-OOL]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
lâmed (ל) [pronounced lee]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
nâsâ' (נָסַא) [pronounced naw-SAW]	<i>lifting up, bearing, carrying; exalting; taking away</i>	Qal active participle	Strong's #5375 (and #4984) BDB #669
k <sup>o</sup> îy (כֹּי) [pronounced k <sup>o</sup> lee]	<i>manufactured good, artifact, article, utensil, vessel, weapon, armor, furniture, receptacle; baggage, valuables</i>	masculine plural noun with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3627 BDB #479

**Translation:** Then said Saul to the one carrying his weapons,... Saul is the king, and therefore, he has an abundance of weapons and armor which were carried by his assistant, his armor bearer, or weapons carrier. Saul is either in great fear or he has been pierced with an arrow and he now is concerned about what might happen, so he turned to his weapon bearer and asks him to kill him.

### 1Samuel 31:4b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shâlaph (שׂלַפ) [pronounced shaw-LAHF]	<i>to draw out, to draw off, to take out</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperative	Strong's #8025 BDB #1025

## 1Samuel 31:4b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
chereb (חֶרֶב) [pronounced <i>khe-RE<sup>b</sup>V</i> ]	<i>sword, knife, dagger; any sharp tool</i>	feminine singular noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #2719 BDB #352
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
dâqar (דָּקַר) [pronounced <i>daw-CAHR</i> ]	<i>to pierce, to pierce through, to thrust through</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperative; with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix	Strong's #1856 BDB #201
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #88

**Translation:** ...“Take out your sword and thrust me through with it,... He orders his weapons bearer to take out his sword (Saul says *your sword*) and orders him to pierce Saul with this sword. Saul sees himself as dead; he does not see any hope in this situation, so he asks his weapon carrier to kill him.

## 1Samuel 31:4c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
pen (וְ) [pronounced <i>pen</i> ]	<i>lest, peradventure, or else, in order to prevent, or, so that [plus a negative]</i>	conjunction	Strong's #6435 BDB #814
bôw' (בּוֹ) [pronounced <i>boh</i> ]	<i>to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #935 BDB #97
ʿârêl (עָרֵל) [pronounced <i>gaw-RAY</i> ]	<i>having foreskins, foreskinned ones; generally rendered uncircumcised [ones, men]</i>	masculine plural noun/adjective with the definite article	Strong's #6189 BDB #790
ʿêlleh (אֵלֶּה) [pronounced <i>KEHLleh</i> ]	<i>these, these things</i>	demonstrative plural adjective with the definite article	Strong's #428 BDB #41
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
dâqar (דָּקַר) [pronounced <i>daw-CAHR</i> ]	<i>to pierce, to pierce through, to thrust through</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal perfect; with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix	Strong's #1856 BDB #201

**Translation:** ...so that these uncircumcised [men] do not come and stab me... This is Saul's reasoning. At first, it seems illogical—kill them so these uncircumcised Philistines do not kill me. However, there is more to Saul's request than just this.

### 1Samuel 31:4d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿâlal (לָלַל) [pronounced ġaw-LAHL]	to satisfy thirst [akin to satisfying lust]; to satisfy one's mind [by doing what is in one's mind, including causing pain to someone or by making sport of them]; to act wantonly towards, to satisfy [sexual] thirst	3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural, Hithpael perfect	Strong's #5953 BDB #759

The original meaning was to have a great thirst and then to satisfy this thirst. It had come to mean to have a great desire or lust and then to satisfy that lust. When used of man, it means to satisfy one's lust [by causing pain to or making sport of another]; when used of God, it means to satisfy all that is in His mind by doing something. Gesenius adds the definitions to put forth all one's power; to expend one's power [in destroying another]; but I don't know that these are really accurate. They also suggest to act severely towards, to deal ruthlessly with, but these definitions really come more from the original meaning to satisfy one's thirst [lust, desire, thinking] and then doing whatever one wants to do.

b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>eth</sup> ]	in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within	a preposition of proximity with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix	No Strong's # BDB #88
---	---	--	--------------------------

The bēyth preposition is often used after the verb ʿâlal.

Although the bēyth preposition is primarily a preposition of proximity, it can also mean in, among, in the midst of; at, by, near, on, before, in the presence of, upon; with; to, unto, upon, up to; in respect to, on account of; because of; by means of, about, concerning.

**Translation:** ...and delight themselves because of me [or, make sport of me].” The verb used here actually covers a great deal of ground. It is a word originally used when one is extremely thirsty and is allowed to satisfy his thirst. It came to be used when one satisfies his lust (or, with regards to God, when God chooses to do all that He has planned to do). Generally speaking, what God or the person does is an act of aggression of some sort (whether God is being destructive; or man is raping). However, here the verb is used to indicate that these Philistines, after years and years of wars with Saul, will finally achieve their lifelong dream of having Saul at their complete mercy. They can, during the final minutes or hours of his life, do whatever they have wanted to do to him. They would hold him personally responsible for many defeats and for the deaths of their friends and relatives. Many Americans, after the 9/11 attacks, would have wanted just 5 minutes alone in a room with any terrorist associated with these attacks. This is how the Philistines felt and Saul knows this. He knows that they will do everything that they have lusted to do against him: make fun of him, humiliate him, torture him, hurt him in many ways.

If you will recall Samson near the end of the book of the Judges. The Philistines kept him in a prison and brought him out periodically for their amusement. He was the strongest man in the land, so it gave them great pleasure to mock him in his weakness. The same thing could have occurred with Saul. He could have been taken prisoner and made into a jester of sorts, to live out his life amusing Philistines. The words Saul uses here are vague as to the exact behavior that he could expect—but only because he had no idea what might happen to him. In those few

minutes (as well as the morning after returning from the necromancer), Saul knew that almost anything was possible in the realm of humiliation at the hands of these uncircumcised Philistines.

1Samuel 31:4e			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lô' (לא or לֹא) [pronounced low]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
ʾâbâh (אָבָה) [pronounced aw <sup>b</sup> -VAWH]	<i>to be willing, to consent</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #14 BDB #2
ʾâbâh with the negative means <i>to choose not to, not to be willing to, to refuse consent, to refuse, to refuse to do.</i>			
nâsâ' (נָשָׂא) [pronounced naw-SAW]	<i>lifting up, bearing, carrying; exalting; taking away</i>	Qal active participle	Strong's #5375 (and #4984) BDB #669
k <sup>e</sup> lîy (כֶּלִי) [pronounced k <sup>e</sup> lee]	<i>manufactured good, artifact, article, utensil, vessel, weapon, armor, furniture, receptacle; baggage, valuables</i>	masculine plural noun with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3627 BDB #479
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced kee]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
yârê' (יָרָא) [pronounced yaw-RAY]	<i>to fear, to fear-respect, to reverence, to have a reverential respect</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #3372 BDB #431
m <sup>e</sup> ôd (מְאֹד) [pronounced m <sup>e</sup> -ODE]	<i>exceedingly, extremely, greatly, very</i>	adverb	Strong's #3966 BDB #547

**Translation:** *But his weapon carrier would not, because he was greatly afraid.* Realize the situation that Saul and the weapon carrier are in. They are being pursued by the Philistines. The Philistines are just about on them. Saul has possibly been pierced with at least one arrow during the battle (although, this is in dispute). Their lives are about to end. Saul and his weapons carrier are both in a panic. At the end of his life, this assistant to Saul, is without any nerve, without any strength. Had he time for retrospection, he may have chosen to kill Saul. However, at this point, being faced with Saul's sudden request, this man could not kill the Lord's anointed. When you face death, you might choose not to do something which you perceive as being wrong as your final act before dying. I believe this is how Saul's assistant felt.

1Samuel 31:4f			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253

## 1Samuel 31:4f

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâqach (לָקַח) [pronounced law-KAHKH]	<i>to take, to take away, to take in marriage; to seize</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #3947 BDB #542
Shâ'ûwl (שׂוּאָל) [pronounced shaw-OOL]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
ʿêth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]	generally untranslated; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
chereb (חֶרֶב) [pronounced khe-RE <sup>BV</sup> ]	<i>sword, knife, dagger; any sharp tool</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #2719 BDB #352

**Translation:** *So Saul then grabbed the sword...* This indicates to me that Saul did not even carry a sword himself. He does not grab a sword, but he grabs the sword, the sword to which he had referred, the sword in the possession of his assistant. At this point in time, Saul actually did very little of the fighting himself; therefore, he would have his assistant carry all of his weapons, most of which he never used anymore. By the way, Dr. Delaney and Clarke both attest to Saul grabbing his armor bearer's sword.<sup>2</sup> However, they further state that the weapon bearer also killed himself with the same sword. That is a reasonable explanation; but it assumes that there is only one sword available to them. *His sword* in the next verse could refer to the sword of the armor bearer rather than to Saul's sword specifically.<sup>3</sup>

## 1Samuel 31:4g

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וּ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
nâphal (נָפַל) [pronounced naw-FAHL]	<i>to fall, to lie, to die a violent death, to be brought down, to settle, to sleep deeply</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5307 BDB #656
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced gahl]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular suffix	Strong's #5921 BDB #752

**Translation:** *...and fell on it.* Saul holds up the sword and falls down upon it, killing himself. At least, that appears to be what is happening here. The verb means *to fall on, to die a violent death*; so the meaning appears to be unequivocal here. We've argued both sides of the arrow wounding in the previous verse; however, I don't think we

<sup>2</sup> Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, 1Sam. 31:4.

<sup>3</sup> According to Jewish tradition, the armor bearer in this case is Doeg (remember him?). No idea if this is true or not. I think the idea was that, he died by the same sword that he used against the priests of God. Very poetic justice, but without Biblical support. Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, 1Sam. 31:4. Also Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, 1Sam. 31:4. Clark points out that Brutus and Cassius killed themselves with the same swords as killed Cæsar; but that *fact* is not sufficient to prove this assertion.



can argue two sides of this. However, just so you know, Josephus claimed that Saul was unsuccessful in his suicide attempt.<sup>4</sup> One might even argue that Saul seemed dead to his armor bearer, who then killed himself.

I have mentioned 2Sam. 1 already, and implied that there is a slightly different story about Saul's death in that chapter. There is. When we exegete that passage, I will smooth out any problems which you might have. Also, at the point, we will discuss David's authorship, as well as how he knew the details of this particular chapter.

At this point, it might be beneficial to examine...

<b>Saul's Failures</b>	
<b>Scripture</b>	<b>Incident</b>
1Sam. 13:8–14	Saul, unwilling to wait on Samuel (which indicates an unwillingness to wait upon God), offered up a sacrifice himself to God, without going through the priest Samuel. Samuel arrives and tells Saul that his kingdom would not endure and that God would find for Himself a man after His Own heart.
1Sam. 14:24–46	Saul, for no reason, put the people of his army under an oath not to eat until their enemy was taken out. Jonathan, not hearing this oath (Saul apparently did not broadcast this as well as he should), ate some honey during a battle. Saul was then put in the position, as a king, of either killing his son, Jonathan, who was the hero at that time against the Philistines, or going back on his vow.
1Sam. 15:1–35	Samuel made it very clear to Saul that he was to wipe out the Amalekites and destroy everything that belonged to them. Saul kept some of them alive, allowed many to escape, and kept back the best of their possessions. Samuel made it very clear that, because Saul reject the Word of God, God would reject him as king. Samuel told Saul that his kingdom would be given to <i>his neighbor</i> , indicating that the line of Israel's kings would not continue through Saul.
1Sam. 17:1–11, 31–39	Saul and his army faced off the Philistine army, and Goliath stood out in front of them, day after day, asking to do battle with any Israelite. This would have been a call to either Saul or Jonathan to stand up against this Philistine. The key is, this was a not between Israel and Philistia, but between God and those who opposed Him. David stepped up and saved the day here.
1Sam. 18:6–29	Saul became jealous of David and hated David and these mental attitude sins motivated Saul to do a number of evil things against David. He attempted to kill David himself; he promised David marriage to his daughter, and then allowed her to marry someone else. When his younger daughter fell in love with David, Saul used that to try to get David killed.
1Sam. 19:9–24	Saul again tried to personally kill David; when that did not work, he sent assassins to David's home. When David escaped, Saul attempted to go after David.
1Sam. 20:25–34	Saul did nothing to keep his mental attitude sins against David in check and he even made an attempt on the life of his son for supporting David.
1Sam. 22	Saul finds out that David has been in Nob, the city of the priests, and he wipes these priests out, as he assumes that they helped David against his wishes.
1Sam. 24	Saul continues to pursue David. When David has the chance to kill Saul, but does not, Saul becomes a blubbering mess, vowing never to harm David and obtaining an oath from David not to hurt his family.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, 1Sam. 31:4. He took this from Antiquities I. 6. c. 14. sect. 7.

<b>Saul's Failures</b>	
<b>Scripture</b>	<b>Incident</b>
1Sam. 26	Saul again pursues David and David again has the chance to kill him, but he does not. At the end, Saul again recognizes David's personal integrity. The only reason that Saul does not pursue David again is, David goes into Philistine territory (1Sam. 27:4).
1Sam. 28	Saul, afraid of the Philistines in an upcoming battle, seeks the advice of Samuel through a spirit medium. He is told that he would die on the battlefield the next day.
1Sam. 31:1-4	Saul, when faced with dying at the hands of his Philistine enemies, commits suicide. His body is defaced, so to speak, by the Philistines.

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

**And so sees [one] bearing his articles that was dead Saul and so falls also he upon his sword and so he dies with him.**

1Samuel  
31:5

**So his weapons carrier saw that Saul was dead so he also fell upon his sword and died with him.**

**When his weapons bearer realized that Saul was dead, he also fell upon his own sword and died as well.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

**Ancient texts:**

Masoretic Text                      And so sees [one] bearing his articles that was dead Saul and so falls also he upon his sword and so he dies with him.

Septuagint                              And his armour-bearer saw that Saul was dead, and he fell also himself upon his sword, and died with him.

Significant differences:              None.

**Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

CEV    When the soldier knew that Saul was dead, he killed himself in the same way.

The Message                              When the weapon bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him.

NLT    When his armor bearer realized that Saul was dead, he fell on his own sword and died beside the king.

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

*God's Word*<sup>TM</sup>                              When the armorbearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword and died with him.

JPS (Tanakh)                              When his arms-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

HCSB    When his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his own sword and died with him.

Young's Updated LT

And the bearer of his weapons sees that Saul is dead, and he falls—he also—on his sword, and dies with him.

**What is the gist of this verse?** The armor bearer observes that Saul is dead, falls on his own sword, and dies with him.

1Samuel 31:5a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
râ`âh (רָאָה) [pronounced raw-AWH]	<i>to see, to look, to look at, to view, to behold; to perceive, to understand, to learn, to know</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7200 BDB #906
nâsâ` (נָשָׂא) [pronounced naw-SAW]	<i>lifting up, bearing, carrying; exalting; taking away</i>	Qal active participle	Strong's #5375 (and #4984) BDB #669
k <sup>e</sup> lîy (כֶּלִי) [pronounced k <sup>e</sup> lee]	<i>manufactured good, artifact, article, utensil, vessel, weapon, armor, furniture, receptacle; baggage, valuables</i>	masculine plural noun with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3627 BDB #479
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced kee]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
mûwth (מוּת) [pronounced mooth]	<i>to die; to perish, to be destroyed</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #4191 BDB #559
Shâ`ûwl (שָׁאוּל) [pronounced shaw-OOL]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982

**Translation:** So his weapons carrier saw that Saul was dead... The weapons bearer was in a panic like Saul, but seeing Saul dead caused him to quickly reevaluate his options. Again, his actions are almost reflex, more than the result of careful consideration.

Those who claim that Saul did not die, say that the armor bearer *thought* that Saul was dead.

1Samuel 31:5b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
nâphal (נָפַל) [pronounced naw-FAHL]	<i>to fall, to lie, to die a violent death, to be brought down, to settle, to sleep deeply</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5307 BDB #656

## 1Samuel 31:5b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
gam (גַּם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i> ]	<i>also, furthermore, in addition to, even, moreover</i>	adverb	Strong's #1571 BDB #168
hûw' (הוּא) [pronounced <i>hoo</i> ]	<i>he, it</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i> ]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
chereb (חֶרֶב) [pronounced <i>khe-RE<sup>BV</sup></i> ]	<i>sword, knife, dagger; any sharp tool</i>	feminine singular noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #2719 BDB #352

**Translation:** *...so he also fell upon his sword...* It is unclear whether this is the same sword that Saul had or whether this man had his own sword (I suspect that he carried at least two swords and that one sword was for his own use in a battle). It would make little sense if Saul was in trouble for them to have but one sword between them (although this is the scenario painted by some commentators). Given that there was little time left, and given that Saul was laying face down with a sword through him, the most reasonable conclusion is not that this man took the sword out of Saul, but had another which he used. Given that Saul is king and chief over all Israel's armed forces, it would seem logical that he would have at least two swords available to him.

## 1Samuel 31:5c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
mûwth (מָוַת) [pronounced <i>mooth</i> ]	<i>to die; to perish, to be destroyed</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #4191 BDB #559
ʿîm (עִם) [pronounced <i>geem</i> ]	<i>with, at, by, near</i>	preposition of nearness and vicinity with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5973 BDB #767

**Translation:** *...and died with him.* Probably within a minute, Saul's armor bearer had also died. The way this reads, is that the armor bearer died along with Saul. Even though, this would barely allow for Saul to die around the same time (maybe an hour later), that hardly seems to be the meaning (if you have not read ahead, you might wonder why I am even suggesting such a thing—for someone reading this passage, it should seem clear that Saul has died). I mention this other viewpoint right here, because this is how some manage to get this and he following chapter to agree.

As mentioned in a footnote, Jewish tradition has it that Doeg was Saul's armor bearer and they both die by the same sword used to kill all of the priests. As poetic and karmic as that might be, we have no evidence of this. It is even unlikely, as I have pointed out, for them to die by the same sword.<sup>5</sup>

At this point, we should examine the **Doctrine of Suicide**.

And, just in case you did not look up this doctrine,...

### A Summary of the Doctrine of Suicide

1. Suicide, the act of taking one's own life, is the final act of a rebellious soul against God's sovereignty. It is God Who gives us life and it is God's prerogative to remove life.
2. Samson's death is mistakenly called by some a suicide. You may recall that he was kept as a slave by the Philistines and humiliated in the final days of his life. He asked God to allow him to die and to take many of the Philistine nobles with him. In this situation, it is important to realize that Samson made his prayer clear, and only God could give him the strength to carry out such a request. Sampson was willing to die in this one last assault against Israel's enemies and against those who would attempt to pry the Land of Promise from Israeli control. Given all of this, it is clear that Samson's final act was approved of by God. See Judges 16
3. By the way, that no one tries to draw a parallel between Samson's final act and the vicious acts of suicide bombers today, Saul's death did not result in the random death of innocents, but in the deaths of the enemies of Israel. Again, the strength given him was supernatural and given to him by God.
4. Being in pain and misery sometimes results in a believer asking God to take his life.
  - a. Jonah was miserable and asked for God to take his life (Jonah 4:3), but he did not take his own life nor did he ask anyone else to take it. In asking to be put off the ship, he did this not as a suicide attempt, but to protect those of the ship, who were in great danger because he was aboard.
  - b. Job was miserable; although he did not ask for God to take his life, he made the incredible statement, "Yet though He slay me, I will still trust Him!" (Job 13:15a). Job gives the correct perspective, equating life and death.
5. On the other hand, there are several suicides recorded in Scripture where no such approval is given:
  - a. We have studied Saul carefully and it is clear that he has not been in fellowship for a very long time. There is no way that any decision that he makes could be considered honorable or in God's will (apart from his willingness to lead his men into battle—which appeared to be followed by a quick retreat). It is clear that Saul would die in this battle. God through Samuel had told him this (1 Sam. 28:19). Therefore, Saul's best choice would be to die fighting and to take out as many Philistines as possible in his last battle. Since he was going to die that day, whatever sport the Philistines would have made of him would not have been like that practiced against Samson. Instead, Saul chose the coward's way out and fell upon his own sword.
  - b. Finally, the most famous suicide of all in Scripture is that of Judas Iscariot. He betrayed Jesus in the garden, received the silver for his sin, and regretted his wrongdoing so much that he hanged himself (Matt. 27:3–10).
  - c. There are five examples of suicide or attempted suicide in the Bible and none of them have the explicit approval of God.
6. Some final points on suicide:
  - a. We do not find a specific commandment against suicide in Scripture. However, it is clear that we are not to murder (Deut. 5:17).
  - b. God has control over life and death (Deut. 32:39 Job 1:21).
  - c. It is clear that we are not our own, but that we have been bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:19–20 7:23).
  - d. Suicide is an attempt to remove God's sovereignty over this matter. We have free will, so, quite obviously, we can act against God's will.
  - e. Therefore, we do not have the right to remove ourselves from this life.

<sup>5</sup> One justification given for this is the murderers of Julius Cæsar killed themselves with the same dagger that they used to assassinate him. Sucton. Vit. Cæsar. c. 89.

## A Summary of the Doctrine of Suicide

7. Can you lose your salvation by suicide? Emphatically no! Salvation is based upon what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross; not upon our pathetic lives which follow believing in Jesus Christ. Every believer sins and some believers sin a great deal after salvation. Most believers get out of fellowship within the first five minutes of salvation and never get back into fellowship. Now, they might act religious and they might act better after salvation than they did before (or not); but the issue here is eternal security—every believer is eternally held by Jesus Christ, and there is nothing that we can do to get out of His hand when it comes to salvation.

**And so dies Saul and three of his sons and a bearer of his articles—also all his men—in the day the that together.**

1Samuel  
31:6

**So Saul died, along with [lit., and] three of his sons, his weapons carrier—also, all of his men—in that day together.**

**So Saul, three of his sons, his armor bearer and all of his men died on that same day together.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Ancient texts:

**Peshitta** So Saul died, and his three sons and his armorbearer and also all his servants, that same day together.

**Septuagint** So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armour-bearer, in that day together.

**Significant differences:** In the LXX, only Saul, his three sons and his armor carrier die (only they are mentioned). In the Peshitta, *all his servants* are part of those who die. The Latin and MT are identical.

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

**CEV** Saul was dead, his three sons were dead, and the soldier who carried his weapons was dead. They and all his soldiers died on that same day.

**The Message** So Saul, his three sons, and his weapon bearer--the men closest to him--died together that day.

**NLT** So Saul, three of his sons, his armor-bearer, and his troops all died together that same day.

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

**God's Word™** So Saul, his three sons, his armorbearer, and all his men died together that day.

**JPS (Tanakh)** Thus Saul and his three sons and his arms-bearer, as well as all his men [lacking in the Septuagint; 1Chron. 10:6 reads "all his house"] died together on that day.

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

**ESV** Thus Saul died, and his three sons, and his armor-bearer, and all his men, on the same day together.

**Young's Updated LT** And Saul dies, and three of his sons, and the bearer of his weapons, also all his men, on that day together.

**What is the gist of this verse?** Saul, three of his four sons, his armor bearer and his soldiers all died on that same day together.

## 1Samuel 31:6a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
mûwth (מת) [pronounced mooth]	<i>to die; to perish, to be destroyed</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #4191 BDB #559
Shâ`ûwl (שׂוּל) [pronounced shaw-OOL]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
sh <sup>e</sup> lôshâh (שְׁלוֹשָׁה) [pronounced shiloh-SHAW]	<i>a three, a trio, a triad, a threesome</i>	feminine numeral construct	Strong's #7969 BDB #1025.
bên (בן) [pronounced bane]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine plural noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #1121 BDB #119

**Translation:** *So Saul died, along with [lit., and] three of his sons,...* This verse summarizes what has just happened, so that there are no misunderstandings. Saul and his soldiers were obviously losing and retreating. Saul falls on his own sword and we are told here that he dies.

Saul had at least four sons, and three of them died in battle with him, as named in v. 2. Again, this verse summarizes what we already know.

## 1Samuel 31:6b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
nâsâ` (נָסַא) [pronounced naw-SAW]	<i>lifting up, bearing, carrying; exalting; taking away</i>	Qal active participle	Strong's #5375 (and #4984) BDB #669
k <sup>e</sup> îy (כֵּי) [pronounced ke'lee]	<i>manufactured good, artifact, article, utensil, vessel, weapon, armor, furniture, receptacle; baggage, valuables</i>	masculine plural noun with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3627 BDB #479

**Translation:** *...his weapons carrier...* Saul's armor bearer carried all of Saul's weapons, and, although he would not kill King Saul, he did fall on his own sword when he saw that Saul had killed himself (vv. 4–5). Interestingly enough, this phrase is not found in the Hebrew of 1Chron. 10:6.

## 1Samuel 31:6c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
gam (גַּם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i> ]	<i>also, furthermore, in addition to, even, moreover</i>	adverb	Strong's #1571 BDB #168
Two early printed editions, the Syriac and the Vulgate have <i>yea, and all of his men</i> here. <sup>6</sup>			
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i> ]	with a plural noun, it is rendered <i>all of; any of</i>	masculine singular construct with a masculine plural noun	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
ʿîysh (אִישׁ) [pronounced <i>eesh</i> ]	<i>men; inhabitants, citizens; companions; soldiers, followers</i>	masculine plural noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #376 BDB #35

**Translation:** ...—also, all of his men [or, companions]—... This is the only contested portion of this verse. In the Latin and Hebrew, we find *all of his men*; in the Greek, this is missing altogether; in the Aramaic, we have *all his servants* (which would be another way of referring to his men). In the parallel passage, 1Chron. 10:6, it reads *all of his house*. His youngest son is not with him in battle, so he did not die. Apparently, there are other relatives of Saul who could be considered heirs to the throne, those of his household, who died in battle.

Keil and Delitzsch suggest: *not all the warriors who went out with him to battle [died in battle], but all the king's servants, or all the members of his house, who had taken part in the battle. Neither Abner nor his son Ishbosheth was included, for the latter was not in the battle; and although the former was Saul's cousin and commander-in-chief he did not belong to his house or servants.*<sup>7</sup> Possibly, the thrust of this portion of this verse is that, any possible heir to Saul was killed in battle (apart from his youngest son and Abner).

Since the Israelite soldiers were retreating, it is clear that many of them died. Whether it is all of his soldiers or not is not known, because of the difference in the ancient versions. However, given that these soldiers went along with Saul and his schemes to destroy David, and that they did so again and again, it makes sense that God would take them out as well.

We will later find out that Abner, one of Saul's generals, is still alive. Whether he escaped in this battle, meaning that not everyone died; or whether, for whatever reason, he did not accompany Saul (which would seem quite unusual), is unknown. Enough of the army died in this battle to make it as though all of them died. Perhaps the casualty rate was 70–95% for those who remained or were pressed against Mount Gilboa. As we will find out in the next verse, a significant number of soldiers escaped to the other side of the Jordan.

## 1Samuel 31:6d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Bryant Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible*; ©1971 by Kregel Publications; p. 321.

<sup>7</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; 1Sam. 31:2–6. Actually, Abner is Saul's uncle; which lineage we covered in great detail in 1Sam. 14:51.



### 1Samuel 31:6d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
yôwm (יּוֹם) [pronounced <i>yohm</i> ]	<i>day; time; today</i> (with a definite article)	masculine singular noun with a definite article	Strong's #3117 BDB #398
hûw' (הוּא) [pronounced <i>hoo</i> ]	<i>that</i>	masculine singular, demonstrative pronoun (with a definite article)	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
The bêyth preposition, yôwm and hûw (with definite articles) mean <i>in that day, on that day, in [on] the same day</i> .			
yachad (יַחַד) [pronounced <i>YAH-khahd</i> ]	<i>together, alike, all together; union, junction, mutually, with one another; equally</i>	adverb	Strong's #3162 BDB #403
There are several slightly different spellings of this adverb.			

**Translation:** [...in that day together](#). In one day, all of Israel changed. Their army had been soundly defeated, the king and his heirs had been killed, and the Israeli army had been decimated.

With this verse, we end the reign of Saul, but not the reign of his house. For awhile, Ishbosheth, his fourth son, will reign over northern Israel (2Sam. 2:8–4:8).

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to the Chart and Map Index](#)

## The Philistines Defeat the Israelites and Display the Dead Bodies of Saul and his Sons

*1Chronicles 10:7–10*

And so see men of Israel that in a region beyond the valley and that in a region beyond the Jordan that fled men of Israel and that died Saul and his sons, and so they let go of the cities and so they flee and so come Philistines and so they stay in them.

1Samuel  
31:7

And [when] the men of Israel who [were] beyond the valley and who [were] beyond the Jordan saw that the soldiers [or men] of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities and they fled. Then the Philistines came and lived in them.

When the men of Israel who lived beyond the valley and beyond the Jordan saw that the soldiers of Israel had fled from the Philistines, they forsook their own cities and fled. Then the Philistines came and lived in those cities.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

**Ancient texts:**

Masoretic Text

And so see men of Israel that in a region beyond the valley and that in a region beyond the Jordan that fled men of Israel and that died Saul and his sons, and so they let go of the cities and so they flee and so come Philistines and so they stay in them.

Septuagint And the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley, and those beyond Jordan, saw that the men of Israel fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead; and they leave their cities and flee: and the Philistines come and dwell in them.

Significant differences: None.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV The Israelites on the other side of Jezreel Valley and the other side of the Jordan learned that Saul and his sons were dead. They saw that the Israelite army had run away. So they ran away too, and the Philistines moved into the towns the Israelites had left behind.

The Message When the Israelites in the valley opposite and those on the other side of the Jordan saw that their army was in full retreat and that Saul and his sons were dead, they left their cities and ran for their lives. The Philistines moved in and occupied the sites.

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™ When the people of Israel on the other side of the valley and across the Jordan River saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned their cities. So the Philistines came to live in these cities.

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

WEB When the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley, and those who were beyond the Jordan, saw that the men of Israel fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities, and fled; and the Philistines came and lived in them.

Young's Updated LT And they see—the men of Israel, who are beyond the valley, and who are beyond the Jordan—that the men of Israel have fled, and that Saul and his sons have died, and they forsake the cities and flee, and Philistines come in, and dwell in them.

**What is the gist of this verse?** The men outside of the battle observed that Saul and his sons died, and that the soldiers retreated; therefore, they left their cities and the Philistines came and lived in those cities.

The sentence structure is moderately difficult here. For the English to make the most sense, we will place the main verb from the first part of this verse to where it better belongs, after the entire subject, which is rather lengthy. We find the phrase *men of Israel* twice in this verse—but it refers specifically to non-soldiers the first time and to soldiers the second time. The third problem is, the men of Israel do not see those who are beyond the valley and beyond the Jordan—*those who are beyond the valley and beyond the Jordan* is a very long relative clause referring back to the first men of Israel.

### 1Samuel 31:7a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
râ`âh (רָאָה) [pronounced raw-AWH]	<i>to see, to look, to look at, to view, to behold; to perceive, to understand, to learn, to know</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7200 BDB #906

## 1Samuel 31:7a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾiysh (יִשָּׁאִי) [pronounced eesh]	<i>men; inhabitants, citizens; companions, soldiers, followers</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #376 BDB #35
Yisʿrāʾêl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced yis-raw-ALE]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975
ʾāsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced uh-SHER]	<i>that, which, when, who</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
bē (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
ʿēber (עֵבֶר) [pronounced ĠAY <sup>b</sup> -ver]	<i>region beyond [across]; region on the other side [of a valley, stream, sea]; the opposite region [side]; beyond, side</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #5676 BDB #719
The bēyth preposition with the masculine noun ʿēber literally mean <i>in the opposite region, in the opposite side</i> ; together, they often act as the single preposition <i>beyond, on the other side of</i> .			
ʿemeq (עֵמֶק) [pronounced ĠEH-mek]	<i>valley, vale, lowland, deepening, depth</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #6010 BDB #770

**Translation:** *And [when] saw the men of Israel who [were] beyond the valley...* As mentioned before, what these men see will not be found until we move further into this verse. That is, they do not see *those who live beyond the valley*; the men of Israel here are those civilians who live beyond the valley. I have two different pictures in my head as to what is occurring. As the soldiers retreat, men of other cities see them retreating, running past their cities. The other possibility is, the men in these verses are like modern-day reporters. The valley is where this battle takes place; just as a reporter might record the events of a war and then broadcast those events via one medium or another, there were men who had a similar function (or, who took on to themselves this particular function). From the sidelines, hidden from those at war, they observed the battle, and then they ran and reported to their particular city what they had observed. So, what we have here are men who lived in cities outside the periphery of this particular battle, and they are watching from a safe distance. What is actually happening may even be a combination of the two.

In any case, these men come from outside the valley. The valley is where this battle more or less took place. It appears as though the battle took place more against the northwestern slopes of Mount Gilboa as the Israelites retreated and the Philistines advanced. The idea is, these men have to know what is going to happen with their cities, their wives and their children—what happens here will determine that.

## 1Samuel 31:7b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wāw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251

## 1Samuel 31:7b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced uh-SHER]	<i>that, which, when, who</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
bē (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
ʿêber (עֵבֶר) [pronounced ĠAY <sup>B</sup> -ver]	<i>region beyond [across]; region on the other side [of a valley, stream, sea]; the opposite region [side]; beyond, side</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #5676 BDB #719
The bēyth preposition with the masculine noun ʿêber literally mean <i>in the opposite region, in the opposite side</i> ; together, they often act as the single preposition <i>beyond, on the other side of</i> .			
Yâr <sup>e</sup> dên (יַרְדֵּן) [pronounced yar <sup>e</sup> -DAYN]	transliterated <i>Jordan</i>	proper noun (with the definite article)	Strong's #3383 BDB #434

**Translation: ...and who [were] beyond the Jordan...** This indicates that there were men there who were from the other side of the Jordan who were also observing the battle—or, at least the retreat. Again, there are two possibilities here: the soldiers retreat as far as the other side of the Jordan<sup>8</sup> and are observed by the people of that area; or the men mentioned here are representatives from the other side of the border observing the war—which result they will report back.

Now, before you are too quick to condemn and say, “They should have joined into the battle” recall that these are men who have a responsibility to entire cities of men, women and children. Charlie Brown might be there from Gilgal by the Jordan; and all the residents of Gilgal are anxiously waiting his report to find out how the battle is going. Everyone in that city are dependent upon his report. If he does not return to them, the Philistines could march into Gilgal, which has little or no defenses, and take the city out, and kill, torture and rape those living there. When Charlie Brown returns to his city with the bad news that Israel’s army has been clearly defeated, that gives those in the city the option to flee from their city. This, of course, assumes that the men mentioned in this verse are runners—the ancient version of news reporters.

I should also mention, if we are dealing with *reporters* here, then I would have expected to find the *min* preposition used here instead of the *bēyth* preposition. This means that they would be *from* beyond the Jordan instead of being *beyond the Jordan*. The implication of the text seems to be, and I am not being dogmatic here, the retreat of Israel’s soldiers covered a huge area, and extended to east of the Jordan. It is possible that these men mentioned in this verse still functioned as ancient reporters, but from a position closer to their own cities.

<sup>8</sup> Since some of you study the same sources that I do, Gill tells us that this could mean either side of the Jordan (Dr. John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, 1Sam. 31:7). The phrase found here is clearly used for the east side of the Jordan. Num. 22:1 32:19 34:15 35:14 Deut. 1:1, 5 3:8, 20, 3:25 4:41, 46–47, 49.

## 1Samuel 31:7c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i> ]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
nûwç (נָוַח) [pronounced <i>noose</i> ]	<i>to flee, to flee from, to escape, to depart, to hasten quickly [away]</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #5127 BDB #630
îysh (אִישׁ) [pronounced <i>eesh</i> ]	<i>men; inhabitants, citizens; companions, soldiers, followers</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #376 BDB #35
Yis <sup>e</sup> râ <sup>e</sup> l (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced <i>yis-raw-ALE</i> ]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975

**Translation:** ...[saw] that the soldiers [or men] of Israel had fled... Those who are observing this battle from the sidelines observe two things: first of all the army of Israel retreat. You may recall that earlier in this chapter, that is sounded as though all of the men died. That does not appear to be the case. Certainly, a retreat was mounted because many were dying in battle; but we are clearly told here that the Israeli army is in retreat. Since these soldiers are still retreating east of the Jordan River, it is clear that many of them are still alive. Only live soldiers are able to retreat.

## 1Samuel 31:7d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וְ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i> ]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
mûwth (מָוַת) [pronounced <i>mooth</i> ]	<i>to die; to perish, to be destroyed</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #4191 BDB #559
Shâ <sup>u</sup> wl (שָׁאוּל) [pronounced <i>shaw-OOL</i> ]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וְ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
bên (בֵּן) [pronounced <i>bane</i> ]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine plural noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #1121 BDB #119

**Translation:** ...and that Saul and his sons were dead,... On the other hand, the second observation is that Saul, the king of Israel, and his sons, those in line for the throne, had all died (actually, 3 of his sons). We do not know how this observation took place. If these were men who stationed themselves away from the battle, but close enough to see, this makes perfect sense. However, this could have also been determined by interviewing some retreating soldiers that they give shelter to (or join with in their retreat).

Our favorite son, Jonathan, had also died in battle. Although we do not know how he was perceived publically, I suspect that Jonathan had a large support base from which he could have become king of Israel. Now, you may look back in previous chapters and say, “But Jonathan was clearly in favor of David ruling over Israel.” Yes, and at that time, Jonathan was sincere and he meant that. For the recorded life of Jonathan, we know that he was a great man—one of the greatest and most grace-oriented<sup>9</sup> in all of Israel. But recall, Saul started off as a very good king; and then his mental illness took over. Jonathan is Saul’s son. We do not know what may have happened to him later in his life. Maybe God removed Jonathan at this point because his future was not going to be as great as his past. My father died when I was young, and he was a great father in many respects. I occasionally wonder if it would have been better that he lived longer and then, for whatever reason, failed greatly as a father or as a husband. My memories of my father are wonderful memories; my memories of my parents’ marriage is wonderful and rich with lessons of devotion and love. What would be best? What if he lived longer, but through a character defect, through his old sin nature, failed greatly as a father or as a husband? Which would be best? I don’t know that he would have failed, but I do know that God removed him at the right time, and for reasons concerning which I can only speculate. This is God’s time for Jonathan. We remember him as one of the greatest men of Israel. We know what happened to his father. No one looks back at Saul and thinks, “What a great king!” But Saul was a very good king for the first part of his rule. And then, he went downhill; and he slid down to a point to where he had become God’s enemy. Jonathan has been removed and this is part of God’s plan. We do not know why, although we can certainly speculate. However, we know that it was God’s time and God’s timing is perfect.

**Tangent/Application:** J. Vernon McGee lived a long, and wonderful life. I don’t know how many times he went through the entire Bible on the radio prior to his death—was it two times or more? But God chose to take McGee when I am sure he had more years left in him, as well as the dedication to continue God’s marvelous work. McGee’s work was completed; he had come to the point where his ministry would impact tens of thousands of people long after he had died. Now, this was not because McGee was a great, unimpeachable person. More than anyone I have heard, McGee was frank about his weaknesses, his foibles and his own imperfections and doubts. But what he recognized was, there was nothing greater than the Word of God, and J. Vernon McGee spent his life getting the Word of God out to all who were positive toward his message. He had this tremendous gift of being able to take complex and confusing doctrines and he could boil them down to concepts that almost anyone could understand. His Texas drawl and easy going manner belied a man of great intellect. I recall driving in the car with a friend, and turning him on, and the moment she heard his Texas tongue, she demanded that I turn him off, as she associated his drawl with ignorance or with the lame preaching that we find so often in the media. But this was a great man, whose life was the Word of God. But, when his work was completed, God took him. God has a perfect time for us to go. I don’t know when my time is; I know that I do not deserve the time and grace given to me by God. I disappoint myself almost every day. But I also recognize that God will take me in His own time—it might be a minute from now and it might be 50 years from now. But, even though I am not always as confident and easy-going about death as I should be, I also know that God has perfect timing and that I can trust His timing—with my death and with the deaths of those I love.

### 1Samuel 31:7e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong’s # BDB #253
ʿâzab (אָזַב) [pronounced <i>gaw-ZA<sup>BV</sup></i> ]	<i>to loosen ones bands; to let go [one from being in bonds]; to leave [forsake, desert]; to leave off, to cease from [anything]</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong’s #5800 BDB #736

<sup>9</sup> Or, *humble*.

## 1Samuel 31:7e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿêth (תָּא) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	generally untranslated; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
ʿîyr (עִיר) [pronounced <i>geer</i> ]	<i>encampment, city, town</i>	feminine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #5892 BDB #746

**Translation:** ...they forsook the cities... This refers to those who observed the battle going against Israel and to those who they reported back to. Any city near the battle left; in fact, this tells us that even some of those on the other side of the Jordan left their cities. Israel had quite a bit of land compared to the Philistines; and now the Philistines, having defeated Israel's army, could pick and choose at will where they wanted to live. Here, they pick up and leave this land, retreating further south or east. They had no recourse. Saul had, throughout his life, saw men he determined were good for soldiers, and drafted them on the spot. There were not many left behind who had these capabilities. There was no staying behind to fight, as those who were trained to fight are clearly routed. The men left at the very best could evacuate their families.

## 1Samuel 31:7f

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
nûwç (נָוּחַ) [pronounced <i>noose</i> ]	<i>to flee, to flee from, to escape, to depart, to hasten quickly [away]</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5127 BDB #630

**Translation:** ...and they fled. Those to whom these reporters reported back to, left their cities and fled. We are not told where they went to; but they left their Israeli cities and towns—at least any of those near the battle site and the lines of retreat.

Normally, the battle would have been fought in the valley of Jezreel, and along the river there which fed into the Jordan. However, the Philistines advanced hard against the Israelites, pushing them back onto Mount Gilboa. Since the Philistines were coming at them from the northwest, the soldiers could retreat in almost any other direction. However, if they go due north, they will be in the valley and easy prey.

## 1Samuel 31:7g

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
bôw' (בָּוֹא) [pronounced <i>boh</i> ]	<i>to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #935 BDB #97

## 1Samuel 31:7g

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
P <sup>h</sup> ilish <sup>t</sup> îy (פִּלִּשְׁתִּי) [pronounced p <sup>h</sup> -lish-TEE]	transliterated <i>Philistines</i>	masculine plural gentilic adjective (acts like a proper noun)	Strong's #6430 BDB #814
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
yâshab (יָשַׁב) [pronounced yaw-SHAH <sup>h</sup> V]	<i>to remain, to stay; to dwell, to live, to inhabit; to sit</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #3427 BDB #442
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #88

**Translation:** [Then the Philistines came and lived in them.](#) The Philistines had carte blanc at this time. They could move in whatever direction they wanted to. Now, bear in mind, even the Philistines had an army which is a virtual killing machine, they are still limited with regards to their population. The Philistines no doubt set up posts in a dozen or two dozen cities. The soldiers no doubt took over whatever house they chose, and gathered whatever possessions that they found into their new home. But they will be spread out throughout Israel at this point. Instead of being concentrated in Philistine territory, at this point, bits and pieces of the army will be either all over, or concentrated in specific cities. We are not told here, except that they came and occupied the cities which the Israelites fled. Which cities these were are unknown to us. Which direction the Philistines went in, is unknown to us. It is implied that they even took over cities on the other side of the Jordan; but I don't believe that is confirmed elsewhere.

There is a sizable time-arc in the book of Samuel, and we sometimes miss the overall picture. [The Philistines were subdued and they did not come any more within the border of Israel \[during the time of Samuel\]. And the hand of Jehovah was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel](#) (1Sam. 7:13). However, despite this respite from war, the people still demand a king from Samuel, so that they would have someone to stand up against the Philistines and other foreign powers (1Sam. 8). For the most part, they really approved of Saul, and what they got here is the exact opposite of what they expected. They expected that having a king would deliver them from the hands of the Philistines, and the end result was the exact opposite.

**Application:** Israel got exactly what they wanted from God, even though Samuel warned them again and again against their petition. No matter what it is in life that you pray for, realize that God sometimes says *no* for a reason. If you continue to pray and pray for the same thing, God might give it to you—but realize, the desired effect may not be a part of it. For instance, you might pray for money, thinking that money will relieve you of some life burdens and make you happier. God may, after excessive petitions, give you the money—but don't think that we will necessarily get the happiness as well.

**Application:** When you have things that you pray for, look at these things sometimes with a critical eye. The example I used before was money. You pray for money, but what you really want is the peace and happiness that you think money will buy you. In your prayers, you are using God to get what you want; what you pray for really indicates your scale of values. You are not depending upon God for happiness; you are depending upon money for happiness. You are working God in order to get what you actually worship—money.



**Application:** Money, in and of itself, is not sinful. However, praying for money with the idea that money will buy you happiness is not unlike praying for heroin or multiple sex partners, for the purpose of finding happiness. Even though money is not sinful, your love of money is.

I know you don't see the application relates to this passage, so let me spell it out for you: the people of Israel prayed for a king, but what they desired was national security. A king, in and of itself, is not evil or wrong. However, in the case of Israel, Israel was a theocracy—a nation ruled by God. Therefore, when they prayed for a king, they were in essence saying, "God, You just are not enough. Therefore, we are going to use You to get a king. A king will solve all of our problems." Do you see? Their trust was in a king, not in God.

**Application:** Does this mean it is always wrong to pray for money? Absolutely not! Money is not wrong and money is not, in and of itself, evil. There are times that you might pray to God in order to meet all of your financial obligations.<sup>10</sup> Being responsible with the money that God has given you is important. No one should view a believer as being a charlatan or a cheat or dishonest.

*The Open Bible: [This is] a very significant defeat. The Philistines gained control of the Jezreel Valley all the way to the Jordan river. Not only did they split off the northern tribes, but they also gained the vast agricultural and commercial wealth of the valley.<sup>11</sup>*

My educated guess is, if you took a compass and drew a 10–15 mile radius around Mount Gilboa, this would be the cities and area evacuated by the citizens of Israel. Jabesh-gilead, as we will see, is outside of this controlled area, and on the other side of the Jordan. The Philistines can only occupy so much space—so it is possible that they chose not to cross over the Jordan and take any territory there. This would mean that the Philistines had control over most of Issachar and northeastern Manasseh. Since they came unimpeded from a southern position and then cut over to the east (a reasonable assumption I am making), they probably already had some control over north and east Manasseh as well. What this probably means is, for the time being, Judah has no incursion of Philistines (apart from them living along the western shore of the Mediterranean Sea); northern Israel is safe, as are the areas east of the Jordan. Again, the Philistines can only occupy so much area. There are a finite number of them. So essentially, they now will occupy and control a significant portion of central Israel. At this point, it does not appear as though the Philistines have any control of the land east of the Jordan; and the disposition of far northern Israel (Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, as well as Dan in the north) is unknown.<sup>12</sup>

*Edersheim descriptions are always interesting: But the Philistine host had not halted. They advanced to occupy the towns deserted by the Hebrew. The main body occupied Bethshan, the great mountain-fortress of Central Palestine, which from the top of a steep brow, inaccessible to horsemen, seemed to command not only the Jordan valley, but also all the country round. As if in utter scorn and defiance, they hung out on the walls of Bethshan the headless trunks of Saul and of his sons. And now night with her dark mantle once more covered these horrible trophies. Shall the eagles and vultures complete the work which, no doubt, they had already begun?<sup>13</sup>*

I want you to bear in mind that, even though the Philistines have won a significant portion of Israelite land, they are now spread pretty thin. What they hold is not contiguous with their land along the southwestern Palestine. If too many of their soldiers remain here, the land which they held originally is vulnerable. I think that the war here is motivated by hatred and revenge as much as it is a lust for Israel's land. When we get into 2 Samuel, the Philistines will be mentioned early on, but not as we would expect. For instance, we might expect the split in the kingdom which occurs to be the land north of this valley, ruled briefly by Saul's remaining son, Ishbosheth; and the land south of Mount Gilboa to be controlled by David (which would include Benjamin). However, what we will find is,

<sup>10</sup> This does not mean that it is okay to run your credit cards up to the max and then pray to God to meet these obligations. What you are doing is depending upon what money buys in order to be happy.

<sup>11</sup> *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 403.

<sup>12</sup> Keil and Delitzsch say that all of northern Israel is now under Philistine rule. Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; 1Sam. 31:7.

<sup>13</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 509.

Ishbosheth will control not just Israel in the far north, but Gilead, Ephraim, Benjamin and *Jezreel*, the valley where this battle is taking place (2Sam. 2:9). In other words, even though the Philistines split the land here, the division between the kingdoms of David and Ishbosheth will actually be south of this area and it will appear as though the Philistines are not even in the land (they receive surprisingly little mention during this time of division). At this point in time, I do not know why. When we get into the first several chapters of 2Samuel, I may have a better idea. However, this ebb and flow between Israel and the surrounding nations is a common historical thread of Israel's history. If you were to draw a map of Israel's borders today, they would not be the same borders as ten years ago; and those would not match its borders fifty years ago.

<p><b>And so he is from [the] morrow and so come Philistines to strip the slain [ones]. And so they find Saul and three of his sons fallen in a mount of Gilboa.</b></p>	<p>1Samuel 31:8</p>	<p><b>And it was on the next day the Philistines came to strip [the bodies] of the slain. They discovered Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa.</b></p>
--	-------------------------	---

**The next day, the Philistines came back to strip the bodies of the slain. They discovered Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### **Ancient texts:**

<p>Masoretic Text</p>	<p>And so he is from [the] morrow and so come Philistines to strip the slain [ones]. And so they find Saul and three of his sons fallen in a mountain of Gilboa.</p>
<p>Septuagint</p>	<p>And it came to pass on the morrow that the Philistines come to strip the dead, and they find Saul and his three sons fallen on the mountains of Gelbue.</p>

Significant differences: The only slight difference is *mountain* is in the singular in the Hebrew, the Latin and the Aramaic; it is in the plural in the Greek (interestingly enough, in 1Chron. 10:8, it is in the singular in the Greek).

#### **Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

<p>CEV</p>	<p>The day after the battle, when the Philistines returned to the battlefield to take the weapons of the dead Israelite soldiers, they found Saul and his three sons lying dead on Mount Gilboa.</p>
<p>The Message</p>	<p>The next day, when the Philistines came to rob the dead, they found Saul and his three sons dead on Mount Gilboa.</p>

#### **Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

<p><i>God's Word™</i></p>	<p>The next day, when the Philistines came to strip the dead, they found Saul and his three sons lying on Mount Gilboa.</p>
---------------------------	---

#### **Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

<p>MKJV</p>	<p>And it happened on the next day, the Philistines came to strip the slain, and they found Saul and his three sons fallen in mount Gilboa.</p>
<p><i>Young's Updated LT</i></p>	<p>And it comes to pass on the next day, that the Philistines come to strip the wounded, and they find Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa.</p>

**What is the gist of this verse?** The next day, after the Philistines had thoroughly defeated Israel's army, they went back to find Saul and his three sons.

## 1Samuel 31:8a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
hâyâh (הֵי, הָ) [pronounced hâw-YAW]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
Without a specific subject and object, the verb hâyâh often means <i>and it will come to be, and it will come to pass, then it came to pass</i> (with the wâw consecutive). Generally, the verb does not match the gender whatever nearby noun could be the subject (and, as often, there is no noun nearby which would fulfill the conditions of being a subject).			
min (מִן) [pronounced min]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
mâchôrâth (מָחָרָת) [pronounced maw-chuh-RAWTH]	<i>the morrow (the day following a past day), the next day, the following day</i>	feminine singular noun/adverb	Strong's #4283 BDB #564

With the min preposition, mâchôrâth means *on the morrow, on the next day*.

**Translation:** [And it was on the next day...](#) The archers who initially found Saul did not go to his body right then and there. We have already discussed why: these soldiers were too disciplined to just stop and plunder those they had just killed. They were not going to stand over the bodies and do a victory dance so that everyone could see them. Israel had been thoroughly defeated by the next day, so now it was payday for the Philistine soldiers. They were sent out to strip the bodies of the dead for anything of value.

By the way, do you see the contrast between Saul's army when they attacked the Amalekites and the Philistines attacking the Israelites? Saul's army is busy collecting all the valuables of the Amalekites while most of the Amalekites are apparently escaping. Saul even keeps their king alive. The Philistines apparently are killing every soldier that they can.

## 1Samuel 31:8b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
bôw' (בּוֹא) [pronounced boh]	<i>to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #935 BDB #97
P <sup>h</sup> lish <sup>tîy</sup> (פְּלִשְׁתִּי) [pronounced p <sup>e</sup> -lish-TEE]	transliterated <i>Philistines</i>	masculine plural gentilic adjective (acts like a proper noun)	Strong's #6430 BDB #814

## 1Samuel 31:8b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>h</sup> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
pâshaṭ (טִּשַׁף) [pronounced paw-SHAHT]	<i>to strip, to strip off; to plunder, to spoil; to flay, to remove the skin</i>	Piel infinitive construct	Strong's #6584 BDB #832
ʿêth (תָּא) [pronounced ayth]	generally untranslated; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
châlâl (לָלַח) [pronounced chaw-LAWL]	<i>slain, fatally wounded, wounded, pierced; from a verb which means to bore, to pierce</i>	masculine plural noun (or adjective); with the definite article	Strong's #2491 BDB #319

**Translation:** ...the Philistines came to strip [the bodies] of the slain. Once the battle was over and the Israeli soldiers were completely routed, the Philistines returned to the bodies of those they had killed. This was payday. It is not clear how this was handled, but I suspect that this was fairly organized. That is, the Philistine soldiers were not sent off in every direction to take whatever they found, but these things of worth were gathered and them perhaps taken to a central area from which they were distributed. As this all took place, an eye was kept out for Saul and his sons.

## 1Samuel 31:8c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וּ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
mâtsâʿ (מָצְאוּ) [pronounced maw-TSAW]	<i>to attain to, to find, to detect, to happen upon, to come upon, to find unexpectedly, to discover</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #4672 BDB #592
ʿêth (תָּא) [pronounced ayth]	generally untranslated; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
Shâʿûwl (שׂוּאֵל) [pronounced shaw-OOL]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וְ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿêth (תָּא) [pronounced ayth]	generally untranslated; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
sh <sup>l</sup> ôshâh (שְׁלוֹשָׁה) [pronounced shiloh-SHAW]	<i>a three, a trio, a triad, a threesome</i>	feminine numeral construct	Strong's #7969 BDB #1025.

## 1Samuel 31:8c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bên (בֵּן) [pronounced <i>bane</i> ]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine plural noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #1121 BDB #119

**Translation:** *They discovered Saul and his three sons...* As previously discussed, some Philistine archers initially discovered Saul, which led him to fall on his sword. The Philistines apparently did not stop there. Eventually, the bodies of Saul and his three sons were found and gathered. The archers may have led the Philistines to them; or this could have been done apart from the archers. We do not know anything about the deaths of Saul's sons—whether they were escaping together or what—we simply know that they were found in the same proximity (and it is possible that most the retreating soldiers moved up to Mount Gilboa in an attempt to escape).

Matthew Henry suggests<sup>14</sup> that Saul could have saved himself in this instance, since the Philistines did not come back until the next day, but the Philistines were more thorough than this; and besides, more importantly, it was God's time for Saul. This was made clear to us in 1Sam. 28:18–19.

## 1Samuel 31:8d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
nâphal (נָפַל) [pronounced <i>naw-FAHL</i> ]	<i>to fall, to lie, to die a violent death, to be brought down, to settle, to sleep deeply</i>	masculine plural, Qal active participle	Strong's #5307 BDB #656
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #88
har (הַר) [pronounced <i>har</i> ]	<i>hill; mountain, mount; hill-country</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #2042 (and #2022) BDB #249
Gil <sup>o</sup> bbô <sup>a</sup> (גִּלְבּוֹא) [pronounced <i>gil-BOH-ahg</i> ]	transliterated <i>Gilboa</i>	proper noun; location	Strong's #1533 BDB #162

**Translation:** *...fallen on Mount Gilboa.* Although the battle apparently took place mostly in a valley between the mountains, Saul attempted to make an escape up Mount Gilboa. The Philistine archers discovered him attempted to retreat that route and they struck him with an arrow (or arrows)—that, or they began to close in on him when he committed suicide. Due to their excellent training and personal dedication to warfare, these archers did not stop for Saul right there. They may or may not have known who he was, but they did not stop pursuing the Israeli soldiers who were still alive.

<sup>14</sup> Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, 1Sam. 31:8–31.

And so they cut off his head and so they strip off his articles and so they send in the land of Philistines round about to bring good news [to] a house of their idols and [to] the people.

1Samuel  
31:9

They cut off his head and stripped off his armor [and weapons] and they made announcements [lit., *sent off*] in the land of Philistia [lit., *Philistines*] to bring good news to the house of their idols and to the people.

They decapitated Saul and stripped off his armor and weaponry. Then a proclamation of this victory was sent throughout the land of Philistia, to bring this good news to the sanctuary of their idols and also to the people.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	And they cut off Saul's head, and stripped him of his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish it in the temples of their idols and among their people.
Masoretic Text	And so they cut off his head and so they strip off his articles and so they send in the land of Philistines round about to bring good news [to] a house of their idols and [to] the people.
Peshitta	And they cut off his head and stripped off his armor, and sent messengers to publish the news in the land of the Philistines and among the people and in the house of their idols.
Septuagint	And they turned him, and stripped off his armour, and sent it into the land of the Philistines, sending round glad tidings to their idols and to the people.

Significant differences: The MT, the Latin Vulgate and the Peshitta are in agreement here that this announcement was sent to the house of the Philistine idols. It would make less sense to send this message to the idols directly.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	The Philistines cut off Saul's head and pulled off his armor. Then they put his armor in the temple of the goddess Astarte, and they nailed his body to the city wall of Beth-Shan. They also sent messengers everywhere in Philistia to spread the good news in the temples of their idols and among their people. [Vv. 9–10].
The Message	They cut off Saul's head and stripped off his armor. Then they spread the good news all through Philistine country in the shrines of their idols and among the people.
NLT	So they cut off Saul's head and stripped off his armor. Then they proclaimed the news of Saul's death in their pagan temple and to the people throughout the land of Philistia.

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>God's Word</i> <sup>TM</sup>	They cut off his head and stripped off his armor. Then they sent men throughout Philistine territory to tell the people this good news in their idols' temples.
JPS (Tanakh)	They cut off his head and stripped him of his armor, and they sent them throughout the land of the Philistines, to spread the news in the temples of their idols [Septuagint: <i>among their idols</i> ] and among the people.

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

MKJV	And they cut off his head and stripped off his armor, and sent into the land of the Philistines all around, to publish it in the house of their idols and <i>among</i> the people.
------	--

Young's Updated LT

And they cut off his head, and strip off his weapons, and send into the land of the Philistines round about, to proclaim tidings in the house of their idols, and among the people.

**What is the gist of this verse?** Saul's head was removed as well as his weapons, and these were sent to the Philistine cities, both to be displayed in their idol-worshiping churches and to show the people that Saul has been defeated.

1Samuel 31:9a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
kârath (כָּרַת) [pronounced kaw-RAHTH]	<i>to cut off, to cut down; to kill, to destroy; to make a covenant</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #3772 BDB #503
ʿêth (אֵת) [pronounced ayth]	generally untranslated; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
rô`sh (רֶשֶׁת) [pronounced rohsh]	<i>head, top, chief, front, choicest</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7218 BDB #910

**Translation:** [They cut off his head...](#) There may have been several reasons for the removal of Saul's head.<sup>15</sup> As we have seen in today's world, it is an act of barbarism which gains great attention. In the ancient world, it could partially be an insult, but the idea may have been more practical. The head could be easily moved about and displayed to clearly indicate that Saul was dead. We are not told what happens with his head in this chapter; however, in 1Chron. 10:10, we find that his head was displayed in the House of Dagon (a Philistine god).

Nothing is said about the heads of his sons—whether they were removed and put on display as well. This would seem logical; however, we do not know.

<sup>15</sup> R. B. Thieme Jr. occasionally would ramble on about how poor some commentaries are, and he is certainly correct in many instances. Matthew Henry (Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, 1Sam. 31:8–13) speaks of Saul's head being removed because Saul was a head taller than most men (1Sam. 9:2); this is barely a coincidence, let alone some reason for the Philistines to do this. The Philistines soldiers did not stand around looking at Saul's body and declare, "This King Saul has always been too tall; let's take care of that and cut off his head!" The removal of his head allowed for easy transport—besides, who wanted to display an entire rotting dead body inside a religious temple? Hey, while I am on the subject of lame comments, Henry says a lot of goofy things in between the reasonable things he says. Another example: *From the triumph of the Philistines over the body of Saul we may learn,...that, if we give not to God the glory of our successes, even the Philistines will rise up in judgment against us and condemn us.* Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, 1Chron. 10:8–14.

## 1Samuel 31:9b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וּ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
pâshaṭ (וּשַׁטּוּ) [pronounced paw-SHAHT]	<i>to cause someone to strip off their garments, to strip off; to flay [a victim]</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #6584 BDB #832
ʿêth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]	generally untranslated; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
k <sup>e</sup> lîy (כֵּלִי) [pronounced k <sup>e</sup> lee]	<i>manufactured good, artifact, article, utensil, vessel, weapon, armor, furniture, receptacle; baggage, valuables</i>	masculine plural noun with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3627 BDB #479

**Translation:** ...and stripped off his armor [and weapons]... Saul, being king, has a number of things which identify him as royalty with regards to his clothing and armor—he probably had a crown and arm bracelets; however, we will later find out that these had been taken from his body by an Amalekite (2Sam. 1:10). However, what remained is removed and put on display in the house of their gods (1Chron. 10:10).

## 1Samuel 31:9c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וּ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
shâlach (וּשַׁלַּח) [pronounced shaw-LAKH]	<i>to send, to send off, to send away, to dismiss, to give over, to cast out, to let go, to set free, to shoot forth [branches], to shoot [an arrow]</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Piel imperfect	Strong's #7971 BDB #1018
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
ʿerets (אֶרֶץ) [pronounced EH-rets]	<i>earth (all or a portion thereof), land</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #776 BDB #75
P <sup>e</sup> lish <sup>e</sup> tîy (פְּלִשְׁתִּי) [pronounced p <sup>e</sup> -lish-TEE]	transliterated <i>Philistines</i>	masculine plural gentilic adjective (acts like a proper noun)	Strong's #6430 BDB #814
çâbîyb (בְּבִיב) [pronounced saw <sup>b</sup> -VEE <sup>b</sup> V]	<i>around, surrounding, circuit, round about, encircle</i>	adverb	Strong's #5439 BDB #686



**Translation:** ...and they made announcements [lit., sent off] in the land of Philistia [lit., Philistines]... This was a tremendous announcement; that the king of Israel had been slain in war and that the Israelites had been clearly defeated. However, to stick with the literal meaning of this passage, it is Saul's head and his armor which is sent throughout the land of the Philistines. It is possible that we are speaking of the heads of his sons as well—that we do not know. These items were no doubt accompanied by some sort of proclamation of victory.

What would make the most sense, and would be in keeping with the Biblical text, is for Saul's head and armor to be taken around to the five Philistine cities, to their city gates or to their heathen temples and for this to be accompanied with announcements of victory. Eventually, Saul's head was put on perpetual display in the house of Dagon and his armor in the house of gods (which name is not more specific). To stick with the literal text here and 1Chron. 10:10, we can only know for sure that Saul's head was taken to the house of Dagon and his armor to the house of gods—that these items were taken around to various cities and displayed is conjecture.

The only thing which stood in the way of the Philistines expanding toward the east were the Israelites themselves and now they were essentially at their mercy. The only other thing which kept them from expanding is having a finite population. The Philistine soldiers may have captured a great deal of territory belonging to Israel; however, that does not mean that there will be a mad rush of Philistines to live in these cities. Quite obviously, they would be moving into a potential war zone.

### 1Samuel 31:9d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l</i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
bâsar (בָּשַׂר) [pronounced <i>baw-SAHR</i> ]	<i>to make one cheerful [with good news]; to announce [good news]; to bear glad tidings, to bring good news</i>	Piel infinitive construct	Strong's #1319 BDB #142
bayith (בַּיִת) [pronounced <i>BAH-yith</i> ]	<i>house, household, habitation as well as inward</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1004 BDB #108
ʿătsabîym (עֲצָבִיִּם) [pronounced <i>ăuh-tzah<sup>b</sup>-VEEM</i> ]	<i>idols, images of idols, idol-images</i>	masculine plural noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #6091 BDB #781
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿêth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	generally untranslated; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
ʿam (אָם) [pronounced <i>ăahm</i> ]	<i>people; race, tribe; family, relatives; citizens, common people; companions, servants; entire human race; herd [of animals]</i>	masculine singular collective noun with the definite article	Strong's #5971 BDB #766

**Translation:** ...to bring good news to the house of their idols and to the people. Apparently, a common public gathering place is the idol temples in Philistia; so the reports of Saul's death and the defeat of the Israeli army was written up (we would suppose) and sent to the various idol temples. This would insure that most people would

receive this announcement. We are also told that the announcements were sent to the people; it is unclear whether this is because the announcements went to the temple or whether these announcements were sent to specific heads of state. 1Chron. 10:10 seems to indicate that there are at least two heathen temples—and I would expect there to be at least one temple in each of their five major cities. We know for certain that Saul's head was displayed in the house of Dagon and that his armor was placed in the house of their gods. It would make sense that the heads of Saul's sons were similarly displayed in other places of idolatry.

Now, one of the many things which I do not know is how many temples could be found in Philistia. The Jews had one place of worship, which was the Tent of God, and we know that religion will attempt to copy the truth—therefore, there was probably only been one house of Dagon in Philistia. However, Dagon was worshipped by other peoples in the mid-east, and we have studied the **Pagan God Dagon** in greater detail in 1Sam. 5.

The short version of this doctrine is below:

### A Summary of the Pagan God Dagon

1. The pagan god, Dagon, is mentioned in only three passages in Scripture, and once in the Apocrypha. In all of those places, Dagon is associated with the Philistines and the city of Ashdod, a famous city of the Philistines. However, he appears to have been a universal god for a much wider group of peoples. Harold G. Stigers, who wrote one of the articles on Dagon for ZPEB, tells us that Dagon was a storm god from the upper Euphrates area and that conquerors from Mesopotamia brought Dagon into the Palestine and Syrian areas.<sup>1</sup>
2. The proper noun, *Dagon*, is actually found very little in the Bible.
  - a. When the Philistines had captured Samson (after Delilah had cut his hair), they offered sacrifices to their god Dagon in Judges 16:23.
  - b. Dagon, the god of the Philistines, is found, obviously throughout 1Sam. 5. It is found 11 times in this chapter. In this chapter, the Philistine army had captured the Ark of God, and they brought it into the temple of Dagon to indicate its subjugation to the god Dagon. However, each morning found the statue of Dagon on the ground and partially damaged.
  - c. When the Philistines take the bodies of Saul and his sons, they cut off the head of Saul and attached it to the temple of Dagon. 1 Chron. 10:10. The Philistines will be soundly defeated by David and we will hear of their god Dagon no more in Scripture.
  - d. Finally, Dagon is mentioned in the Apocrypha. 1 Maccabees 10:83b–84 reads: *They fled to Azotus [Ashdod] and entered Beth-Dagon, the temple of their idol, for safety. But Jonathan burned Azotus and the surrounding towns and plundered them; and the temple of Dagon, and those who had taken refuge in it, he burned with fire.*
3. According to the NIV Study Bible, Dagon is not strictly a god of the Philistines. *Veneration of this deity was widespread in the ancient world, extending from Mesopotamia to the Aramaean and Canaanite area and attested in non-Biblical sources dating from the late third millennium B.C. until Maccabean times (second century B.C.; in the Apocrypha see 1 Maccabees 10:83–85).*<sup>2</sup> The god Dagon was a Semitic god who was worshipped in Mesopotamia at least as early as the third century B.C.<sup>3</sup> Apparently the Philistines adopted him as their chief god.
4. On the Babylonian god list, Dagon is equated with Enlil, who was the god of the wind.<sup>4</sup> ZPEB, on the next page, tells us that this information is from a letter to Zimrilim, circa 1730 B.C.<sup>5</sup> Since Dagon was known as the father of the storm god, this would make sense. There are well over a dozen references to Dagon in ancient artifacts which associate him with some weather god or another, either by relation or simple association.
5. Now, we view weather today from an entirely different perspective than did the ancients. We are concerned whether we will be driving through the rain, whether or not it's a good time for a picnic or a trip to the beach or the snow, or whether or not we can even go out to work. The weather for the ancient world was tied directly to their agriculture, which determined whether a population would live and flourish or languish and die out. The ancients needed the rain in the right amounts at the correct time of the year for their crops to do well; and, obviously, prayers and the like would be offered up to whoever was in charge of the weather, which appears to be Dagon and associates. Because of this tie in between the weather and agriculture,

## A Summary of the Pagan God Dagon

- it is not difficult to see Dagon later being associated with agriculture as well.
6. ZPEB: *In Palestine, he appears to have yielded place as a vegetation fertility god in some locales to Baal, but have held his own against Baal in others.*<sup>6</sup> This observation would indicate that there was some fluidity with the pagan gods and their functions in the ancient world. Our God, Jehovah-Elohim, changes not; however, there is no reason to assume this of a deity who does not exist. Therefore, Dagon could have had several different functions, since he was venerated by different people at different times. For the same reason, his relationships to the other gods is not necessarily written in stone either.
  7. The influence of Dagon was widespread in the near eastern world, as we have several cities and people named after him:
    - a. We have the city of *Beth-dagon* in Judah (Joshua 15:41).
    - b. There is another *Beth-dagon* in Asher (Joshua 19:27).
    - c. The Annals of Sennacherib mention a *Beth-dagon* near Joppa. Since I do not have those annals with me, I don't know if this is equivalent to the *Beth-dagon* in Asher (West Manasseh is situated between Joppa and Asher).
  8. Although we find Dagon closely associated with the Philistines throughout Scripture, he was worshipped throughout the near eastern world. Assyrian and Babylonia records indicate that Dagon's popularity spanned a period of approximately 1500 years. Specific details and documentation is found in the doctrine itself.

<sup>1</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 2, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 379.

<sup>3</sup> Gordon (in *I & II Samuel A Commentary*; Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI; ©1986; p. 336) quotes the sources G. Roux, *Ancient Iraq* (London, 1964), pp. 142, 145; G. Pettinato, *BA 39* (1976), p. 48 (in this source, Dagon is one of the pantheon at Ebla).. Gordon also suggests to compare Matthiae, *Ebla, An Empire Rediscovered* (ET; London, 1980), pp. 187f.

<sup>4</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 2, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Their source: Montalbano, "Canaanite Dagon," *CBQ*, 13: p. 388. You may wonder if there were two different sources for this information. I think that the second article was simply better researched than the first. The first article is on *Dagon* and the second is on *Dagon, Temples of*. The latter article is six times as long with about three times the references.

<sup>6</sup> *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 2, p. 2.

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

**And so they put his articles [in] a house of Ashtaroths and his body they fastened in a wall of Beth Shan.**

1Samuel  
31:10

**They put his weapons in the temple [lit., house] of Ashtaroths and they fastened his body to a wall in Beth-shan.**

**They placed his weapons in their temple of the Ashtaroths and they fastened his body to a public wall in Bethshan.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Ancient texts:

#### Masoretic Text

And so they put his articles [in] a house of Ashtaroths and his body they fastened in a wall of Beth Shan.

#### Septuagint

And they set up his armour at the temple of Astarte, and they fastened his body on the wall of Baethsam.

Significant differences: None.

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

The Message	They displayed his armor in the shrine of the Ashtoreth. They nailed his corpse to the wall at Beth Shan.
REB	They deposited his armour in the temple of Ashtoreth and nailed his body on the wall of Beth-shan.
TEV	Then they put his weapons in the temple of the goddess Astarte, and they nailed his body to the wall of the city of Beth Shan.

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

God's Word™	They put his armor in the temple of their goddesses-the Asherahs-and fastened his corpse to the wall of Beth Shan.
JPS (Tanakh)	They placed his armor in the temple of Ashtaroth, and they impaled his body on the wall of Beth-shan.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

Updated Emphasized Bible	And they put his armour in a house of Ashtoreths, and <his dead body> they fastened on the wall of Beth-shan.
HCSB	Then they put his armor in the temple of the Ashtoreths and hung his body on the wall of Beth-shan.
Young's Updated LT	And they place his weapons in the house of Ashtaroth, and his body they have fixed on the wall of Beth-Shan.

**What is the gist of this verse?** Saul's armor and weapons were hung up in the temple of Ashtaroth, and his headless body was hung on a wall in Beth-shan.

1Samuel 31:10a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
sîym (שׂוּם) [pronounced <i>seem</i> ]; also spelled sûwm (שׂוּם) [pronounced <i>soom</i> ]	<i>to put, to place, to set, to make</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7760 BDB #962
ʿêth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	generally untranslated; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
k <sup>o</sup> lîy (כֻּלֵּי) [pronounced <i>k<sup>o</sup>lee</i> ]	<i>manufactured good, artifact, article, utensil, vessel, weapon, armor, furniture, receptacle; baggage, valuables</i>	masculine plural noun with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3627 BDB #479
bayith (בַּיִת) [pronounced <i>BAH-yith</i> ]	<i>house, household, habitation as well as inward</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1004 BDB #108
ʿash <sup>a</sup> târôwth (עֲשֵׂתָרוֹת) [pronounced <i>gáshh-taw-ROHTH</i> ]	transliterated <i>Ashtaroth, Ashtartes, Ashtaroths</i>	Feminine proper noun; plural form	Strong's #6252 BDB #800

**Translation:** *They put his weapons in the temple* [lit., *house*] of Ashtaroths... Again, we have the singular of *house*, suggesting that there was only one temple or one house of Ashtaroth. Even though this is a plural noun, it appears to act more like a singular noun which is given great emphasis (like *Elohim* or *Adonai*). The plural of some nouns in the Hebrew give them great emphasis; and sometimes they are simply a plural noun.

Barnes: *This was doubtless the famous temple of Venus in Askelon mentioned by Herodotus as the most ancient of all her temples. Hence, the special mention of Askelon 2Sam. 1:20 (Tell it not in Gath; do not make it known in the streets of Ashkelon, that the daughters of the Philistines not rejoice; that the daughters of the uncircumcised not exult). The placing Saul's armour as a trophy in the temple of Ashtaroth was a counterpart to the placing Goliath's sword in the tabernacle 1Sam. 21:9 (And the priest said, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you struck in the valley of Elah; behold, it is wrapped in the cloak behind the ephod. If you desire, take it for yourself; for there is no other here except it." And David said, "There is none like it. Give it to me.")*.<sup>16</sup>

Gill: [It was] *common with the Gentiles...to place in their temples the arms they took from their enemies, as is [confirmed] by Homer (Iliad. 7. ver. 83) and Virgil (Aeneid. 7. ver. 183. So Persius, Satyr. 6. ver. 45)*.<sup>17</sup>

Gordon also affirms that bringing Saul's armor to Astarte would have been appropriate to that heathen people, mentioning that she is also a goddess of war (among other things).<sup>18</sup>

### 1Samuel 31:10b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
êth (ת ך) [pronounced ayth]	generally untranslated; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
g <sup>w</sup> îyyâh (ה י ך) [pronounced g <sup>e</sup> wee-YAW]	<i>body [of man or animal], dead body, corpse</i>	feminine singular noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #1472 BDB #156
tâqa <sup>r</sup> (ק ך) [pronounced taw-KAHG]	<i>to fasten, to thrust, to clap, to give a blow, to give a blast</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #8628 BDB #1075
The key to the meaning of this verb is context and the direct object.			
b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
chôwmâh (ה ו ך) [pronounced khoh-MAW]	<i>a wall [around a city]; less often for simple a wall; metaphorically, a maiden, chaste and difficult to approach</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #2346 BDB #327

<sup>16</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, 1Sam. 31:10 (I added in the verses themselves).

<sup>17</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, 1Sam. 31:10.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Gordon, *I & II Samuel A Commentary*; Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI; ©1986; p. 203.

## 1Samuel 31:10b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Bêyth Shân (בֵּית שָׁן); also spelled Bêyth Sh <sup>o</sup> ân (בֵּית שָׁן) [pronounced <i>beyth-SHAWN</i> ]	<i>house of quiet, place of quiet;</i> and is transliterated <i>Bethshan,</i> <i>Beth-shan, Beth Shan</i> or <i>Beth</i> <i>Shean</i>	proper noun; location	Strong's #1052 BDB #112

**Translation:** ...and they fastened his body to a wall in Beth-shan. Beth-shan was not a Philistine property, per se. Eusebius and Jerome place Beth-shan six miles east of Mount Gilboa, where Saul and his sons fell dead in battle.<sup>19</sup> Since the Philistines originally came from a south-southwest position, after defeating the Israelites, we would expect them to make themselves more at home in moving further eastward. For maximum affect, it appears as though the body of Saul and his sons were hanged on a wall in town square (2Sam. 21:12).

It is quite interesting that the text of 1Chron. 10 and 1Sam. 31 begin to diverge at this point. Up until this point, they were the same almost word for word. These are not independent texts. Either 1Chron. 10 was written from this chapter directly or they used the same source material. There are a few who believe that the Holy Spirit essentially dictated Scripture to various individuals, but that makes little sense. We find strong variances in vocabulary, writing styles, and even the type of writing used throughout. Furthermore, it makes more sense for Scripture to be fully a product of man and God, the written Word corresponding with the Living Word (John 1:1–3, 14). Anyway, the Chronicles text reads: *And they put his weapons in the house of their gods; and they fastened his skull in the house of Dagon.* In Chronicles, even though we are told that the valiant men of Jabesh-gilead retrieved the bodies of Saul and his sons, we are not told that they were attached to a wall in Bethshan. However, in Chronicles, we are told that his skull was put on display in the house of Dagon. In Chronicles, we know his weapons and armor were put on display in the house of Philistine gods; however, we are told in Samuel that this is the house of Ashteroths. At this point in time, I do not know why these texts diverge in these details; it is possible that David did not know where Saul's head ended up and that this became known after David had written this. On the other hand, he does know here where Saul's gear ended up. I'll give it some thought and maybe I will know by the time we get to 1Chron. 10.

Barnes: *In 1Chron. 10:10 it is added that they "fastened Saul's head in the temple of Dagon " probably either in Gaza Judges 16:21 or in Ashdod 1Sam. 5:1-3. This was perhaps in retaliation for the similar treatment of Goliath's head 1Sam. 17:54 (And David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem; and he put his weapons in his own tent). The variations seem to imply that both this narrative and that in 1Chron. 10:1-14 are compiled from a common and a fuller document.*<sup>20</sup> I don't think the idea was retaliation, per se, but more of a tradition from that era.

Now even though I, and many other exegetes, picture Saul's head and armor being carried outside Israel in order to be displayed in their Philistine temples, Keller suggests that there are temples ruins on the north and south walls of Beth-shan, which would have been used to display Saul's head and armor. The house of Ashtaroth, in his estimation, is the temple whose ruins were discovered on the south side of Bethshan; and his head was placed in the house of Dagon, which was the temple excavated on the north slope.<sup>21</sup> Personally, I have always assumed that this house of Dagon is the same one named in the first part of 1Sam. 5, when the Ark of God was taken from Israel and set up in the house of Dagon in Ashdod. As for the temple of Ashtaroth, that is conjecture, as its location is not definitive in Scripture.

<sup>19</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880, with introduction by R. A. Torrey; courtesy of E-sword, 1Sam. 31:1.

<sup>20</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, 1Sam. 31:10. I added the quote. I don't know that this would necessarily be specifically a retaliation on the part of the Philistines, as they did nothing to David other than send him home when he showed up ready for battle in 1Sam. 29.

<sup>21</sup> Werner Keller, *The Bible as History* (second revised edition); New York, 1981; p. 185.

Keil and Delitzsch give us a good summary of what has happened; however, as you read it, realize that their summarization is based, in part, on reasonable conjecture: *On the day following the battle, when the Philistines stripped the slain, they found Saul and his three sons lying upon Gilboa; and having cut off their heads and plundered their weapons, they took them (the heads and weapons) as trophies into the land of the Philistines, i.e., round about to the different towns and hamlets of their land, to announce the joyful news in their idol-temples (the writer of the Chronicles mentions the idols themselves) and to the people, and then deposited their weapons (the weapons of Saul and his sons) in the Astarte-houses. But the corpses they fastened to the town-wall of Beth-shean, i.e., Beisan, in the valley of the Jordan.*<sup>22</sup> Part of their reasoning is based upon, since the Philistines hung the bodies of Saul's sons on the wall of Beth-shan (1Sam. 31:12) just as they had done to Saul, it is reasonable to assume that they removed the sons' heads as well, just as they had done to Saul.

Now might be a good time to examine the **Doctrine of Beth-shan**.

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to the Chart and Map Index](#)

Just in case you did not go to check out the entire doctrine, I have provided a summary below:

### A Summary of the Doctrine of Beth-Shan

1. Beth-shan is a city located in west Manasseh, almost 10 miles west the River Jordan, about a fourth of the distance from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea (or 14 miles south of the Sea of Galilee).
2. Bethshan is located at the intersection of the Valley of Jezreel and the Jordan valley. It is near one of the few tributaries of the Jordan river. There are also fresh water springs in Mt. Gilboa which provide an excellent supply of fresh water.
3. Later on in the same chapter (Joshua 17:14–18), the sons of Joseph (Manasseh and Ephraim) complain that their land is not large enough to match their populations and that the Canaanites are too close. The biggest problems, as they see it, are Beth-shan and its villages and the valley of Jezreel (which appears to be the site where King Saul dies battling against the Philistines). As we have seen on previous occasions, the Philistines seemed to push their point through Manasseh, through the center of Israel, in order to get a foothold. This is exactly what is occurring in our present study in 1Sam. 31—the Philistines have struck the heartland of Israel, defeating Saul and the armies of Israel in the center of Israel. By the way, Joshua's suggestion to these people is rather humorous. "Okay, since you are a large people, you can easily clear out the forests with all of these people and deal with the Canaanites yourselves" (Joshua 17:17–18).
4. In the book of the Judges, we find out that Manasseh did not drive the Canaanites out from the cities which were given over to her; and one of these cities was Beth-shan (also Taanach, Dor, Ibleam and Megiddo, along with their villages). The problem was that they were intimidated by the iron chariots of the Canaanites who lived there. Judges 1:27
5. In our passage, 1Sam. 31, the Philistines have struck the heartland of Israel once again, and successfully defeated Saul's army, killing Saul and his sons. They apparently took over the city of Beth-shan (or Beth-shan had been in their possession all along), as they tacked the bodies of Saul and his sons on the walls of Beth-shan. These bodies were later retrieved by Israelites and burned in Jabesh, where the bones were apparently buried. 1Sam. 31:10–13
6. David retrieved these bones sometime later and gave them a proper burial in Zela in the country of Benjamin, in the grave of Kish, Saul's father. 2Sam. 21:13–14
7. The tel of Beth-shan is actually the highest tell (300 ft.) in all of Israel.\* *Archaeologists have identified eighteen different levels of occupation in the tell, indicating that this was one of the oldest cities in Palestine.\*\**
8. Keller tells us about Tel el-Husn, which is this great mound of rubble which can be seen far beyond the

<sup>22</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; 1Sam. 31:8–10. I made some very slight changes in the text.

## A Summary of the Doctrine of Beth-Shan

Jordan valley. On the north and south slopes, the strong foundation walls of two temple buildings emerge out of the piles of cleared debris.†

9. Even though Beth-shan is in the middle of Israel, Mitchell suggests that it was under Philistine control until the time of David, citing 1Sam. 31:10 as evidence. We do not know for certain, but the geological evidence seems to suggest that Beth-shan was under foreign control as well.

The actual doctrine is replete with pictures and maps.

\* Taken from <http://www.ancientsandals.com/overviews/beth-shan.htm>

\*\* Taken from <http://www.ancientsandals.com/overviews/beth-shan.htm>

† Werner Keller, *The Bible as History* (second revised edition); New York, 1981; p. 485.

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

### Brave Men from Jabesh-gilead Retrieve and Bury the Bodies of Saul and his Sons

*1Chronicles 10:11–14*

**And so hear unto him inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead that had done Philistines to Saul.** 1Samuel 31:11

**The inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead heard regarding him what the Philistines had done to Saul,...**

**When the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul,...**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text                      And so heard unto him inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead that had done Philistines to Saul..

Septuagint                              And the inhabitants of Jabis Galaad hear what the Philistines did to Saul.

Significant differences:              Very minor, as noted by the different color above.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV    The people who lived in Jabesh in Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul's body.

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

*God's Word*™                              When the people living in Jabesh Gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul,...

JPS (Tanakh)                              When the inhabitants of [1Chron. 10:11: reads *all*] Jabehe-gilead heard about it—what the Philistines had done to Saul—.

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

MKJV    And when they heard about it, the people of Jabesh-gilead, what the Philistines had done to Saul,...

*Young's Updated LT*                      And they hear regarding it—the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead—that which the Philistines have done to Saul.



**What is the gist of this verse?** The citizens of Jabesh-gilead, across the Jordan, heard about what had been done to the bodies Saul and his sons.

### 1Samuel 31:11

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
shâma' (שָׁמְעוּ) [pronounced <i>shaw-MAHG</i> ]	<i>to listen, to hear, to listen intently, to listen and obey, to listen and act upon, to listen and give heed to, to hearken to, to be attentive to, to listen and take note of, to listen and be cognizant of</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #8085 BDB #1033
'el (אֶל) [pronounced <i>e/</i> ]	<i>unto, in, into, toward, to, regarding, against</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied) with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #413 BDB #39
yâshab (יָשָׁבוּ) [pronounced <i>yaw-SHAHBV</i> ]	<i>those inhabiting, those staying, those dwelling in, the inhabitants of, the ones dwelling in, dwellers of, those sitting [here], the ones sitting</i>	masculine plural construct, Qal active participle	Strong's #3427 BDB #442
Yâbêsh (יָבֵשׁ) [pronounced <i>yaw<sup>B</sup>-VEYSH</i> ]	<i>to be dry, dried up, withered; transliterated Jabesh</i>	cognate of verb (Strong's #3001); acts as a proper noun	Strong's #3003 BDB #386
Gal <sup>er</sup> êd (גִּלְעָד) [pronounced <i>gahl<sup>e</sup>-ÇAYD</i> ]	<i>witness-pile, hill of witness; and is transliterated Gilead</i>	proper noun; location	Strong's #1567 BDB #165
Although some exegetes treat this as one noun, <i>Jabesh-gilead</i> ; I think the idea is that this is the city <i>Jabesh</i> in <i>Gildean</i> (sort of like <i>Boston, Massachusetts</i> ).			
'êth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	<i>together, they mean how, that which, what, whatever; whom, whomever</i>	untranslated mark of a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
'âsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>uh-SHER</i> ]	<i>whomever</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
'âsâh (עָשׂוּ) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i> ]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
P <sup>o</sup> lish <sup>tiy</sup> (פְּלִשְׁתִּי) [pronounced <i>p<sup>e</sup>-lish-TEE</i> ]	<i>transliterated Philistines</i>	masculine plural gentilic adjective (acts like a proper noun)	Strong's #6430 BDB #814
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l<sup>e</sup></i> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510

## 1Samuel 31:11

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Shâ'ûwl (לַוּאֵל) [pronounced shaw-OOL]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982

**Translation:** [The inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead heard regarding him what the Philistines had done to Saul](#),... First of all, let's examine Jabesh Gilead. Jabesh is the name of the city and Gilead is likely the area where Jabesh is. We do not know exactly where this city is located; however, it makes logical sense for it to be found on the other side of the Jordan, near Beth-shan, in an area formerly known as Gilead. Well, actually, it might be a misnomer to say that it was formerly known as Gilead, as it is called Gilead right here. This city held onto its name of long ago, prior to the Israeli invasion. This area officially was Gadite territory, although the Gadites did not refer to it as such, given the designation of Jabesh in this verse.

Jabesh is an interesting city, showing up in some very unusual places. We have encountered this city before in Judges 21. The Benjamites had been determined to be an incredibly degenerate group of men (see Judges 19), so the Israelites from all over rose up against the Benjamites and slaughtered them—all but 600 men. Now, even though this slaughter was apparently encouraged by God (see Judges 20:26–28), at the end, these men were concerned because this had almost completely wiped out the tribe of Benjamin. There was also the problem that one city sent no men to deal with the degenerate Benjamites—that city was Jabesh Gilead. So that city was wiped out, except for 400 virgin women. These 400 women were given to the 600 surviving members of the tribe of Benjamin. Here we are, nearly 500 years later, and those who will go to recover the bodies of Saul and his sons are men of Jabesh Gilead. I don't know if the men here are Benjamites; I don't know if they are progeny of the sons and daughters of the men who were killed; or the progeny of those who were not killed. Perhaps others just came in and lived there (even some of those who wiped out the men here).

To better determine the location of this city, we may reasonably assume that it is located along the banks of the Wadi Yabis, a river which retains its ancient name (remember, there is no *j* in the Hebrew language). This wadi is approximately 25 miles south of the Sea of Galilee and on the east side of the Jordan. Eusebius in his *Onomasticon*, more specifically locates Jabesh for us. There are two side-by-side tells in this general area—Tel el-Meqbreh and Tel abu Kharaz—either of which could have been Jabesh Gilead.<sup>23</sup>

You may ask, why these people? Why these men of Jabesh-gilead? Why are they the only ones stepping up to the plate? If you have forgotten, look back in 1Sam. 11, when these men were threatened by Nahash the Ammonite. Nahash was going to destroy the men of Jabesh, and they asked to serve him instead—which meant that they would pay him tribute. Being the blood-thirsty heathen that he was, he said, "Fine—but I am going to gouge out the right eye of every one." That would have been his brand. Saul delivered this city, in the power of God the Holy Spirit. Because of Saul's degeneracy and wickedness in the past dozen or so chapters, we forget that he did some great things, in the power of the Holy Spirit. What he did in 1Sam. 11 was amazing, and the people of Jabesh were forever grateful to him. So, when they heard that his body was disgracefully tacked up on a public wall, along with the bodies of his sons, these men will risk their lives to remove him from this post-mortem mockery, in what Barnes calls a *touching and rare example of national gratitude*.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Much of the information on Jabesh Gilead came from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 3, pp. 381–382.

<sup>24</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, 1Sam. 31:11.

And so stands each man of strength and so they go all the night and so they take a body of Saul and bodies of his sons from a wall of Beth-shan. And so they come Jabesh-ward and so they consume [with fire] them there.

1Samuel  
31:12

Every strong man arose, walked all night and took the bodies of Saul and his sons from off the wall at Beth-shan. They returned [lit., *came*] to Jabesh and burned them there.

The strong men of Jabesh then took a stand and traveled all night and retrieved the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall at Beth-shan. They returned to Jabesh and cremated the bodies there.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text                      And so stands each man of strength and so they go all the night and so they take a body of Saul and bodies of his sons from a wall of Beth-shan. And so they come Jabesh-ward and so they consume [with fire] them there.

Septuagint                              And they rose up, every man of might, and marched all night, and took the body of Saul and the body of Jonathan his son from the wall of Baethsam; and they bring them to Jabis, and burn them there.

Significant differences:              In the MT, the Peshitta and the Latin Vulgate, it is the bodies of Saul and his sons; in the LXX, it is the bodies of Saul and Jonathan. Given v. 2, this is not a significant difference. In the Greek, they *bring them* to Jabis; in the Hebrew, they *come* to Jabesh; also not a significant difference. The Greek text, in this regard, is in agreement with the Hebrew of 1Chron. 10:12.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV    So one night, some brave men from Jabesh went to Beth-Shan. They took down the bodies of Saul and his sons, then brought them back to Jabesh and burned them.

The Message                              Their valiant men sprang into action. They traveled all night, took the corpses of Saul and his three sons from the wall at Beth Shan, and carried them back to Jabesh and burned off the flesh.

NLT    ...their warriors traveled all night to Beth-shan and took the bodies of Saul and his sons down from the wall. They brought them to Jabesh, where they burned the bodies.

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

God's Word™                              ...all the fighting men marched all night and took the dead bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth Shan. They came back to Jabesh and burned the bodies there.

JPS (Tanakh)                              ...all their stalwart men set out and marched all night; they removed the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth-shan and came [1Chron. 10:12 reads *brought them*] to Jabesh and burned them there.

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

The Amplified Bible                      All the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the bodies of Saul and his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and came to Jabesh, and cremated them there.

HCSB    ...all their brave men set out, journeyed all night, and retrieved the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan. When they arrived at Jabesh, they burned the bodies there.

MKJV

...then all the brave men arose, and they traveled all night. And they took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and came to Jabesh, and burned them there.

Young's Updated LT

And all the men of valour arise, and go all the night, and take the body of Saul, and the bodies of his sons, from the wall of Beth-Shan, and come in to Jabesh, and burn them there.

**What is the gist of this verse?** Brave men from Jabesh-gilead go to Bethshan at night and surreptitiously take down the bodies of Saul and his sons and bring them back to Jabesh and cremate them.

### 1Samuel 31:12a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, and then, then, and</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
qûwm (קוּמ) [pronounced koom]	<i>to stand, to rise up, to get up; to establish, to establish a vow, to cause a vow to stand, to confirm or to fulfill a vow</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6965 BDB #877
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl]	<i>every, each, all of, all; any of</i>	masculine singular construct not followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
ʾiysh (אִישׁ) [pronounced eesh]	<i>men; inhabitants, citizens; companions, soldiers, companions</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #376 BDB #35
chayil (חַיִל) [pronounced CHAH-yil]	<i>army, strength, valour, power, might; efficiency; and that which is gotten through strength—wealth, substance</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2428 BDB #298

**Translation:** *Every strong man arose,...* Recall that these are different men in Jabesh than we knew from before. Their men of valor, the men of strength of that community, rose up and took a stand. They were offended that Saul and his sons were disrespected as they were. Their bodies were hanging on a wall in Beth-shan.

According to the research I did on Beth-shan, it appears as though that city never had a city wall, which is quite unusual. We do not know that is true, although that is what the archeological evidence seems to indicate. However, there apparently were buildings, and on one of these buildings, or on a section of wall, the bodies of Saul and his sons were hung to proclaim Philistine domination over Israel. Given the smell of rotting flesh, my guess is that this was not necessarily near any Philistine building. This was offensive to the men of Jabesh, so they arose and took a stand.

Edersheim comments: *The tidings [of Saul and his sons being hung on the walls of Bethshan] had been carried across the Jordan, and wakened echoes in one of Israel's cities. It was to Jabesh-gilead that Saul, when only named but not yet acknowledged king, had by a forced night-march brought help, delivering it from utter destruction (1Sam. 11). That had been the morning of Saul's life, bright and promising as none other; his first glorious victory, which had made him king by acclamation, and drawn Israel's thousands to that gathering in Gilgal, when, amidst the jubilee of an exultant people, the new*

kingdom was inaugurated. And now it was night; and the headless bodies of Saul and his sons, deserted by all, swung in the wind on the walls of Bethshan, amid the hoarse music of vultures and jackals.<sup>25</sup>

### 1Samuel 31:12b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
hâlak <sup>e</sup> (הָלַךְ) [pronounced <i>haw-LAHK<sup>e</sup></i> ]	<i>to go, to come, to depart, to walk; to advance</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i> ]	<i>the whole, all of, the entirety of, all; can also be rendered any of</i>	masculine singular construct followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
lay <sup>e</sup> lâh (לַיְלָאֵה) [pronounced <i>LĀY-law</i> ]	<i>night; that night, this night, the night</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3915 BDB #538

**Translation:** ...walked all night... The men of Jabesh marched to Beth-shan at great personal risk. The army of Israel had been defeated. The greatest men of Israel had been routed. However, for the bodies of Saul and his sons to be hung on a wall to rot was an insult—particularly for the men in Jabesh.

The fact that these men walked all night means that the distance between Beth-shan and Jabesh was probably between 10 and 40 miles (most geographers put this at about 10 miles—which is in complete accord with their mission). The walking all night could be the one-way trip; and it could have covered the round trip (which is what I would suppose). For what they planned to do, these men would not want to remove these bodies at daybreak. They would not get very far. It is more reasonable for them to travel at night, remove the bodies in the middle of the night; and return to Jabesh still under the cover of darkness.

This particular mission was very risky; as one commentator points out, there is scant which lies between these two cities apart from the Jordan. We have no idea how the Philistines reacted to this; but it seems clear that they did not figure out who took the bodies or where they went.

### 1Samuel 31:12c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
lâqach (לָקַח) [pronounced <i>law-KAHKH</i> ]	<i>to take, to take away, to take in marriage; to seize</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #3947 BDB #542
ʿêth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	generally untranslated; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84

<sup>25</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 509. One of my great pleasures after studying and exegeting a chapter of Scripture, is turning to Edersheim's fine prose.

## 1Samuel 31:12c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
g <sup>e</sup> wîyyâh (גַּיְיָהּ) [pronounced pewee-YAW]	<i>body [of man or animal], dead body, corpse</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #1472 BDB #156
Shâ`ûwl (שׂוּאָל) [pronounced shaw-OOL]	which is transliterated <i>Saul</i> ; it means <i>asked for</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #7586 BDB #982
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
`êth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]	generally untranslated; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
g <sup>e</sup> wîyyâh (גַּיְיָהּ) [pronounced pewee-YAW]	<i>body [of man or animal], dead body, corpse</i>	feminine plural construct	Strong's #1472 BDB #156
bên (בֵּן) [pronounced bane]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine plural noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
min (מִן) [pronounced min]	<i>from, off, out from, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
chôwmâh (חֹמַת) [pronounced khoh-MAW]	<i>a wall [around a city]; less often for simple a wall; metaphorically, a maiden, chaste and difficult to approach</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #2346 BDB #327
Bêyth Shân (בֵּית שָׁן); also spelled Bêyth Sh <sup>e</sup> ân (בֵּית שְׁאָן) [pronounced beyth-SHAWN]	<i>house of quiet, place of quiet; and is transliterated Bethshan, Beth-shan, Beth Shan or Beth Shean</i>	proper noun; location	Strong's #1052 BDB #112

**Translation:** ...and took the bodies of Saul and his sons from off the wall at Beth-shan. Obviously, since Israel had been defeated in battle, this had to be a surreptitious move against the Philistines. So the retrieving of the bodies would have taken place in the dead of night. They needed at least an hour or two head start in order to evade the Philistine soldiers who occupied Beth-shan.

## 1Samuel 31:12d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וּ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253

## 1Samuel 31:12d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bôw' (בּוֹא) [pronounced boh]	<i>to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #935 BDB #97
Yâbêsh (יָבֵשׁ) [pronounced yaw <sup>B</sup> -VEYSH]	<i>to be dry, dried up, withered; transliterated Jabesh</i>	cognate of verb (Strong's #3001); acts as a proper noun; with the directional hê	Strong's #3003 BDB #386

**Translation:** **They returned** [lit., *came*] **to Jabesh...** These men greatly insulted the Philistines. They came and stole the bodies which marked the victory of Philistia, and burned the bodies so that this display could not be continued. The city of Jabesh was far enough away that the Philistines of Beth-shan would not be positive as to who took the bodies.

## 1Samuel 31:12e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וּ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
sâraph (סָרַף) [pronounced saw-RAHF]	<i>to suck in, to absorb, to drink in, to swallow down; to absorb or consume [with fire], to burn; to bake [bricks]</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #8313 BDB #976
ʿêth (אֵת) [pronounced ayth]	untranslated mark of a direct object; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	affixed to a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #853 BDB #84
shâm (שָׁמָּה) [pronounced shawm]	<i>there; at that time, then; therein, in that thing</i>	adverb	Strong's #8033 BDB #1027

**Translation:** **...and burned them there.** The idea was to completely destroy the bodies so that they could not be hung again for public display. Burning bodies is unusual for the Jews to do—in fact this was a practice generally reserved for grievous moral sins (Lev. 20:14 21:9 Joshua 7:15–25). Barnes suggests<sup>26</sup> this was done because Saul was beheaded; his body had been humiliated and burning his body somehow fixed all that. Barnes further suggests that this kept the Philistines from humiliating the bodies again (if it was discovered where they were). I suspect that in their minds they were offering up Saul to God as a sacrifice; however this would not necessarily be recorded so that this would never become standard practice. After all, believers today cannot distinguish between doctrine and what is recorded in the gospels or the book of Acts. They attempt to copy what they see done in those books, not fully realizing just how horribly imperfect their attempts are.

Almost invariably, Jews buried their bodies, as they believed in a resurrection. This is why Joseph's bones were carried into the Land of Promise—so that when he stood up, he would stand up in the land given to him by God. In any case, it was not a total cremation, as the bones were buried (1Sam. 31:13 2Sam. 21:12).

<sup>26</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, 1Sam. 31:12.

Keil and Delitzsch point out<sup>27</sup> that the Chaldee rendering suggest that the bodies are not burned, but that incense or something along those lines, is burned; sort of a purification or religious rite, which is in line with the burials of some kings (2Chron. 16:14 21:19 Jer. 34:5). The problem with that interpretation is, that the Hebrew text really does not allow for it.

Clarke puts this to rest, using reason and logic: *It has been denied that the Hebrews burnt the bodies of the dead, but that they buried them in the earth, or embalmed them, and often burnt spices around them, etc. These no doubt were the common forms of sepulture, but neither of these could be conveniently practiced in the present case. They could not have buried them about Beth-shan without being discovered; and as to embalming, that was most likely out of all question, as doubtless the bodies were now too putrid to bear it. They therefore burnt them, because there was no other way of disposing of them at that time so as to do them honor; and the bones and ashes they collected, and buried under a tree or in a grove at Jabesh.*<sup>28</sup>

Let me add one more point: if you are going to bury their *bones*, as it clearly says in the next verse, then it makes little sense to think that only incense was burned in this verse. Their bones are buried because their flesh was burned. There is no reason whatsoever to try to put some sort of a twist on this clear reading of Scripture.

<b>And so they take their bones and so they bury [them] under the tamarisk in Jabesh-ward. And so they fast seven of days.</b>	1Samuel 31:13	<b>They then took their bones and buried [them] under a tamarisk tree in Jabesh. Then they fasted [for] seven days.</b>
--	------------------	---

**They then took their bones and buried them under a tamarisk tree in Jabesh. After the burial, they fasted for seven days.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	And they took their bones, and buried them in the wood of Jabes: and fasted seven days.
Masoretic Text	And so they take their bones and so they bury [them] under the tamarisk in Jabesh-ward. And so they fast seven of days.
Peshitta	And they took their bones and buried them under the almond tree of Jabesh and fasted seven days.
Septuagint	And they take their bones, and bury them in the field that is in Jabis, and fast seven days.

Significant differences: The bones are buried in a field in the Greek; under a tamarisk tree in the Hebrew. It is an almost tree in the Peshitta and the woods in the Latin.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	They buried the bones under a small tree in Jabesh, and for seven days, they went without eating to show their sorrow.
The Message	They then buried the bones under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh and fasted in mourning for seven days.
NLT	Then they took their remains and buried them beneath the tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and they fasted for seven days.

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<sup>27</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; 1Sam. 31:12.

<sup>28</sup> Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, 1Sam. 31:12.



God's Word™

They took the bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh. Then they fasted seven days.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

MKJV

And they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree at Jabesh. And they fasted seven days.

Young's Updated LT

And they take their bones, and bury them under the tamarisk in Jabesh, and fast seven days.

**What is the gist of this verse?** The men of Jabesh buried the remaining bones under a tamarisk tree in Jabesh. They also fasted for seven days.

### 1Samuel 31:13a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, and then, then, and</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
lâqach (לָקַח) [pronounced <i>law-KAHKH</i> ]	<i>to take, to take away, to take in marriage; to seize</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #3947 BDB #542
ʿêth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]	generally untranslated; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
ʿetsem (עֲצָמִים) [pronounced <i>geh-TSEM</i> ]	<i>bone, substance, self; self-same; corporeality, duration, existence, and therefore identity</i>	feminine plural noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #6106 BDB #782

**Translation: They then took their bones...** The Jews apparently did not have some sort of crematorium. They did have a fire, but the fire did not burn hot enough to do anything but consume the flesh. There were still bones to be disposed of; and those bones they buried.

### 1Samuel 31:13b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
qâbar (קָבַר) [pronounced <i>kaw-BAHR</i> ]	<i>to bury, to heap up a mound</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6912 BDB #868
tachath (תַּחַת) [pronounced <i>TAH-khahth</i> ]	<i>underneath, below, under, beneath; instead of, in lieu of; in the place [in which one stands] [when found in accusative position]; on the basis of</i>	preposition	Strong's #8478 BDB #1065

## 1Samuel 31:13b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿêshel (עֵשֶׁל) [pronounced AY-she]	<i>tamarisk tree, tree; trees, grove</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #815 BDB #79
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
Yâbêsh (יָבֵשׁ) [pronounced yaw <sup>b</sup> -VEYSH]	<i>to be dry, dried up, withered; transliterated Jabesh</i>	cognate of verb (Strong's #3001); acts as a proper noun; with the directional hê	Strong's #3003 BDB #386

**Translation:** ...and buried [them] under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh. Although I have seen a couple of commentators make some kind of a deal out of this sort of tree; I think that there is really no substantiation for it. I should add that there are only two other times when this tree is found in Scripture (Gen. 21:33 1Sam. 22:6). One problem with many believers is, they cannot distinguish between something which they are told to do as opposed to reading the historical account of what someone has done. They ignore every mandate in Scripture, yet get fanatical about a practice which this or that person did in Scripture. For this reason, it is very lucky that not many people know much about the book of Judges. There are many stories from that book which I would not care to see emulated.

Keil and Delitzsch write a wonderful summary at this point: *In this ignominious fate of Saul there was manifested the righteous judgment of God in consequence of the hardening of his heart. But the love which the citizens of Jabesh displayed in their treatment of the corpses of Saul and his sons, had reference not to the king as rejected by God, but to the king as anointed with the Spirit of Jehovah, and was a practical condemnation, not of the divine judgment which had fallen upon Saul, but of the cruelty of the enemies of Israel and its anointed. For although Saul had waged war almost incessantly against the Philistines, it is not known that in any one of his victories he had ever been guilty of such cruelties towards the conquered and slaughtered foe as could justify this barbarous revenge on the part of the uncircumcised upon his lifeless corpse.*<sup>29</sup>

## 1Samuel 31:13c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וּ) [pronounced wah]	<i>and so, then</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
tsûwm (צוּם) [pronounced zoom]	<i>to abstain from food, to fast</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6684 BDB #847
shib <sup>er</sup> âh (שִׁבְעָה) [pronounced shib <sup>er</sup> -GAW]	<i>seven</i>	numeral feminine construct	Strong's #7651 BDB #987

<sup>29</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; 1Sam. 31:11–13.

## 1Samuel 31:13c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
yâmîym (יָמִים) [pronounced yaw- MEEM]	days, a set of days; time of life, lifetime; a specific time period, a year	masculine plural noun	Strong's #3117 BDB #398

**Translation:** Then they fasted [for] seven days. This was not an arbitrary choice for this city. Nahash the Ammonite had given them seven days to find themselves a savior, which he was sure they would be unable to do. In that time, they found Saul, who came and delivered them. So they fasted for seven days in remembrance of Saul and what he had done for them (1Sam. 11:1–11). This did not mean that no one ate or drank anything for an entire week; this probably means that they did not eat at all during the day and that they may have eaten at sundown.

Edersheim: *The brave men of Jabesh-gilead marched all the weary night; they crossed Jordan; they climbed that steep brow, and silently detached the dead bodies from the walls. Reverently they bore them across the river, and ere the morning light were far out of reach of the Philistines. Though it had always been the custom in Israel to bury the dead, they would not do so to these mangled remains, that they might not, as it were, perpetuate their disgrace. They burned them just sufficiently to destroy all traces of insult, and the bones they reverently laid under their great tamarisk tree, themselves fasting for sever days in token of public mourning. All honour to the brave men of Jabesh-gilead, whose deed Holy Scripture has preserved to all generations!*<sup>30</sup>

There is a certain breed of Christian that fasts. One told me the other day that I would be surprised how often fasting is mentioned in the Bible. Again, this is a situation where it is *monkey see, monkey do*. They cannot distinguish between particular historical instances in Scripture and doctrinal application. It is important that you know that fasting is not an important part of the Christian way of life; or the Jewish way of life. We covered the **Doctrine of Fasting** back in 1Samuel 7:6.

Rather the review the entire **Doctrine of Fasting**, why don't I instead review...

### A Summary of the Doctrine of Fasting

1. Fasting is nowhere prescribed for believers in the Old or New Testaments. It is not found in the Mosaic Law nor is it found in any of the epistles; it is not found as a command, nor even as a suggestion.
2. In the beginning, there are a few instances of fasting which were spontaneous and voluntary, and appropriate to the circumstances. Feasts were often times of celebration and the gathering of believers together. When under great pressure, fasting was more appropriate.
3. Fasting was institutionalized by Queen Esther, although it is not clear that this was given God's stamp of approval.
4. Many of the times that fasting is mentioned in the New Testament, it is with a negative connotation and it is observed by an unbeliever who is observing the ceremonial fasting of his day.
5. There are at least three instances of believers fasting in the New Testament during the pre-canon period of the Church Age, which implies that there might be an occasion for a believer to fast. Therefore, when might it be appropriate to fast?
  - 1) Missionaries often endure great hardships and there is a great likelihood that missionaries will suffer hunger as a part of their ministry. It may occur once or twice and it may occur more often. Even though this is imposed fasting, Paul spoke of this twice in his second epistle to the Corinthians.
  - 2) Although this suggestion makes me positively grimace: there might be an important meeting of the congregation or of the deacons of a church which goes long, theoretically extending it into a meal time.

<sup>30</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 509.

## A Summary of the Doctrine of Fasting

The time spent in this meeting during meal time is a fast.

- 3) It is reasonable that, the time between when you get off work and when Bible class begins is such a short interval that you must rush off to Bible class without eating. That is a fast.
- 4) Personally, over the past seven years, I have gotten up at 4 in the morning almost every morning to study and to write, when, on many of those mornings, I would rather roll over and go back to sleep. That, for all intents and purposes, is a type of fasting. Now, I am not losing sleep nor am I possessed with great dedication. I have simply found that, at this time in the morning, I am least likely to be disturbed and I am wide-awake (I am a morning person); therefore, this is the most logical time for me to engage in this activity. Only on occasion do I go for any period of time without food (which has absolutely no spiritual connotation, as it is prior to going out for a morning jog); and most of the time I have enjoyed a reasonable amount of sleep. The voluntary setting aside of this time for spiritual things is equivalent, or at least analogous, to fasting in the Old Testament.
- 5) In a marriage, there might be various points in time when a married couple attend Bible class when they would rather have marital relations. Such a situation is probably closer in spirit to the act of spiritual fasting, and it throws in the added bonus of two people acting as a married unit, as opposed to acting like two people who are simply legally bound to one another.
- 6) Now, this would **not** be a spiritual fast: you want God to give you something, so you starve yourself and pray for this thing for a few hours, figuring if God sees your dedication (and meager suffering), that He might give you what you want. Might there be a time when you forgo a meal in order to pray? That is possible; however, the previous scenarios are more likely to occur with great frequency. Again, be aware of the actual difference between the preparation time involved for a meal in the ancient world and a meal now. When one went without dinner in the ancient world, this saved perhaps 5 or more man hours of preparation. That is a lot of time which could be devoted to spiritual things. However, today, passing on a meal might save maybe one man hour (apart from the time spent consuming the meal).
- 7) What you should understand from all this is that, as a believer, God has not called you to periodically skip meals in order to pray for something. There certainly might be an occasion for sacrifice and an occasion to give up this or that, but typically you are not going to, once a month, skip your meals for a day in order to engage in some sort of spiritual activity. Nowhere can we derive this sort of ceremony or activity from the Old or New Testaments. Moses did not tell the Jews to do this; and Paul did not tell us to do this.
- 8) Just as important: you are not going to go without food for a day so that you can *suffer as Christ suffered* or *so you can suffer for Christ*. Don't be a damned idiot! Our sufferings cannot be compared to those of Christ, whether they are self-imposed or not; and the Bible does not call for us to ceremonially suffer as believers. Obviously from the two passages in II Corinthians already alluded to, Paul did indicate that there were many times that he *suffered for Christ*. However, he did not set apart some time each month or each year to inflict himself with pain, hunger or sleeplessness. Paul was on the front lines in the Angelic Conflict and, as such a one, he would suffer various problems, pains and deprivations. Paul did not impose these things upon himself nor did he look for these things—they were a natural result of his great spiritual impact.

### A Summary of the Doctrine of Fasting

(1) If you are a new believer and you are pondering this, please understand that God is not calling on you to fast in any way. Do not think that, after a year or two that you, as a believer, will need to set aside time to fast. In the instances and examples mentioned, these things may occur. There is going to be less forethought and less planning than you might think. In fact, what is likely, is, in the midst of a fast (or activity which is analogous to fasting), you may suddenly think to yourself, "I'll be damned; I'm fasting right now!" Given your spiritual growth at that time, it will be more natural than it will be forced. Often, whatever suffering or deprivation might be involved will be minimal.

**Do not think that, after a year or two that you, as a believer, will need to set aside time to fast.**

6. Finally, nowhere in the Old or New Testaments is fasting ever required in any way. There are no laws which require us to fast; no regulations, no commands by Paul. There was a ceremonial fasting set up by Queen Esther.

These points were taken direction from the **Doctrine of Fasting**. If you want more information or the justification for any of these points, then examine that doctrine.

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to the Chart and Map Index](#)

In the previous few chapters, we have the last few days of Saul and the last few days of David before he is made a king. They actually find themselves, from time to time, in parallel situations. Therefore, let us examine...

### The Contrast Between David and Saul

Saul	David
Saul looked like a king (1Sam. 9:1–2).	David did not look like a king, even to his own father (1Sam. 16:6–12).
What was emphasized about Saul was his kingly exterior (1Sam. 9:1–2).	What was emphasized about David was his royal interior (1Sam. 16:7).
Saul disobeyed clear orders from God (1Sam. 15:1–15).	David was clearly authority-oriented (1Sam. 18:5) and he acted with great wisdom (1Sam. 18:30).
The key is what is in a man's own soul. Even though Saul made a million errors, his son Jonathan was a great man of integrity (1Sam. 20).	Even though David was a man of integrity, his brothers (at least his elder brother) could be a total jerk (1Sam. 17:28–30).
Saul continually reacted to David's integrity with bitterness, fear and jealousy (1Sam. 18:18:7–9).	David did not react to the sins of others (1Sam. 17:28–29).
Saul's soul was filled with mental attitude sins (1Sam. 18:8–9, 12, 15, 28).	David had relatively few mental attitude sins, and when he had them and acted on them, he later rebounded and got back into fellowship ().
Saul's mental attitude sins eventually began to manifest themselves in overt sins (1Sam. 18:10–11 19:9–10).	David, on the other hand, acted without rancor (1Sam. 18:30). This did not mean that he was naive or oblivious; David knew that he could not trust Saul (1Sam. 19) but that he could trust Saul's son, Jonathan (1Sam. 20).

<b>The Contrast Between David and Saul</b>	
<b>Saul</b>	<b>David</b>
Saul would continually lie and manipulate others to get what he wanted (1Sam. 18:17–22, 25–27).	David was grace-oriented (1Sam. 18:18, 23) and he did not take any shortcuts to get what he wanted (1Sam. 24–26).
When Saul got out of fellowship, his first response was not to get back into fellowship, but to <i>give his side of the story</i> (1Sam. 13:9–14 15:1–21).	David got out of fellowship; however, at some point, he realized his error and got back into fellowship without any self-justification (1Sam. 23:1–4—this is right after David had lied to the priests and had gone to Gad for asylum).
Even when Saul seemed to confess his sin, he still had to give his side of the story (1Sam. 15:24–25).	When David got back into fellowship, he spent no time at all justifying his past actions (1Sam. 22:20–23:5).
This does not mean that Saul always did that which was wrong and that he was 100% a worthless king (1Sam. 14:47–48).	These previous points mean that David sometimes did not act intelligently and with integrity (1Sam. 21–27).
Saul, as the representative of God as king of Israel, would not fight Goliath (1Sam. 17:1–11).	David, as a very young man, recognized that the battle was the Lord's and stood up to Goliath (1Sam. 17:31–51).
Saul used religious language to get what he wanted and to manipulate others (1Sam. 18:17).	When David spoke of anything to do with God, he put his money where his mouth is (1Sam. 17:45–50 1Sam. 23:1–5).
Saul's word meant nothing (1Sam. 14:24–46 18:17–19 19:6, 9–10, 15 20:30–33 24:16–22).	David's word was his bond (1Sam. 20:8–17).
Saul kills all of the adult male priests in Nob (1Sam. 22:1–19).	David provided a safe haven for the one surviving young priest (1Sam. 22:20–23).
Saul used Israel's nation army to settle a personal score with David—again and again (1Sam. 19:11 23:24 26:2).	David used the men who attached themselves to him to protect certain individuals and particular cities which were in danger (1Sam. 23:1–5 25:4–8).
God will not speak to Saul, and we know that God does not generally communicate with those who are out of fellowship. One of the few times Saul called for the ephod, he does not appear to use it (1Sam. 14:18). When Saul does not receive immediate guidance from God, he goes to a necromancer in order to raise up Samuel for guidance (1Sam. 28).	David determines God's will through the use of the Ephod. The Ephod is in David's possession because Saul killed all of the priests at Nob and the youngest escaped to David with the Ephod (1Sam. 23:9 30:7).
Saul and his army are defeated by the Philistines (1Sam. 31).	Although the Amalekites take the possessions and families of David's army, David tracks them down and wipes them out (1Sam. 30).

We are told that the men of the Old Testament are examples for us. We learn a great deal from studying and contrasting Saul and David. It is clear that Saul is not always evil and not everything that he does is wrong; and it is clear that David does not always do the right thing. What we find in studying these two men is a contrast between self-involvement and grace-orientation; between manipulation and integrity; between self-justification and rebound, and between willful disobedience and wisdom.

[Return to Chapter Outline](#)

[Return to the Chart and Map Index](#)

Now might be an excellent time to examine **1Chron. 10**, which is almost word-for-word the same as this chapter.

Apart from that, we have completed the book of 1Samuel, which began with the birth of Samuel and ends with the death of Saul. Samuel bridged the gap between the era of priests to the era of prophets; and Saul ushered in the kingdom era of Israel.