

## 16.04 Saul's First War with Philistines; Offers Sacrifice (1 Samuel 13)

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows

[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that usually should not be read. It also indicates answers to questions.

### Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.

**Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach:** Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *mattock, sickle, plowshare*: (see pictures at end of this lesson)
- *smith*: a person who works with shaping and sharpening metal; a blacksmith
- *raiding parties*: a group of people who attack a place or group

### Scripture: (ESV)

1 Samuel 13:1 Saul lived for one year and then became king, and when he had reigned for two years over Israel, 2 Saul chose three thousand men of Israel. Two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and the hill country of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin. The rest of the people he sent home, every man to his tent. 3 Jonathan defeated the garrison of the Philistines that was at Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, “Let the Hebrews hear.” 4 And all Israel heard it said that Saul had defeated the garrison of the Philistines, and also that Israel had become a stench to the Philistines. And the people were called out to join Saul at Gilgal.

5 And the Philistines mustered to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen and troops like the sand on the seashore in multitude. They came up and encamped in Michmash, to the east of Beth-aven. 6 When the men of Israel saw that they were in trouble (for the people were hard pressed), the people hid themselves in caves and in holes and in rocks and in tombs and in cisterns, 7 and some Hebrews crossed the fords of the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul was still at Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

8 He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattering from him. 9 So Saul said, “Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the peace offerings.” And he offered the burnt offering. 10 As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came. And Saul went out to meet him and greet him. 11 Samuel said, “What have you done?” And Saul said, “When I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines had mustered at Michmash, 12 I said, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the favor of the Lord.’ So I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering.” 13 And Samuel said to Saul, “You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the Lord your God, with which he commanded you. For then the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. 14 But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.” 15 And Samuel arose and went up from Gilgal. The rest of the people went up after Saul to meet the army; they went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin.

And Saul numbered the people who were present with him, about six hundred men. 16 And Saul and Jonathan his son and the people who were present with them stayed in Geba of Benjamin, but the Philistines encamped in Michmash. 17 And raiders came out of the camp of the Philistines in three companies. One company turned toward Ophrah, to the land of Shual; 18 another company turned toward Beth-horon; and another company turned toward the border that looks down on the Valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness.

19 Now there was no blacksmith to be found throughout all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, “Lest

the Hebrews make themselves swords or spears.” 20 But every one of the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen his plowshare, his mattock, his axe, or his sickle, 21 and the charge was two-thirds of a shekel for the plowshares and for the mattocks, and a third of a shekel for sharpening the axes and for setting the goads. 22 So on the day of the battle there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people with Saul and Jonathan, but Saul and Jonathan his son had them. 23 And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the pass of Michmash.

### **Introduction/Review:**

Imagine living at the time before Saul first became king. The Philistia, the main enemy, was constantly taking over cities and adding them to their land. In order to avoid fighting, Israelites escaped into their mountains, where the land wasn't good to farm. It would have been hard to farm anyway because if someone needed a plowshare, sickle (*coulter* in the KJV), an axe, or a mattock sharpened, he would have to go down to Philistia to get them sharpened.

Why couldn't they sharpen their own tools? Because the Philistines so controlled them that they wouldn't allow a smith (blacksmith) to work in Israel. Why didn't Israel fight the Philistines? Well, they had no swords or spears. That was why the Philistines didn't allow smiths: they didn't want anyone making swords or spears. Once in a while God had raised up a man like Samson to set the Philistines back a bit, but they had been a constant trouble for years and years. Maybe if Israel had a king like all the other nations, they could be assured of having a leader all the time. If the king died, his son could lead. Instead, they were tired of waiting on God to raise up a leader only when He chose to do so.

So God gave Israel Saul, their first king—tall and handsome! He had been brilliant in the war for Jabesh Gilead against Nahash and the Ammonites. Yet, God was displeased that Israel was rejecting Him and rejecting Samuel. He let them know right after that great victory in Gilead by sending so much rain and thunder on their assembly that they were scared to death. That rain also ruined their wheat harvest.

Nevertheless, Samuel assured them in 1 Samuel 12:24, “Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider what great things he has done for you.”

### **Story:**

#### ***Assembled for war***

All 330,000 Israelite soldiers went home after the battle at Gilead and the rain experience at Gilgal, but after two years Saul chose 3000 to come back to him in order to make up an army. He was stationed with 2000 men at Michmash [locate this and the following places a map found below] and the hill country of Bethel. Jonathan his son, was stationed with 1000 men at Gibeah, their hometown, but left there and went to Geba, another town in the tribe of Benjamin. There he fought the Philistines and defeated a stronghold of them.

When Saul heard about Jonathan's victory, he sent messengers throughout the land to blow a trumpet, calling more soldiers. You see, some Philistines had died in Jonathan's battle, and now the Philistines were riled. Saul retreated to Gilgal, where Israel had first camped when entering the land and where the people had been so happy about Saul's first victory two years previous.

#### ***Tired of waiting***

Earlier, Samuel had told Saul to wait seven days for him at Gilgal. ✓It seems as if this was a standing rule. Saul really depended on Samuel to know what God wanted him to do, and so he waited for Samuel these seven days.

While Saul waited with his 3000 soldiers, the Philistines gathered an army that included 30,000 chariots, 6000 horsemen, and so many marching soldiers that they couldn't be counted—“like the sand on the seashore.” (This sounds like the number of Midianites in Gideon's day.) This great Philistine army marched right up to Michmash where Saul had been just seven days before.

Woooo! Here they were: a mere 3000 Israelite soldiers without spears or swords except for two, carried by

Saul and Jonathan, about to fight twice as many horsemen, ten times as many charioteers, and who knows how many more foot soldiers! And all of these had swords and spears!

I would have been scared. So were the Israelite soldiers. Many deserted. Some went to join the Philistines; some ran away and hid in caves, in thick stands of trees, in rocks, in high places, or in pits. Some even crossed the Jordan to hide in Gilead.

Only one-fifth of Saul's army (about 600 men) stayed with him in Gilgal, but they were shaking with fear. Each day more deserted. Finally, the seventh day dawned, when Samuel was to join them and tell them God's will. All day Saul and his few men waited. Samuel didn't arrive at noon nor by 3:00 p.m. By the end of the day, he still wasn't there.

✓Saul was beside himself. His men were deserting, the huge Philistine army was poised to strike, and Samuel wasn't coming to offer a sacrifice. Something had to be done!

"Bring burnt offerings and peace offerings to me," ordered Saul. And Saul, not a priest but a king ✓who did not have personal communion with God, presumed he should offer the burnt offering and did so.

He had just finished offering this sacrifice when Samuel arrived. Saul went out to greet him.

### ***Punished for disobedience***

"What have you done?" demanded Samuel.

"Well, because the people were scattered from me and you didn't come when you said and the Philistines were gathered at Michmash, I thought the Philistines would come after us in Gilgal. I hadn't properly prayed with a sacrifice. Therefore, I forced myself and offered a burnt offering."

Samuel said, "You have done foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God which He commanded you. Your kingdom might have been established forever, but now it won't continue. The Lord has a man who loves Him who will be captain over His people because you didn't keep His Word."

Did you catch that? What has Samuel said about Saul's kingship? [He won't have a permanent line of kings because he has not kept God's commandment.] Sounds as if Saul has a problem trusting what God says to do, doesn't it?

Then, all these people—Saul, Samuel, Jonathan, and the 600 soldiers—went on to the area of Benjamin near Gibeah and Geba. Meanwhile, the Philistines camped at Michmash, sending out raiding parties to the west, north, and south and continuing to harass Israel.

### **Lessons from this lesson:**

- We see Jesus:

As Saul did not trust Samuel to come by the appointed time, "thus the scoffers of the latter days think the promise of Christ's coming is broken, because he does not come in their time, though it is certain he will come at the set time" ([1 Samuel 13 Commentary - Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible \(Complete\)](#) ([biblestudytools.com](http://biblestudytools.com))).

- Learn to trust the Lord rather than lean on your own understanding (Proverbs 3:5, 6).

### **Activities:**

- Play dough: mattock, sickle, plowshare, axe
- Snack: Use plastic sword toothpicks to pierce foods like cheese squares, grapes, broccoli, *etc.*
- Review questions: (Game: Place ten plastic toothpick swords (sometimes available at Wal-Mart) in a small transparent container, labeled "Philistines." Label another similar container "Israelites." For each correct answer, a student will transfer ("confiscate") one sword from the "Philistines" and place it in the

Israelite container.)

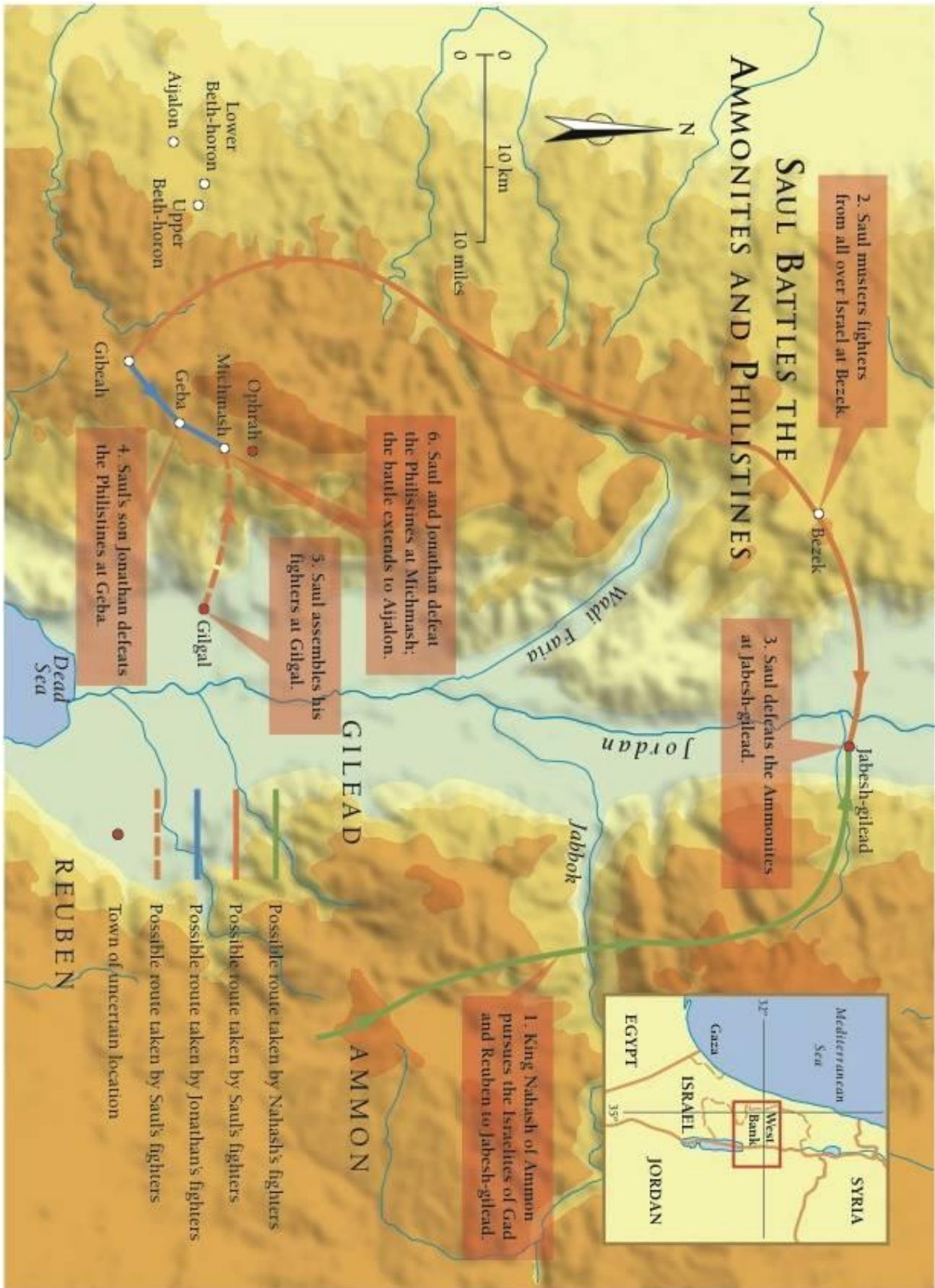
1. When Saul called 3000 soldiers, 2000 were with him. Who led the other 1000 soldiers? [Jonathan, Saul's son.]
2. Who was the first to defeat some Philistines, Saul or Jonathan? [Jonathan.]
3. Compare the number of Philistine soldiers to Israelite soldiers. [The Philistines had thirty thousand chariots, six thousand horsemen, and troops like the sand on the seashore. Israel had 3000 at first.]
4. Because the men of Israel were scared, what are two things they did? [Hid themselves caves, in thick stands of trees, in rocks, in high places, or in pits; some crossed Jordan to Gad and Gilead.]
5. How many Israelite soldiers were left with Saul and Jonathan after many deserted? [Six hundred.]
6. What did Saul do when Samuel didn't come at the expected time? [Offered his own burnt offering.]
7. Who came as soon as Saul had offered the burnt offering? [Samuel.]
8. Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the Lord your God." What was the consequence for Saul's disobedience? [The Lord would not establish Saul's kingdom over Israel forever; now his kingdom would not continue.]
9. Besides the number of soldiers, what other disadvantage did Israel have regarding weapons? [They had no swords.]
10. Why did Israel have no swords? [Because the Philistines had not allowed them.]

**Memory Verse[s]:** (ESV)

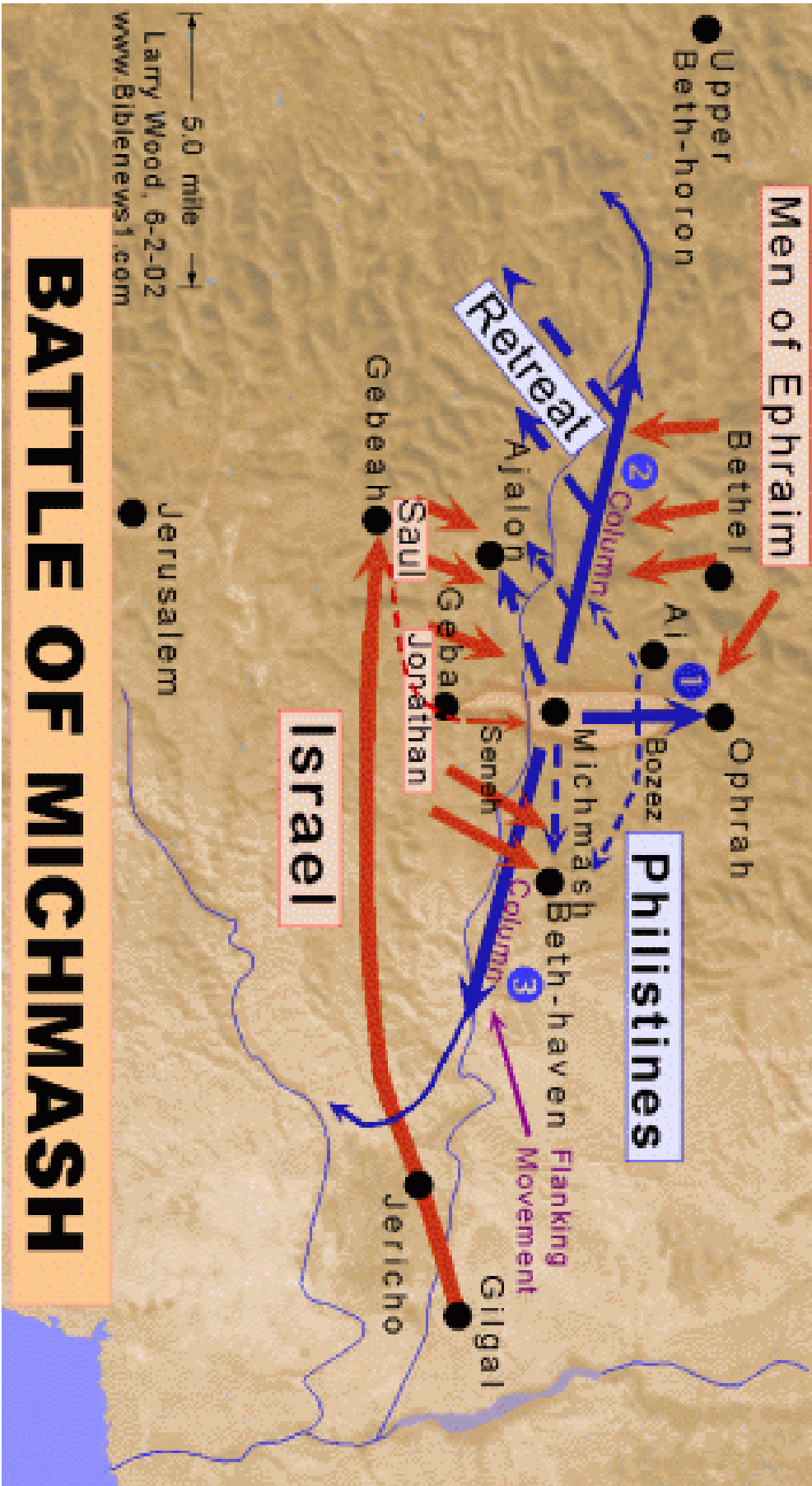
- 1 Samuel 12:20–25: And Samuel said to the people, "Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil. Yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart. And do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver, for they are empty. For the LORD will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you a people for himself. Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you, and I will instruct you in the good and the right way. Only fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you. But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king."

**Handwork:**

- Cut out about twelve 1-inch rocks from gray or brown paper. Glue onto another piece of paper to form an altar. Color grass or ground around the altar.





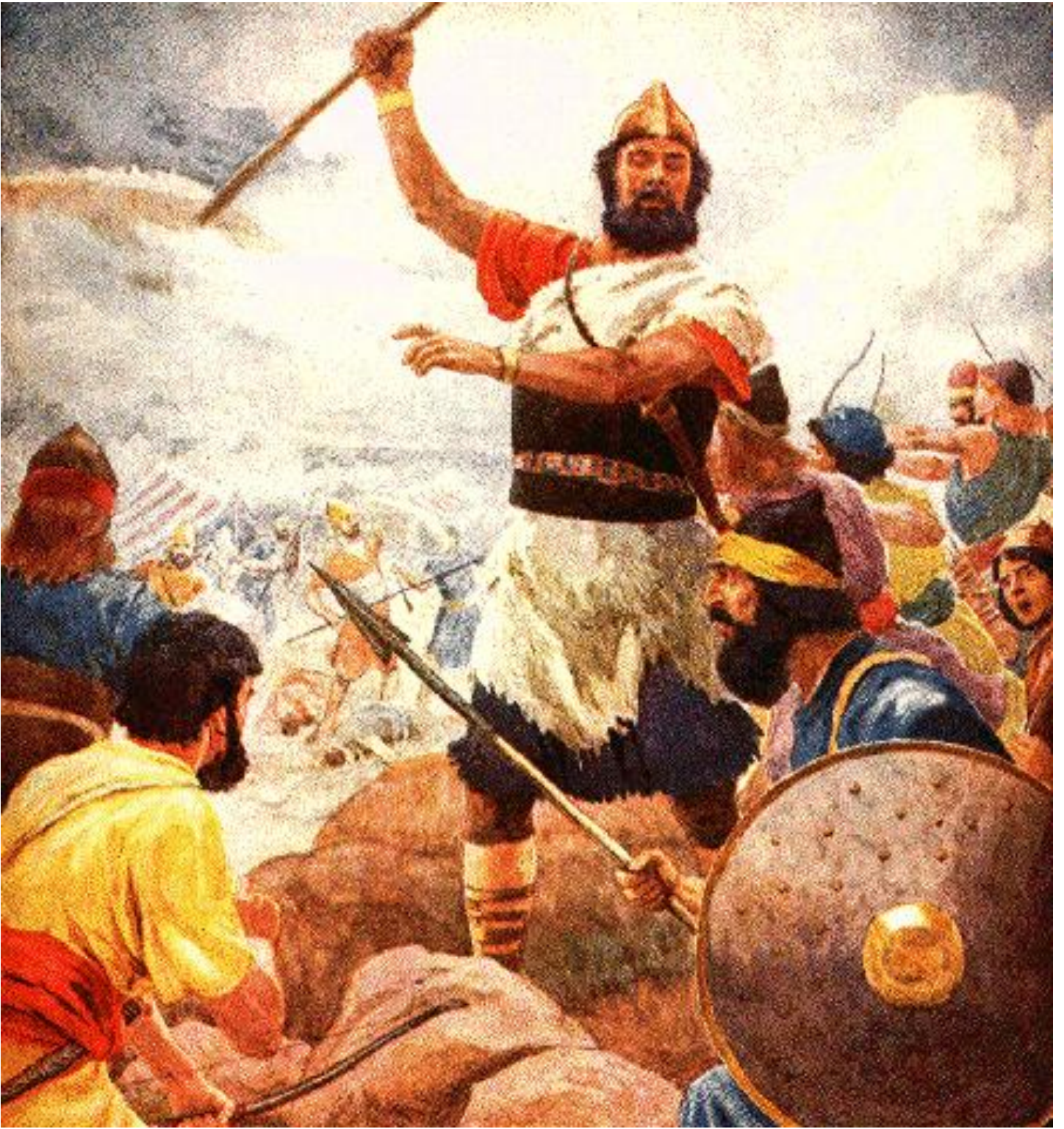


# BATTLE OF MICHMASH

# Map of Philistine Cities and Conquests







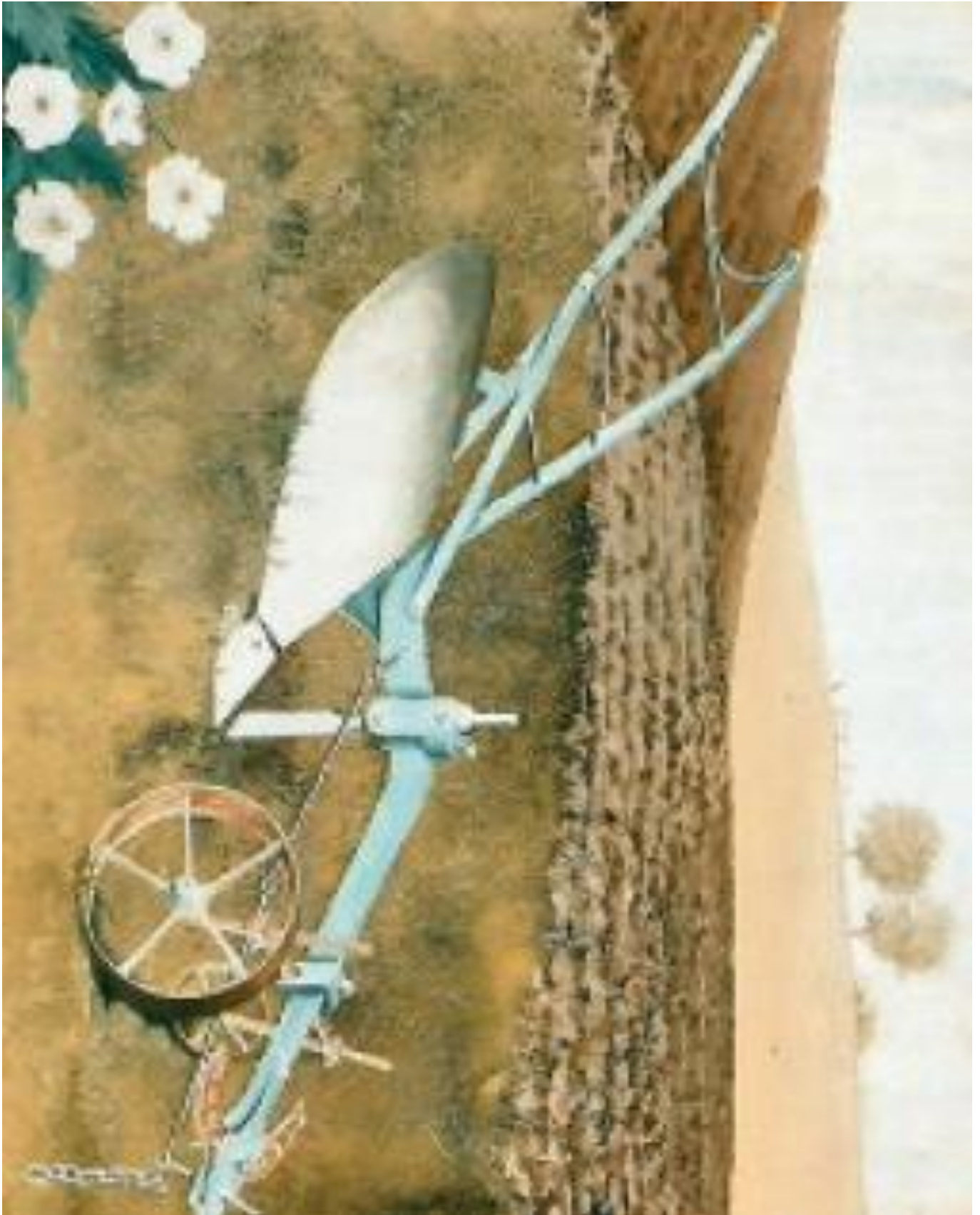
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