

# The Honey Incident: 1 Samuel 14.24-46

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## Scene one: Saul's curse on anyone who eats food

24. [Following LXX:] Now Saul committed a very rash act [or: MT: "The people were hard-pressed ...] on **that day**. He had laid an oath on the people, saying, "**Cursed** be anyone who eats food before it is evening and I have been avenged on my enemies." So none of the people **tasted** food.

## Scene two: Jonathan and the people in the forest

25. All the land entered a forest; and there was **honey** on the ground.  
26. When the land came into the forest, behold! The **honey** was dripping out; but they did not put their hands to their mouths, for they feared the oath.  
27. But Jonathan had not heard his father charge the people with the oath; so he extended the staff that was in his hand, and dipped the tip of it in the honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes brightened.  
28. Then one of the people said, "Your father swore to the people, saying, '**Cursed** be anyone who eats food **this day**.' And so the people are faint."  
29. Then Jonathan said, "My father has troubled the land; see how my eyes have brightened because I **tasted** a little of this **honey**.  
30. How much better if **today** the people had eaten freely of the spoil taken from their enemies; for now the scourging among the Philistines has not been great."  
31. After they had struck down the Philistines **that day** from Michmash to Aijalon, the people were very faint;  
32. so the people flew upon the spoil, and took sheep and oxen and calves, and **slaughtered** them on the ground; and the people ate them with the blood.

## Scene three: Saul and the people

33. Then it was reported to Saul, "Behold! The people are **sinning** against YHWH by eating with the blood." And he said, "You have dealt treacherously; roll a large stone before me **this day**."  
34. Saul said, "Disperse yourselves among the people, and say to them, 'Let all bring their oxen or their sheep, and **slaughter** them here, and eat; and do not **sin** against YHWH by eating with the blood.'" So all of the people brought their oxen with them that night, and **slaughtered** them there.  
35. And Saul built an altar to YHWH; it was the first altar that he built to YHWH.  
36. Then Saul said, "Let us go down after the Philistines by night and despoil them until the morning light; let us not leave one of them." They said, "**Do whatever seems good to you.**" But the priest said, "Let us draw near to God here."  
37. So Saul inquired [Heb, *sh'!*] of God, "Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will you give them into the hand of Israel?" But **he did not answer** him **that day**.  
38. Saul said, "Come here, all you leaders of the people; and let us find out how this **sin** has arisen **today**.  
39. For as YHWH lives who saves Israel, even if it is in my **son Jonathan, he shall surely die!**" But there was **no one among all the people who answered** him.  
40. He said to all Israel, "You shall be on one side, and I and my **son Jonathan** will be on the other side." The people said to Saul, "**Do what seems good to you.**"  
41. Then Saul said, "O YHWH, God of Israel, why have you not answered your servant **today**? If this guilt is in me or in my **son Jonathan**, O YHWH, God of Israel, give Urim; but if this guilt is in your people Israel, give Thummim." And Jonathan and Saul were indicated by the lot, but the people were cleared.  
42. Then Saul said, "Cast the lot between me and my **son Jonathan**." And Jonathan was taken.

## Scene four: Saul and Jonathan

43. Then Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have done." Jonathan told him, "I **tasted**, yes, **tasted** a little **honey** with the tip of the staff that was in my hand; behold! **I will die.**"  
44. Saul said, "God do so to me and more also; **you shall die, yes, die**, Jonathan!"  
45. Then the people said to Saul, "**Shall Jonathan die**, who has accomplished this great deliverance in Israel? Far from it! As YHWH lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground; for he has worked with God **today**." So the people ransomed Jonathan, and **he did not die**.  
46. Then Saul withdrew from pursuing the Philistines; and the Philistines went to their own place.