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# Goliath Mocks Isra'el
# First Samuel 17: 1-16

**Goliath mocks Isra'el DIG: What does Goliath's armor and weaponry reveal about him? What is a possible explanation for his extraordinary height? What other problems would it cause? Why didn't the Philistines and the Israelites charge each other? What motivated David to fight Goliath? What was at stake?**

**REFLECT: Is your attitude more like Sha'ul's or David's? Are there any areas in your life that you have tried to throw off your shackles and have your own way with God? Finances? Relationships? Career? How can that attitude be changed? How can David's actions of faith and courage be a model in your walk with God?**

**For forty days the Philistine came forward every morning and evening and took his stand,**
**denouncing the armies of Isra'el.**

**The Challenge of Goliath: Now the Philistines gathered their troops for war and assembled in the Elah Valley in Judah (17:1a).** At the heart of ancient Palestine is the region known as the Shephelah, a series of ridges and valleys connecting the Judean Mountains to the east with the wide, flat expanse of the Mediterranean plain. It is an area of breathtaking beauty, home to vineyards and wheat fields and forests of sycamore and terebinth. But it was also of great strategic importance.

Over the centuries, numerous battles have been fought for control of the region because the valleys rising from the Mediterranean plain offer those on the coast a clear path to the cities of Hebron, **Bethlehem**, and **Jerusalem**, in **the Judaean** highlands. **The Elah Valley** was the most important valley in Aijalon, in the north; but the most storied is **Elah**. **It** was where Saladin faced off against the knights of the Crusades in the twelfth century. **The Elah Valley** played a central role in the Maccabean wars with Syria more than a thousand years before that, and most

famously, during the days of TaNaKh, it was where the fledgling kingdom of **Isra'el** squared off against the armies of **the Philistines**.

**The Philistines pitched their camp** on the southern ridge **between Sokoh and Azekah in Ephes Dammim** (meaning *the boundary of blood,* for all the battles that had been fought there)**. Sha'ul and the men of Isra'el set up their camp** along the northern ridge **of the Elah Valley, and drew up their battle line opposite the Philistines.** The two armies looked at each other across a deep and narrow gorge cut out by a stream running down the middle of **the valley**. **The Philistines occupied one hill and the Israelites the other (17:1b-3).** Neither army dared to move. To attack meant descending down the ridge and then making a suicidal climb up to the enemy's position on the other side.[351]

Finally, **the Philistines** had enough. **A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp.** The word **champion** means *a challenger, a representative,* or *the man of the between.* In those days it was common for two armies to choose two representatives to fight each other. Whichever man won the individual battle, also won for his nation, the battle between the two armies. **The Philistines** sent **Goliath** out as **their** representative. In **the Israelite** camp, no one moved. Who could win against such an opponent?

**Goliath was nine feet, nine inches tall.** But **he** probably had a very serious medical condition. **He** looked and sounded like someone suffering from what is called acromegaly. A disease caused by a benign tumor of the pituitary gland. The tumor causes an overproduction of the human growth hormone, which would explain **Goliath's** extraordinary size. And furthermore, one of the common side effects of acromegaly is a vision problem. The pituitary tumors can grow to the point where they compress the nerves leading to the eyes, resulting in severely restricted eyesight and double vision.[352]

Not only was **his** height imposing, but **his** armor was also intimidating. **He had a bronze helmet on his head, and he wore a coat of scale armor of bronze,** fashioned from several hundred small **bronze** plates that resembled fish scales, **weighing one hundred and twenty-five pounds,** very advanced military equipment. **He had bronze armor protecting his legs and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. His shaft of his javelin was like a weaver's rod, and its iron point weighed twenty pounds.** Because **he** could not see very well, **his shield-bearer went ahead of him** and guided **him** to the spot where **he** would stand **(17:4-7).** The Hebrew word for **shield** here is not *magm*, which means a

small **shield**, but is *tzinah*, which is a large shield that would protect the whole body.



The only thing that matched **Goliath's** size was **his** bluster. **He stood and shouted to the armies of Isra'el, "Why do you come out and line up for battle?** There is no need for two whole armies to fight. **Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Sha'ul, so choose a man for yourselves, and have him come down to me. If he can fight me and kill me, we'll be your slaves; but if I beat him and kill him, you will become slaves and serve us. Then the Philistine** taunted and mocked **the Israelites, "This day I defy the armies of Isra'el. Give me a man and let us fight each other!"** Having thrown down the gauntlet, **the Philistine** challenger had no takers at first.

Before **Goliath**, there was **King Sha'ul**. That is, before going out to fight **the giant**, **David** had to overcome **his** own lethargic and unbelieving **king**. **Sha'ul**, after all, was **Isra'el's Goliath**: the tall and impressive champion, the one whose prowess would gain the nation victory. But the taller **Philistine** had bested **Sha'ul**, and now **he** was cowering in fear.[353] **When Sha'ul and all Isra'el heard the Philistine's words, they were shaken and terrified (17:8-11).** This sets the stage for **David's** heroic act.

**Rabbinic tradition teaches that Orpah** (see the commentary on **Ruth, to see link click An – Your People Will Be My People and Your God My God**) **was the mother of Goliath. In the Aggadah, it gives her real name was Harafu and that when she returned to Mo'av she was given a new husband, the Philistine king of Gath, resulting in a shrewd political alliance between Eglon King of Mo'av and the Philistines. In those days there were still giants living in Mo'av, but most of them had moved to Philistia. Rabbinic tradition also teaches that Orpah became the wife of one of those giants**

**and the mother of Goliath. Naomi's** other daughter-in-law, **Ruth**, chose the harder path of leaving **her** homeland of Mo'av to follow **the God of Isra'el**. **Ruth** gave birth to **David**, **a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22).** Even when the path is hard, it is better to follow **the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.**

**The Family of David:** While **the giant's** physical features are highlighted to impress us, it is **David's** covenant lineage that sets **him** apart: **Now David was the son of an Ephrathite Judah named Jesse.** It is clear from **Genesis 35:19**, **Ruth 4:11** and **Micah 5:2**, that **Ephrath(ah)** was another name for **Bethlehem** in **Judah** (opposed to **Bethlehem** in Zebulun – **Joshua 19:10**). **Jesse had eight sons, and in the time of Sha'ul he was very old – the years had taken their toll. Jesse's three oldest sons,** loyal warriors, **had followed Sha'ul into battle. The firstborn was Eli'av; the second was Avinadav; and the third was Shammah. David** may have been fifteen years old, and **the youngest. The three oldest followed Sha'ul, but David went back and forth from Sha'ul to tend his father's sheep at Bethlehem (17:12-15).**

**For forty days the Philistine came forward every morning and evening and took his stand** (Hebrew: *yatsar*)**,** denouncing **the armies of Isra'el (17:16).** The Bible uses the number **forty** for a definite period of testing. We can think of **Isra'el's forty** years in the wilderness **(Numbers 32:13)**, and **Yeshua's forty** days of temptation (see **The Life of Christ Bj – Jesus is Tempted in the Wilderness**). Therefore, **David's** arrival occurred at the exact point when **Isra'el's** army had completely failed the challenge set before them by **Goliath**.

**The psalter** agreed with **the Ruach** when **he** wrote: **Why do the** Gentile **nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? Why** do they even bother? **The kings of the earth take their stand** (Hebrew: *yatsar*) **against ADONAI and against His anointed,** saying: **Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles.** The kingdoms of this earth are by nature opposed to the rule of **YHVH** and **His Messiah**. However, **the One enthroned in heaven, laughs; ADONAI scoffs at them. He rebukes them in His anger and terrifies them in His wrath,** mocking the feeble attempts of anyone to overthrow **Him**, saying: But as for **Me, I** (in the emphatic position), **I have set My King on Tziyon, My holy mountain (Psalm 2:1-6).** After the bluster from **Goliath**, **God** will have the final say, not only with **the kings of the earth,** but also with **the Philistine giant**.

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for **Your** almighty strength and power and that **You** use when I am in trouble and I cry out to **You**. I don't need to worry if **You** will*

*hear me, for **You** have promised to come and to dwell with those who love **You**. **Yeshua answered and said to him: If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him (John 14:23).** It is so awesome that **Your** promises are always trustworthy. **For in Him (Yeshua the Messiah) all the promises of God are "Yes." (Second Corinthians 1:20a).** This comforts my soul. When I face an extremely terrible situation, **You** are right there with me. The outcome of the battle does not depend on my strength nor size; but in **Your** strength. It is a joy to trust and to obey **You**! In **the Name** of **Him** who sits at **Your** right hand. Amen*