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David Kills Goliath
First Samuel 17: 17-58

David kills goliath DIG: How would you describe the sibling rivalry between David and Eli'av? What might be the root cause of that jealousy? How did David seek to persuade Sha'ul to let him fight Goliath? Where does David find the confidence to face Goliath? Why did David take five smooth stones with him? How does David's attitude compare with Sha'ul's? What is the end result of David's boldness for Goliath? For the men of Isra'el and Y'hudah? For the Philistines? For David himself?

REFLECT: What's holding you back from taking the "bull by the horns" (or Goliath by the sling)? What do you fear might happen if you turned and faced the enemy who taunts you and defiles God? Having imagined that, re-write the end result with ADONAI on your side. Where have you seen God's name ridiculed or blasphemed? What could you have done to set the record straight? David's oldest brother thought he was conceited (17:28). How can you tell the difference between conceit and faith? What evidence of faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did David demonstrate in this chapter? As you look at your own life, how does this story affect you?

David knew that he would kill Goliath because the giant had insulted ADONAI.

David's Arrival at the Camp: Now Jesse said to his son David, who may have been about 15 at that time**, "Hurry to the camp and take these five bushels of roasted grain and ten loaves of bread to your brothers. Also bring these ten cheeses to the commander of their unit. Find out if your brothers are well, and bring back some token from them** so I can know that **they** are safe**. They are with Sha'ul and all the men of Isra'el in the Elah Valley, fighting against the Philistines" (17:17-19).**

Early in the morning David left the flock in the care of a shepherd, loaded up, and set out, just as his father had directed. David's obedience saved **the**

nation. **He reached the camp just as the army was going out to their battle positions and shouting the war cry. Isra'el and the Philistines had set up their battle lines facing each other** across **the Elah Valley. David left the roasted grain, loaves of bread and cheeses with the keeper of supplies, ran to the battle line and asked his brothers if they were well. As** providence would have it, just as **he was talking with them, Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, stepped out from his battle line and shouted his usual defiance – and David heard it (17:20-23). David** arrived at the very moment when the **Spirit**-less **Sha'ul** and **his** dispirited army were at their lowest point.

Their defeatist attitude proved **Isra'el** to be devoid of faith in **their God**. **Goliath's** challenge was really a test of their confidence in **YHVH**. It was as if **Goliath** was saying, "Am I not a pagan, **God**-hating **Philistine**? Then why won't any of you men of 'the living **God**,' come and fight me? You must not really believe in **Him** at all! In fact, you must believe that a nine-foot warrior is actually stronger than your 'living **God**' when it comes to a real battle."

This is the kind of test the world still delights to pose for believers, often with Goliath-like mockery. "We know what you teach, but let's see how you do when faced with real-life sensual temptation, or an opportunity to get rich by cheating. Let's see the look on your **God**-praising face when you receive a terrifying medical diagnosis or your stock portfolio crashes! Let's see how you respond when given an opportunity to cheat on an important college exam!" Behind **Goliath** was the same devil that wages spiritual warfare today. The issue is always the same, "Do you really trust a loving **God** of power and grace?"

Perceiving this spiritual dynamic helps us to understand **David's** shocking reaction to the sight before **him**. This may have been the first time that **he** had ever heard anyone blaspheme the name of **ADONAI**. How humiliated **David** must have been when **he** saw all **the Israelites run away in great fear (17:24).**[354]

Now while **the king** would not risk **his** own neck and fight **the** formidable **Philistine**, **he** was willing to richly **reward** anyone who would. **The Israelites had been saying to each other, "Do you see how this man keeps coming out? He comes out to defy Isra'el. Whoever kills him, the king will give a rich reward; he'll also give him his daughter in marriage and exempt his father's family from all** military **service and taxes in Isra'el."** Thinking of **his** family, **David** asked for some clarification and verification of what **he** had just

heard to make sure that it was just not a rumor. **So he said to the men standing with him, "What reward will be given to the one who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Isra'el? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" They repeated to him what they had been saying and told him, "This is what will be done for the one who kills Goliath" (17:25-27).**

Despite the reward, the only reason David did what he was about to do was for the glory of YHVH. David came to the contest in the name of ADONAI-Tzva'ot, and he wanted Goliath, the Philistine army, and all the Gentile nations to know that the true and living God was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

When Eli'av, David's oldest brother heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked, "Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness?" "**I know how conceited you** (but **David** was humble) **are and how wicked your heart is** (but this **is a** young **man after God's own heart**)**; you came down only to watch the battle."** Just as Joseph's older brothers reacted with jealous hatred to his dreams of sovereignty over them (see the commentary on **Genesis, to see link click Iz – Joseph's Dreams**), so also **David's older brother** misunderstood and angrily questioned **David's** motives for coming down to the battlefield. **David's** response to **Eli'av** was respectful but firm. **"Now what have I done?"** answered **David. "I only asked a question." He then turned away to someone else and brought up the same matter, and the men answered him as before.** Then **David's** contempt for **Goliath was overheard and reported to Sha'ul, and the king sent for him (17:28-31).**

David prepared before the battle: Finally **David** came to **Sha'ul**, being summoned because **the king** had heard of **David's** bold, defiant question **(17:26).** Undaunted by **his brothers** rebuke, **David said to Sha'ul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him."** It had been a long time since **Sha'ul** had such a brave volunteer, but **his** initial response was to dismiss **David**: **You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; but you are just an** inexperienced **youth** (Hebrew: *naur*) **and Goliath has been a warrior from his youth" (17:32-33).**

But David said to Sha'ul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I

went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by the hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defiled the armies of the living God. Then David said: **ADONAI, who rescued me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will rescue me from the paw of this Philistine!** Up until now no one else in the story has named the name of **ADONAI**. The others were cowards, because they had abandoned their only source of courage. Finally **Sha'ul** agreed **and said to David, "Go, may the LORD be with you" (17:34-37).** It was though **David** had given **the king** the courage and faith to speak again of **YHVH**.[355]

As a rule, the soldiers will reflect the spirit of their leader. And that was the problem, for **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** had departed from **Sha'ul** and **he** was left to **his** own limited resources.[356] When **Jonathan** attacked **the Philistine** outpost **(14:1-23)**, **Sha'ul** was merely a spectator, and **his** bad decisions almost cost them the victory. Here, once again, **Sha'ul** simply watched as **David** defeated the enemy single-handedly. Unfortunately, this would be **Sha'ul's** pattern of leadership to the tragic end of **his** life.[357]

Sha'ul still didn't get it. **He** tried to **dress David in his own armor – he put a bronze helmet on his head and gave him a coat of armor to wear. Isra'el** had yearned to have **a king like the** Gentile **nations (8:5).** So **God** gave **them Sha'ul**, and **he** was preparing **David** for battle just like **the Gentile giant**. **David buckled the king's sword on his armor and tried to walk around, but it** was too heavy and **he wasn't used to such equipment. Then David said to Sha'ul, "I can't move wearing these things, because I'm not used to them." So David took them off (17:38-39). David** refused to be like **Sha'ul**, or like **the** Gentile **nations**, or like **the Philistine**.

Then David took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag (17:40a). Why **five smooth stones**? **David** was merely being prepared. **ADONAI** had not promised that **he** would kill **Goliath** with the first **stone**. And what if **the Philistines** had attacked? How would **he** defend **himself**? **Five** would be just right. Such was **David's** alternative to conventional modes of self-defense.

And with his leather **sling in his hand, approached the Philistine (17:40b).** This was not a kid with a toy on the battlefield. It took an extraordinary amount of skill and practice, but in an experienced hand, the sling was a devastating weapon.

Shepherds could whip their slingshots six to seven times per second before hitting their target. An experienced **slinger** could kill or seriously injure a target 200 yards away with accuracy. **The Benjamites had seven hundred slingers, each of whom could sling a stone at a hair and not miss (Judges 20:16). They** could hit birds in flight. The **stones** released from **their slingshots** had the impact of firing a .45 caliber handgun. **David** was a master marksman . . . a sharpshooter, if you will.[358]

As Sha'ul watched David going out to meet Goliath, he said to Abner, commander of the army, "Abner, whose son is that young lad (Hebrew: *naar*)**?"** Notice that **Sha'ul** didn't ask who **David** was. **The king** could hardly forget **the red headed youth** (see **16:12,** from the Hebrew word *adom*, meaning *to be red*, the same as **Esau** in **Genesis 25:25**) that had been **his** court musician, but apparently had forgotten the name of **David's** father. **He** needed that information in order to **reward** the family for the victory (see **17:25b** above).[359] **Abner replied, "As surely as you live, your majesty, I don't know." The king said, "Find out whose son this young lad is" (17:55-56).**

David prevailed in the battle: **Meanwhile, Goliath, with his** limited eyesight and double vision (see **Cp – Goliath Mocks Isra'el**), had **his shield bearer in front of him** to guide **him. As he came closer to David he** was finally able to see **him. The Philistine looked David up and down and had nothing but scorn for what he saw – a boy with ruddy cheeks, red hair and good looks.** Shepherds carried a **staff** that they held at the center. **It** was used not only for support in climbing hills, but also for the purpose of beating bushes and low brushwood in which the flocks stray, and where snakes and other reptiles could be found. **It** would also be used for correcting the shepherd **dogs** and making **them** obey.[360] Enraged, **Goliath said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" David** had only one **staff**. **Goliath** saw two. **And the Philistine cursed David by his Philistine gods,** saying: **Come here to me and I'll give your flesh to the birds and the wild animals (17:41-44 CJB).** Why didn't **Goliath** go to **David**? **He** couldn't. **He** was a statue. **The giant's** supposed greatest strength, **his** height and size, was **his** greatest weakness. On top of that, **he** could hardly see.

What happened next was historic.

David preserved God's name: **David** was undaunted and **said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I**

come against you in the name of ADONAI-Tzva'ot, the God of the armies of Isra'el, whom you have defiled (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Af – The Problem of Holy War in the TaNaKh**)**. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole** Gentile **world will know that there is a God in Isra'el. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that ADONAI saves; for the battle is Ha'Shem's and He will give all of you into our hands (17:45-47).** Just as **David** was confident that **he** would be victorious over **Goliath**, **he** was also confident that **Isra'el** would be victorious over **the Philistines**.

The talking was over. **As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David**, taking the offensive rather quickly, **ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him** powered by courage and strength**.** What could **Goliath** do? **He** was carrying over a hundred pounds of armor. **He** was prepared for a battle at close range where **he** could stand, immobile, warding off blows with **his** armor and delivering a mighty thrust of **his javelin**. **He** watched **David** approach, first with scorn, then with surprise, and then with anger. **He** seemed oblivious to what was happening or the danger **he** was in.[361]



While still **running, David reached into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead** (Hebrew: *metsch*)**, his** only point of vulnerability, **and the giant fell face down on the ground.** In boxing terms, it was a technical knockout within 5 seconds in the first round. **The stone** had stunned **the giant**, and now **the sword** must **kill him**. **David took hold of the Philistine's** heavy **sword** with both hands **and drew it from the sheath.**

After killing him, David cut off his head with the sword. Thus, David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down Goliath and killed him (17:48-51a). He was too big, too slow, and too blurry eyed to comprehend the way the tables had been turned until it was too late.

When the Philistines saw that their hero (Hebrew: *gibor* meaning a mighty one) had been decapitated with **his** own **sword, they turned and ran. Then the men of Isra'el and Judah surged forward with a shout and pursued the Philistines to the entrance of Gath and to the gates of Ekron. Their dead were strewn along the Shaaraim road to Gath and Ekron. When the Israelites returned from chasing the Philistines, they plundered their camp (17:51b-53). The LORD** is the hero of this story.

As soon as David returned from killing Goliath, Abner took him and brought him before Sha'ul, with David still holding the Philistine's head. "Whose son are you, young man?" Sha'ul asked him. David replied: **I am the son of your servant Jesse of Bethlehem (17:57-58).** Now **the king** knew whose family to reward for **David's** victory.

David took Goliath's head and brought it to Jerusalem, which at the time was a **city** controlled by the Jebusites, would have been quite happy to see **Goliath's head**. And as grisly as it was, it would also remind the Jebusites that **David's God** was very powerful indeed. **He put the Philistine's weapons in his own tent** on the battlefield **(17:54).** Later, **Goliath's sword** will show up with the Jewish priests in **Nov** (see the commentary on **the Life of David Av – David at Nov**), so **David** must have dedicated it to **the LORD** by giving it to the priests.

It has been said that there are people who make things happen, people who watch things happen, and people who don't know what happened. **David** had insight into **Isra'el's** plight and knew what was happening. **He** realized that it wasn't a physical conflict between two armies, but a **spiritual** battle between truth and error, faith and superstition, the true and living **God** and dead, lifeless idols. **David's** faith lifted the war to a much higher plane, just as Rabbi Sha'ul did with the church at Ephesus: **Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:12).**[362]

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** as the wonderful **Father** that ever could be!*

Your steadfast love *is so awesome!* ***(Psalms 36:7). Your*** *wisdom is perfect, even knowing the secrets of men's hearts* ***(Matthew 9:4, 1 Samuel 16:7, Jeremiah 17:10). You*** *are the living eternal* ***God*** *who knows the future as though it already happened.* ***But Adonai Elohim is truth. He is the living God and eternal King. At His wrath the earth quakes and the nations cannot endure His indignation (Jeremiah 10:10*** *see also* ***Daniel 6:26).***

What a joy and comfort to know that your Holiness, steadfast love and great wisdom all work together to guide what happens in my life. It is wonderful when all is going well; but ***Your love*** *and wisdom are still guiding me when things do not go well. Times of trial are opportunities to trust* ***You*** *even stronger and continue to praise* ***You****, as* ***king Jehoshaphat*** *did when several mighty armies came against* ***his*** *kingdom* ***(2 Chron 20:18-22). You*** *are still on the throne, in control and able to conquer and win when there are problems and temptations* ***(1 Cor 10:13).*** *Trials are opportunities to trust* ***You****.* ***David*** *went thru many severe trials and huge problems, but as* ***he*** *kept* ***his*** *trust in* ***You****,* ***he*** *was encouraged and not afraid.* ***My foes trample me all day. For many are fighting me arrogantly. In a day when I am afraid, I will put my trust in You. In God – I keep praising His word – in God I trust, I will not fear (Psalms 56:2-4a).***

David's *faith gave* ***him*** *courage to kill* ***the*** *mighty* ***giant****. Abraham's faith enabled him to be the Father of many nations, though his body was as good as dead* ***(Romans 4:19). F****aith in Yeshua, the promised Messiah, results in the wonderful blessing of being sealed with an inheritance, the promised* ***Ruach Ha'Kodesh. After you heard the message of truth – the Good News of your salvation – and when you put your trust in Him, you were sealed with the promised Ruach Ha'Kodesh. He is the guarantee of our inheritance, until the redemption of His possession – to His glorious praise! (Ephesians 1:13-14).*** *How wonderful to have faith in* ***You****, for* ***You*** *are so wise and loving! It is a joy to love, trust and to follow* ***You****! In* ***Messiah Yeshua's*** *holy* ***Name*** *and power of* ***His*** *resurrection. Amen*