



# 1 Samuel 17

## *David & Goliath*

### Life of David Series

#### A. Outline of Ch17

1. Philistines assembled at Socoh in Judah.
  1. Saul and the Israelite on one side of the valley, the Philistines on the other.
  2. A champion named Goliath, who was huge, came out daily to challenge the Israelites.
  3. “If you win we will be your slaves; but if I win, you will be our slaves.” For 40 days.
  4. The Israelites trembled in fear and ran away.
2. Now David was the youngest of Jesse and went back and forth from Saul to his father’s flock.
  1. David went with food supplies to his older brothers who were in Saul’s army.
  2. David’s brother Eliab insults him.
  3. David hears 3 times what will be done for the man who fights and kills Goliath.
3. David volunteers
  1. Saul says “you’re just a boy and this man has been training since youth.”
  2. David replies, “I’ve been training too – as a shepherd over the sheep.”
  3. “Yahweh who delivered me from the lion and the bear will deliver me from this Philistine.”
  4. Saul puts his armor on David
  5. David refuses the armor and takes instead his staff, 5 smooth stones and his sling.
4. David Fights Goliath
  1. As they approach each other, Goliath mocks David and curses him by his gods.
  2. David: “You come against me with sword and spear but I come in the name of Yahweh the almighty. This day Yahweh will hand you over to me ...”
  3. Goliath moves closer and David runs to meet him.
  4. David slings a stone at Goliath, hitting him in the forehead, stunning the giant.
  5. David then killed Goliath with his own sword and cut off his head.
5. The Philistines ran away.
  1. Israel and Judah pursued and plundered.
  2. David took Goliath’s weapons.
  3. Saul asks whose son David is (having not recognized him.)
  4. Saul honors and promotes David.

#### B. Where does the story take place?

1. Socoh (Ehes Dammim between Socoh and Azekah. (Philistines)
2. Valley of Elah or a nearby hill (Saul and the Israelites)
3. The Shephelah between Judean hills and the coastal plains.

See Appendix B: Maps

#### C. Who is in the story?

1. Saul
  - a. Was “head and shoulders above other Israelites”(Sam 9:2) He was the one with the best chance to beat Goliath but he wasn’t using his head. No one could BEAT Goliath at his own game, but a solution could be found by thinking outside of the box. Instead, Saul was “dismayed and terrified.”
  - b. We can already see the effects of God removing his spirit from Saul (16:14) He experiences periodic tormenting, his army is in decline. The fact that Jesse sends food supplies to his sons’

commander indicates that the rations are not sufficient. Saul is not providing properly for his army.

## 2. Army of Israel

- a. Along with Saul, the army reacts in fear. This is the kind of fear that prevents them from creative thinking. They got stuck in the fact that no one could face Goliath and be the victor.
- b. In verse 11, the Israelites were “dismayed and terrified.” In verse 24, when Goliath comes a little closer to challenge them again, they “all ran from him in great fear.”

## 3. Goliath

- a. The idea of a champion fighting one-on-one was an appealing alternative to all the bloodshed of actual war. The idea proposed by the Philistine Goliath was an attractive way of avoiding the loss of men even if they won the war.
- b. 7-9’ tall, wore armor weighing 120lbs, carried an impossible spear. “The Homeric description of all his armor is atypical of the bible.” (Alter)
- c. But he was also slow and of poor eyesight. Medical speculation suggests that Goliath had acromegaly, the same disease as has the famous wrestler and actor Andre the Giant. A disorder of the pituitary gland, the symptoms and complications of acromegaly include oversized hands, feet and organs, large height and weight, thickened skin, compressed spinal cord and poor vision due to ocular growths. This could explain why Goliath needs an attendant (vs41), saw more than 1 stick in David’s hand (v. 43) and asked David to come closer. Goliath wanted hand-to-hand combat because there was no match for him. But David wasn’t about to do that. (Gladwell)

## 4. Eliab, David’s oldest brother.

- a. Handsome and well built. Samuel had thought of him, “Surely the Lord’s anointed stands here.” To this God replies, “Do not consider his appearance or his height... Yahweh does not see as man sees but God looks on the heart.” David had to imitate God in this when he stood up to Eliab in verse 29.
- b. If he hadn’t already adopted the same rejection of David as his father had in chapter 17, he certainly developed it since then. It seems jealousy has consumed him since David’s anointing. He insults and accuses David of selfish motives. “With whom did you leave that feeble bit of flock of yours? I am the one who knows your impudence and wicked impulses. You came only to watch the battle.” (Alter’s translation)
- c. Eliab couldn’t be more wrong. He is about to see just how wrong he is about David’s character and actions.

## 5. David

- a. Jesse, the Father, sends the Son to his Brothers. Here is one of the first times we see David as a type of Christ. (Cowger)
- b. We can already see the effects of the Spirit of Yahweh upon David in power (16:13) He has humbly returned to shepherding but has also been appointed to the position of musician and armor-bearer (an honorary title) to the king. Also, he has been entrusted with a special task by his father.
- c. His character has already been discussed in the introduction and in chapter 16 of this series: David is humble, skilled in music, valiant, prudent in speech, a protective shepherd (vs. 20), responsible (vs. 22), ruddy and good-looking. (16:18) He was a man after God’s own heart. (13:14)
- d. David is also no fool. He asks to hear the details 3 times before deciding to act.
- e. He is not experienced in warfare – he was not used to armor. But he was experienced in a different sort of violence: defending his flock from the lion and bear. “When a lion or 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 its hair, struck it and killed it. This uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them.” David was able to think outside the normal warfare box.

- f. David was forward thinking. He wasn't naïve about his anointing by Samuel; he knew what that meant for his future. So after slaying Goliath, he keeps his weaponry for himself and takes Goliath's head to Jerusalem. Jerusalem wasn't the capitol yet. It had recently been in Jebusite hands until David captured it (2 Sam 5:6-10) Was David already becoming the strategist, giving this important city reason to recognize Israel's dominance?" (Baldwin)

## D. Major Themes in the Story (Find yourself in the Scripture)

### 1. The Compilation of the Scripture

- a. The 2 episodes of David's entrance seem segregated and parallel; two different accounts of David's emergence on the scene. This is likely because of the way the book of Samuel was put together. There is no one author identified for the book of Samuel. Several theories of its creation have been proposed. The most prominent theory is the Deuteronomist theory which proposes that an editor, a "deuteronomist" arranged accounts found from many different sources and interjected connecting points and theological comments to glue the picture together. It is possible the account of Samuel's anointing of David was recorded by a Bethlehem local, while the account of David was recorded by someone from Saul's court or army recorder.
- b. Keep this in mind when treating apparent inconsistencies like Saul seeming to not recognize David. Passages and sections were pulled together from various genres of literature. For more on this, see Appendix A.
- c. Even within ch17 one can see a choppieness that indicates different sources pulled together. For example, in Verse 54, David took the Goliath's head to Jerusalem (a day's journey) and put his weapon's in his own tent. End of story. Verses 55-58 (which don't appear in the Septuagint) record an addendum where David speaks with Saul while still holding Goliath's head.

### 2. The Triumph of the Underdog (Man and God Partner to defeat the Foe)

- a. Why do we all love an underdog story?
- b. While Malcolm Gladwell blows the whole underdog theory out of the metaphorical window, there's still an element of the small and brave triumphing over the huge and established. Gladwell brings out that Goliath never really stood a chance with David who was so experienced a slinger. The speed and accuracy of those ancient "slingshots" were actually astounding.
- c. Still, David had to beat a menacingly strong adversary who no one else was willing to fight. How he did it was by fighting on his own (and God's) terms. He *fought outside of the box*. Goliath, the Philistines and even the Hebrews were expecting someone to fight with hand-to-hand combat. David wasn't about to do that. He came at the foe from a different angle. So perhaps instead of being the underdog, David is Different underdog: a "Dunderdog."
- d. Lessons in Spiritual Warfare: Can we come at our adversary from a different angle?
  - i. First of all, don't let him get too close to you. The enemy would love hand-to-hand combat but that requires us letting him get close enough. "Do not let the Devil have a foothold."(Eph 4:27, In the context of speaking truthfully and not sinning in your anger.)
  - ii. Partner with God. David carefully crafted a plan (see next section "Collecting Confidence") that included God as his reason, his helper and his shield.
  - iii. Don't fight the enemy in the same way the enemy fights for you'll lose. Instead, fight for and with God. "*You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.. ..All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands.*" (17:45-47)

### 3. Collecting Confidence

- a. David clarifies 3 times what will be done for the man who kills Goliath. He wasn't foolish. He was calculated. He counts the cost. He may have been buying himself time as he collected his confidence and crafted a plan.

- b. Have you ever had that moment when your heart races and your stomach flips because you sense God is leading you to do something brave? (Speak up at a meeting, stand up to a coworker or boss.) You bide your time as you think, “am I really going to do this?” You ask God silently for confirmation and direction. I think that was what David was experiencing here. So he asked a 3<sup>rd</sup> time “what does the king offer for the man who kills this Philistine?”
  - c. When God leads us to do something brave, he gives us time to collect our confidence and receive direction from Him.
4. There will always be jealous people who insult faithful courage. (Eliab rebukes David)
- a. “Eliab burned with anger”
  - b. His contempt has grown exponentially since David’s anointing.
  - c. He wants to put David in his place. So he publicly belittles David.
  - d. He insults David to make him feel small. “Where is your feeble flock?” See Section C4b.
  - e. He accuses David of being conceited, wicked and only an observer; not a man of action.
  - f. Have you ever been belittled publicly like this? Instead of engaging in defending yourself, try answering with a question to turn it back on the accuser. That’s what David did. (Cowger) Ask “What have I done now?” “Why are you against me?” “Why are you so upset?”
  - g. Have you ever been an Eliab? Was there ever someone at work or in your family who had been safely in place and not a challenge to you but when they were elevated or promoted suddenly you felt jealous and wanted to squash them back down to size?
  - h. Be generous with your rejoicing. Be careful to rejoice with those God promotes and to celebrate other people’s advancement. Being generous with our rejoicing for others guards against jealousy which leads to bitterness. (Which some say can even lead to health problems!)
5. Saul’s army reacted in their emotions. David responded with faith and creativity.
- a. The shock and awe of a Giant’s taunts had caused gut-level fear in the Israelites. One can hardly blame them. It was a flight or fight response. But after 40 days, no one had broken out of the fear. They settled into a habit of fear.
  - b. It took fresh eyes with a fresh perspective to see the situation differently. David was able to think outside the fear box.
6. The Enemy is a Liar. Goliath, representing the Philistines, promised that if Israel defeated him, they would become slaves to Israel. But when Goliath fell, the Philistines ran away instead. When we were having a rare family discussion about possible end times hardships, my daughter Aleah commented that if Nazi-type thugs promised to stop the torture if you deny Yeshua, “they’re probably lying anyway!”
- a. Never trust an enemy.
  - b. Don’t react to his taunts with fear. (Cowger)
  - c. Confront the empty promises and lies of the enemy with:
    - i. Words of truth
    - ii. Decisive action
    - iii. Giving God the Glory
7. A mundane errand turns into a life-changing event.
- a. What seemed like a simple errand of duty for David turned into a story of biblical proportions.
  - b. Be open to interruptions to your daily routines.
  - c. There may be a big moment hidden in a small task.
  - d. Kairos moments: opportunities to learn, grow or be the hero are often hidden in annoying interruptions.

8. David answers Saul from his secret history in God. (Bickle)
  - a. David had experienced God’s power in his mundane job among sheep. David had been faithful to let God work in his private, mundane life with the sheep.
  - b. God gives private victories over the “lion & bear” before He releases public victories.
  - c. You have a secret history with God: your time with Him, trusting Him with yet-answered prayers, sharing privately with him the desires of your heart, choosing patience, gentleness and submission when no one but He sees it.
  
9. David refused Saul’s armor. (Bickle)
  - a. We do not want to walk in another person’s calling.
  - b. David had no experience with Saul’s equipment. We must not go to war against the enemy relying on another’s experience and calling. David took Saul’s armor off and went forth in what had been proven in his own history.
  - c. Cultivating God’s presence in our life today is essential to standing against unexpected giants tomorrow.
  
10. Modern Day Goliaths
  - a. A Goliath is a big, strong, scary enemy that cannot be beaten in your own strength. What is your Goliath?
    - i. Cancer
    - ii. Debt
    - iii. Depression
    - iv. Addiction (drug, alcohol, sexual)
    - v. Loneliness
    - vi. Fear & Worry
    - vii. A Family Issue
    - viii. Lack
    - ix. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Approach your modern day Goliath like a modern day David:
    - i. Respond in Faith, not Fear.
    - ii. Respond to Lies with Truth
    - iii. Collect your Confidence. Take your time. Let God build your confidence and craft a plan with you.
    - iv. Get fresh perspective so you can think outside the fear box. Be a “Dunderdog,” a different kind of underdog!
    - v. Don’t engage with an accuser; turn it back on them with a question or a truth.
    - vi. Respond with your own armor from your secret history with God. Don’t try to fight with someone else’s words or techniques.
    - vii. Give Glory to God like David did. He knew He didn’t do it on His own. Rejoice in Him.

## Appendix A

### Why did Saul and his general, Abner, appear not to recognize David at the battlefield?

#### This textual problem arises at the end of the story in verses 55-58

*”As Saul watched David going out to meet the Philistine, he said to Abner, commander of the army, “Abner, whose son is that young man?” Abner replied, “As surely as you live, O king, I don’t know.” The king said, “Find out whose son this young man is.” As soon as David returned from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul, with David still holding the Philistines’ head. “Whose son are you, young man?” Saul asked him. David said, “I am the son of your servant Jesse of Bethlehem.”*

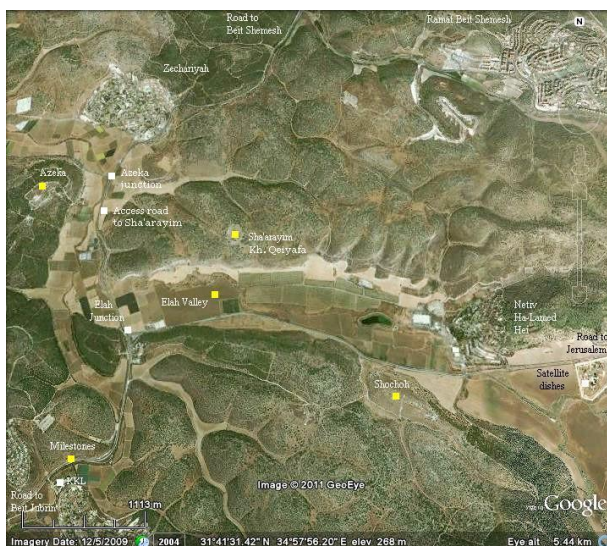
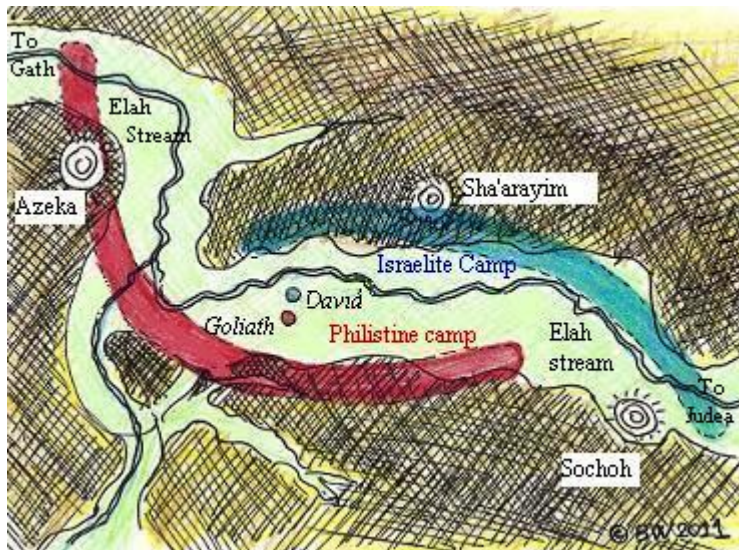
In chapter 16, after being privately anointed king by Samuel, David became Saul's personal musician. He played the harp in Saul's chamber when Saul was tormented by an evil spirit. If Saul had met David as his own musician, why did he not know him (or at least not know whose son he was) on the battle field? Here, I list possible reasons why the text appears to indicate this conflict.

1. It is easy to understand why Abner, the army commander, didn't know David or his family. David served in Saul's personal chamber, not at the battle front where Abner spent his time. Even if Abner entered Saul's chambers while David was there, he likely had no interest or reason to connect with a lowly musician from the country. (Benson) Alternatively, Abner could have pretended not to recognize David in deference to the ailing king. (Alter)
2. Saul did know David, but didn't know his father. It's possible that Saul had employed David as musician in his tents without knowing or at least remembering that he was Jesse's son. Now that David qualified to become his son-in-law, receive great riches and tax-free status, it was of utmost importance who his father was – even more important than who David was. For if David was, as most suggest, about 13 at the time, it was his father who would be tax-exempt and David's lineage was important as it related to the marriage of the King's daughter. (Ellicot)
3. Samuel 16 & 17 are very different narratives. In fact all of Samuel is a compilation of texts found in different parts of Israel pulled together by a supposed "Deuteronomist" or editor. Sam 16 was likely from documents in Bethlehem kept by the local elders there. It was an intimate chapter about local people. Sam 17, on the other hand, is likely compiled by records kept in the military archives. Military events were meticulously recorded even back then. Although it reads like folklore, the events could have been taken from official military records. If this is the case, there would have been an official recorder on hand, an ancient equivalent of an imbedded journalist. It is conceivable that Samuel asked his questions for the benefit of the recorder so that David's name and family would be properly noted in the battle archives. This theory is supported by the fact that these verses where Saul asks about David (55-58) do not appear in the Septuagint (LXX). Nor do verses 12-32 which describe David's personal account of the day including his relationships and how he came to be on the battlefield. The Masoretic text (compiled later in 6<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries ACE) do include them. Both the LXX and the Masoretic text were compiled from a variety of ancient sources and oral traditions. It could be concluded, then, that there were at least 2-3 different sources used to compile this story.
  - a. The main story of Goliath appearing in the LXX.
  - b. The personal story of David arriving on the scene (vs.12-32)
  - c. The denouement of Saul inquiring about David and his father (vs. 55-58)

So the entire story is compiled from several unique perspectives. The historical perspective, the military perspective and David's personal perspective. The fact that Saul asks about David's family is present for the benefit of the archives from which that portion of the text came. (JRO)

4. Joyce Baldwin conjectures that there was enough time between David's last musical appointment with Saul and Sam 17 for David to mature as a man beyond recognition. David had gone back to tend his father's sheep and had grown up, grown a beard and had changed enough for Saul not to recognize him. (Baldwin)
5. It is additionally conceivable that Saul had been so dysfunctional under the "tormenting spirit" while David played the harp, that Saul never really got a good look at him and certainly didn't remember him. His confusion during those sessions prevented him from really knowing David. This is less likely since Saul sends word to Jesse saying "I am pleased with David." Still, Benson proposes that a combination of Saul's confusion under the evil spirit blotting out clear memory and David growing up from a boy to a young man could explain him not recognizing David in the battle field.

## Appendix B: Maps



Southern Coastal Plain in Ancient Israel



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