

1 Samuel 17:31-58

David Defeats Goliath

1 Samuel 17:31-32 - 'And when the words were heard which David spake, they rehearsed them before Saul: and he sent for him. And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.'

“Let no man's heart fail “ - This recalls God's exhortation to the Israelites:

- **Deuteronomy 31:6** - "Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid or terrified of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you."

- **Deuteronomy 31:23** - "Then the LORD commissioned Joshua son of Nun and said, "Be strong and courageous, for you will bring the Israelites into the land I swore to give them, and I will be with you."

.. and to Joshua:

- **Joshua 1:6** - "Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them."

- **Joshua 1:7** - "Only be you strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded you: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go."

- **Joshua 1:9** - "Have not I commanded you? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be you dismayed: for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

David could trust God because God had helped him in other circumstances:

1 Samuel 17:33-36 - "And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth. And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God."

"this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them" - Because Goliath was like an animal, a savage predator with the character of a brute beast, blaspheming the living God.

1 Samuel 17:37 - "David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this

Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee."

David realized there was a connection between these earlier incidents and the current situation. Goliath was threatening the "sheep" of God's flock - Israel.

The Good Shepherd - The Model for Ministry

David is the type of the Messiah and of the Good Shepherd.

The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep - Jesus did this ultimately at the cross. (**John 10:11, 15**)

The Shepherd is the door (**John 10:7**). Many times the shepherd would sleep using his body as the door, so that nothing could go in or out without his knowledge.

The shepherd is invested in the sheep - he "knows" them and calls them by name (**John 10:3**), and they know his voice. (**John 10:4**)

He goes first to lead (**John 10:4**). (We walk a path of faith already trail-blazed by Jesus)

The shepherd is not acting out of desire for gain or reward (**John 10:13**). (Of course he gets satisfaction and joy from his vocation, but that's not his primary motivation)

- **Isaiah 40:11** - "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

Abarbanel (Mashmia Jeshua, fol. 20. 4) has a note on **Isaiah 40:11** which may serve to illustrate this passage:

"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd"; not as he that feeds the flock of others, for the hire they give him, but as a shepherd that feeds his own flock; who has compassion more abundantly on it, because it is his own flock; and therefore he saith, "behold his reward is with him" for he does not seek a reward from another; "and his work is before him"; for he feeds what is his own, and therefore his eyes and his heart are there."

Now David had Saul's blessing to act as the champion of Israel. Perhaps the mere presence of David had summoned up some of Saul's original boldness, and he saw the possibility that the Spirit of God was with this young man.

Refusing the Armor of Saul

1 Samuel 17:38-39 - "And Saul armed David with his armor, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail. And David girded his sword upon his armor, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him."

Saul was head and shoulders taller than other men, so the Talmud says that, because David had been anointed with the special oil from the Tabernacle, he grew taller to fit into the armor. (The Midrash explains that when a person becomes king he grows taller.)

But David took the armor off. "I have not proved them" means "I am not accustomed to them" In Hebrew, the word is derived from the word for "miracle" according to the Targum of Jonathan. i.e. "there is no miracle in them" meaning there would be no praise for the miracle God was about to perform if David wore the armor.

David's Equipment

David's action here displays for us an important biblical principle - "purposed weakness."

Like Paul explains:

- **2 Corinthians 12:9,10** - "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness....when I am weak, then am I strong."

This is the corollary of the earlier statement, "Be strong and of good courage." It is courageous to purposely become weak so that flesh cannot glory in what God achieves through His power.

The idea is to go with what you have - the circumstances God has placed you in, the talents He has given you.

- **Mark 6:8-9** - "He commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bag, no bread, no copper in their money belts—but to wear sandals, and not to put on two tunics."

The Greek phrase is more like "don't acquire anything else for the journey." Those who already had a staff can take that. Don't stop to acquire food or money or extra clothes. The preaching of the Kingdom is essential now - God will take care of you.

David had his staff, a sling and a bag for stones for slinging - articles he probably always had when he was protecting his sheep.

- **Ephesians 6:10-11** - "be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power, and put on the full armor of God" The "full armor" for a shepherd was his staff, his sling and some stones.

The armor Paul refers to represent seven things - truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation and the word of God - all bound together with prayer.

David's outfit mentions seven things - his staff, his sling and the five stones in his bag.

The Staff

A staff was used to beat back thieves and predatory animals like lions and bears.

Tradition says David's staff is mentioned in the Passover sing-song poem Chad Gadya or "One Kid."

"'The stick came, and beat the dog' refers to David's shepherd staff, which gave him the strength to fight Goliath, who is compared to a dog (**1 Samuel 17:43**). The next couplet, 'The fire came, and burned the stick' indicates that when the first Temple was burned, the staff was hidden away awaiting Messiah." - Mishbetzos Zahav

According to tradition, this staff had been held by Jacob when he crossed the Jordan (**Genesis 32:11**), and later by Judah (**Genesis 38:18**), by Aaron when he sent the plagues (**Exodus 7:9**) and by Moses when he fought Amalek (**Exodus 17:9**). It was subsequently held by every Israelite king until the First Temple was destroyed, at which point it was hidden away to remain hidden until Messiah regains it and uses it to subdue idol worshippers.

Five Smooth Stones

1 Samuel 17:40 - "And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine."

Commentators throughout history have speculated what the five stones represent. But the parallel I think is between David confronting Goliath and Jesus confronting Satan in the wilderness.

Jesus had only the five books of the Torah to answer Satan's temptations for 40 days in the wilderness. These were prefigured in David's confrontation with Goliath, who taunted Israel for 40 days. The stones had been smoothed and shaped for their purpose over eons of time, and accessible to David at just the right moment.

As St. Augustine put it, Jesus "...took the five books of Moses out of the flowing stream of Judaism. He took what was solid out of what was fluid. He took what was permanent out of what was transitory. He took what was moral and perpetual out of what was ceremonial and temporary. He took stones out of a brook, and with one of these He overthrew Satan ... with this sling and stone of Scripture He laid our Goliath low."

(Possibly the other four stones unused were for Goliath's four brothers - see **2 Samuel 21:15-22** and **1 Chronicles 20:4-8**)

Goliath Approaches

1 Samuel 17:41-42 - "And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David; and the

man that bare the shield went before him. And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance."

David was probably about 20 years old (the rabbis say 28), with a "fair countenance" perhaps looking effeminate to the weather-beaten and grizzled veteran Goliath.

1 Samuel 17:43-44 - "And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field."

"Come to me" - Because Goliath's taunts had prevented the Jews from reciting the 248 words of the Shema, so now the 248 bones in his body became weighed down so he could not easily move forward, and the very ground itself was holding him back.

David's Reply

1 Samuel 17:45-46 - "Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel."

The name of the LORD of hosts is all that is needed to ensure victory, in David's mind. This prophecy of victory was given to him by the Spirit of God.

"This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand" - the word for "deliver" = *sāgar* - used to describe locking away someone stricken with leprosy (**Leviticus 13:4-5**) Goliath was spiritually leprous because of his blasphemy, according to Vayikra Rabbah 17:3, 21:2.

1 Samuel 17:47 - "And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands."

Echoed in Zechariah:

- **Zechariah 4:6** - "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

The Malbim expands on this idea: There is actually no need for an Israelite to participate in battle, since the Lord determines who will win. But God expects men to perform their normal activities of battle (**Proverbs 21:31** - "The horse is readied for the day of battle, even though salvation is the Lord's"). In the same way, we are to work even though our income or prosperity is in God's hands.

1 Samuel 17:48-49 - "And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and

drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth."

David prayed for the ground to release its hold on Goliath so that he could be "delivered into my hand."

The stone penetrated Goliath's forehead. This targets the seat of deception for humanity - our thoughts. This is means with which Satan speaks to us, where temptation originates and where self-seeking devises plans to disobey God and rebel. It spawns our covetousness and our self-justification, our accusations of others, and gives shape to our hypocrisy and pride.

The forehead is where the mark of the Beast is engraved:

- **Revelation 13:16** - "And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads (also **Revelation 14:9-10**).

In fact, the forehead is associated with insolence: (**Jeremiah 3:3** - "...thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed.")

David, as a type of the Messiah, defeats Goliath by a trick - David's seeming smallness and unthreatening appearance causes Goliath to neither unsheathe his sword nor pull down his visor which might have deflected the stone. His own pride combined with the supernatural hand of God guiding the stone brings down the giant. In similar fashion, Satan believed the crucifixion marked his victory, but really it ensnared him in defeat at the resurrection.

Goliath Decapitated by a Sword

1 Samuel 17:50-51 - "So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David. Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled."

This puts a punctuation on the previous insight about human thoughts. The stone stunned him and made Goliath fall down in a stupor.

(An angel pushed him forward so he fell on his face, his mouth which had blasphemed God now filled with dirt, facing away from heaven and toward the earth where his goals and desires had pointed him.)

The ancient prophecy of the Deliverer in Genesis 3:15 states:

- **Genesis 3:15** - "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

Messiah will bruise or crush Satan's head.

- **Revelation 1:16** - "And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

God's final victory is described like this:

- **Habakkuk 3:13** - "Thou woudest the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck."

Goliath was finally killed by David cutting off his head with his own sword. Compare this to Haman's end, impaled on the 50-foot stake he had prepared for Mordecai.

The Philistines are Routed

1 Samuel 17:52 - "And the men of Israel and of Judah arose, and shouted, and pursued the Philistines, until thou come to the valley, and to the gates of Ekron. And the wounded of the Philistines fell down by the way to Shaaraim, even unto Gath, and unto Ekron. And the children of Israel returned from chasing after the Philistines, and they spoiled their tents. And David took the head of the Philistine, and brought it to Jerusalem; but he put his armor in his tent."

He took the head to Jerusalem to terrify the Jebusites, who still controlled the upper part of the city. The armor and sword of Goliath was put, some said, in the Tabernacle, which was called "David's tent" because of his later attachment to it and reverence for it.

The armor and sword would remind the people of God's miraculous deliverance.

Goliath's sword is mentioned later when David was fleeing from Saul:

- **1 Samuel 21:8-9** - "Then David asked Ahimelech, "Is there not a spear or sword on hand here? For I have brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business was urgent." The priest replied, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the Valley of Elah, is here; it is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you want, you may take it. For there is no other but this one." And David said, "There is none like it; give it to me."

So when we are delivered from idolatry, everything is transformed, and even Goliath's sword can be turned to good. We can "ride upon our high places" where we once feared false gods.

David's Lineage and Identity

1 Samuel 17:55 - "And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell."

This is further evidence of Saul's disturbed state of mind. Also, David was now handling himself in a kingly manner, and as the zeal of the Spirit was on him, his face shown and he was not recognizable as the humble shepherd who played the lyre.

“ I cannot tell” - Abner may have known David's background but hesitated to respond truthfully, because he had been warned of David's Moabite background by Doeg the Edomite.

But this inquiry into David's identity may be out of chronological order, and possibly happened earlier.

According to the Talmud, Saul said, “If he comes from the family of Perez, he will be a king, for the king may break fences (פורץ, related to פרץ) to make a way for himself, and no one may stop him. If, however, he comes from the family of Zerah, he will merely become an esteemed person. Said Doeg to him, “Before you ask whether or not he is descended from a family which qualifies him for the throne, ask whether or not he is qualified to enter the congregation, (i.e., whether or not he may marry among Jews) since he is descended from Ruth the Moabitess.” Said Abner to him, “We have learned: An Ammonite (is forbidden, Deut. 23:3) but not an Ammonitess. (Similarly, a Moabite is forbidden, but not a Moabitess.)” Said Doeg to him, “If so (let us say), a *‘mamzer’* (the male issue of a union forbidden under penalty of extinction is forbidden,) and not a *‘mamzereth’* (the female issue of such a union).” He replied, “It is stated here: 'Because they did not meet you with bread and water' (v. 5 *ibid.*), and it is not customary for a woman to do so.” He said to him, “Men should have met men, and women should have met women.” Abner became silent and had no reply. Then David's brother-in-law Ithra spoke up, saying the standards of modesty among the Moabites would not have allowed them to offer bread even to women strangers, and that Samuel had ruled that a Moabitess was allowed.

1 Samuel 17:56-58 - "And the king said, Inquire thou whose son the stripling is. And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand. And Saul said to him, Whose son art thou, thou young man? And David answered, I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."

The bottom line of these passages is: “ Let no mans heart fail.”

God is on control, he can lay low any giant or Goliath in our lives that threatens our peace or our remaining in the rest. Like David we can “revenge the disobedience” and chop off the head of the deceiver by constantly returning to the cross. Our purposed weakness will reveal God’s strength made perfect in our lives.

The Good Shepherd knows his sheep, and we follow His voice.

