

A Study of I Samuel
The Desiring for a King

David and Goliath

Chapter 17

The Battle Scene (17:1-3): The Valley of Elah is about 15 miles west of Bethlehem and about 20 miles east of the Mediterranean Sea. It is located on the western edge of the Judean lower hills and was an important travel route from the coastal cities up to the center of the land of Judah and its main cities of Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Hebron.

The Challenge of Goliath (17:4-11): The continual battle against the Philistines led to this “winner take all battle” (8-9).

The Philistines put forth their challenger, their champion, named Goliath of Gath (4). Goliath was a survivor of the ancient race of Anakim, a remnant of which found refuge in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod, when Joshua “cut them off” (Josh. 11:21,22) from the mountains of Judah. His armor would look like all the Philistines armor of that time. The description is as follows:

1. **Goliath’s Height is 6 cubits and a span (4).** A cubit is the measurement from your elbow to your fingertips. Therefore, the actual length varies but the widely accepted measurement is 18 inches. A span is the distance from the tip of the thumb to the tip of the little finger. Therefore, this also can vary but 9 inches is most widely accepted. Using the most conservative measurements Goliath would be over 9 feet tall.
2. **Helmet of Brass (5).** As to the issue of “brass” vs Bronze see appendix 3.
3. **Armed with a Coat of Mail that weighed 5,000 shekels of brass, greaves of brass upon his legs (used to protect the shins) and a target of brass between his shoulders (protecting in between the shoulders and throat) (5-6).** The approximate weight of Goliath’s armor would be around 125 pounds.
4. **Goliath’s spear, like a weaver’s beam (7).** A weaver’s beam is the main supporting beam used in the weaving of material such as yarn or wool. Thus, it was a long-handled spear. The Spear head weighed 600 shekels of iron. The tip of this spear alone would weigh 15 pounds.
5. **Goliath also had a shield carried by his armourbearer (7).**

Many battles in the ancient times were decided by a contest between two warrior and such is the case of the challenge of Goliath. This battle would be a winner take all. The looser would be the servant to the victor (8-10).

The defying words from Goliath not to mention the formidable foe Goliath seemed to be lead Saul and all Israel to be dismayed and greatly afraid (11 cf. 24).

Jesse's Command (17:12-19): David is the youngest of the eight sons of Jesse. The three oldest sons of Jesse followed Saul to the battle (12-14). Jesse commands David to take provisions to his three oldest sons as well as something for the captain.

David's Battle Visit (17:20-27): David arriving at the battle scene gives the "carriage", the vessel that held the provisions for David's brothers and the captain to the keeper. After dropping the provisions off, David goes to his brothers at the battle site (20-22).

David hears Goliath defy the armies of God (23). The person to win against Goliath will be enriched with great riches, get king Saul's daughter in marriage and his parents' house will be free (no more servants) (24-27).

The Discouragement of Eliab (28-29): The eldest son of Jesse, Eliab hears the words of David his youngest brother and rebukes him, to which David relies, "Is there not a cause" (28-29). David's enthusiasm causes him to repeat the challenge of verse 26 to all the people (30) of which the people tell Saul the words that David spoke (31).

David's Desire (17:32-37): David tells Saul that he would fight Goliath (32). Saul does as Eliab and tries to discourage David (33). David tells Saul how he slew both a lion and a bear and Goliath will be as one of them, for as the LORD delivered him out of the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear so will the LORD deliver me out of the hand of the Philistine (34-37).

David and Goliath (17:38-55): Saul conceding to David's request gives him his armor (Only Saul and Jonathan had weapons of war see I Sam. 13:19). David however was ill equipped to handle the heavy, bulky armor and weapon. But David refuses for he had not proven them (38-39). David chose 5 smooth stones out of the brook; weapons he was skillful in using (40). Why five stones? Goliath had four brothers! David was ready to take them all on (2 Sam. 21:16-22 cf. I Chron. 20:5). The five brothers of Goliath are listed in 2 Samuel 21: Ishbibenob (16), Saph (18), an unnamed brother (19) and a unnamed man with 6 fingers and 6 toes (20, 22).

In the eyes of Goliath David was a man not worthy of his challenge (42-44). David's confidence is not in sword or spear but in the living God whom Goliath defied. David's defying words are inspiring (45-47).

The battle against Goliath is short lived. David rushing to Goliath, takes out a stone from his shepherd's bag and slings it into the forehead of Goliath killing him (48-50). David then does as he said we would do (46), cutting off the head of Goliath with Goliath's own sword (51) and bears it before Saul, parades it to Jerusalem (54). So, Israel wins a great victory this day against the Philistines.

Saul's Inquiry of David (55-58): Why didn't Saul recognize David, who had already served him as musician and armor-bearer? It seems that Saul is inquiring about whose son David is, not who David himself is. This inquiry would be right considering Saul had promised his daughter to the winner of the battle. Notice David's answer to Saul's inquiry, he does not say, I am David but, "I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite (58).