

1. The Valley of Elah, Google Maps



2. Samuel I 13:4-7, 13:19-22 (JPS tr. c/o sefaria.org)

When all Israel heard that Saul had struck down the Philistine prefect, and that Israel had incurred the wrath of the Philistines, all the people rallied to Saul at Gilgal. The Philistines, in turn, gathered to attack Israel: 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen, and troops as numerous as the sands of the seashore. They marched up and encamped at Michmas, east of Beth-aven. When the men of Israel saw that they were in trouble—for the troops were hard pressed—the people hid in caves, among thorns, among rocks, in tunnels, and in cisterns. Some Hebrews crossed the Jordan, [to] the territory of Gad and Gilead. Saul was still at Gilgal, and the rest of the people rallied to him in alarm...

No smith was to be found in all the land of Israel, for the Philistines were afraid that the Hebrews would make swords or spears. So all the Israelites had to go down to the Philistines to have their plowshares, their mattocks, axes, and colters sharpened. The charge for sharpening was a pim for plowshares, mattocks, three-pronged forks, and axes, and for setting the goads. Thus on the day of the battle, no sword or spear was to be found in the possession of any of the troops with Saul and Jonathan; only Saul and Jonathan had them.

3. Samuel I 17:1-3 (JPS tr. c/o sefaria.org)

The Philistines assembled their forces for battle; they massed at Socoh of Judah, and encamped at Ephes-dammim, between Socoh and Azekah. Saul and the men of Israel massed and encamped in the valley of Elah. They drew up their line of battle against the Philistines, with the Philistines stationed on one hill and Israel stationed on the opposite hill; the ravine was between them.

4. Samuel I 17:4-11 (JPS tr. c/o sefaria.org)

A champion of the Philistine forces stepped forward; his name was Goliath of Gath, and he was six cubits and a span tall. He had a bronze helmet on his head, and wore a breastplate of scale armor, a bronze breastplate weighing five

thousand shekels. He had bronze greaves on his legs, and a bronze javelin [slung] from his shoulders. The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's bar, and the iron head of his spear weighed six hundred shekels; and the shield-bearer marched in front of him.

He stopped and called out to the ranks of Israel and he said to them, "Why should you come out to engage in battle? I am the Philistine [champion], and you are Saul's servants. Choose one of your men and let him come down against me. If he bests me in combat and kills me, we will become your slaves; but if I best him and kill him, you shall be our slaves and serve us." And the Philistine ended, "I herewith defy the ranks of Israel. Get me a man and let's fight it out!" When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and terror-stricken.

5. Samuel I 17:12-22 (JPS tr. c/o sefaria.org)

David was the son of a certain Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah whose name was Jesse. He had eight sons, and in the days of Saul the man was already old, advanced in years. The three oldest sons of Jesse had left and gone with Saul to the war. The names of his three sons who had gone to the war were Eliab the first-born, the next Abinadab, and the third Shammah; and David was the youngest. The three oldest had followed Saul, and David would go back and forth from attending on Saul to shepherd his father's flock at Bethlehem. The Philistine stepped forward morning and evening and took his stand for forty days.

Jesse said to his son David, "Take an ephah of this parched corn and these ten loaves of bread for your brothers, and carry them quickly to your brothers in camp. Take these ten cheeses to the captain of their thousand. Find out how your brothers are and bring some token from them." Saul and the brothers and all the men of Israel were in the valley of Elah, in the war against the Philistines. Early next morning, David left someone in charge of the flock, took [the provisions], and set out, as his father Jesse had instructed him. He reached the barricade as the army was going out to the battle lines shouting the war cry. Israel and the Philistines drew up their battle lines opposite each other. David left his baggage with the man in charge of the baggage and ran toward the battle line and went to greet his brothers.

6. Samuel I 17:23-29 (JPS tr. c/o sefaria.org)

While he was talking to them, the champion, whose name was Goliath, the Philistine of Gath, stepped forward from the Philistine ranks and spoke the same words as before; and David heard him. When the men of Israel saw the man, they fled in terror. And the men of Israel were saying [among themselves], "Do you see that man coming out? He comes out to defy Israel! The man who kills him will be rewarded by the king with great riches; he will also give him his daughter in marriage and grant exemption to his father's house in Israel."

David asked the men standing near him, "What will be done for the man who kills that Philistine and removes the disgrace from Israel? Who is that uncircumcised Philistine that he dares defy the ranks of the living G-d?" The troops told him in the same words what would be done for the man who killed him.

When Eliab, his oldest brother, heard him speaking to the men, Eliab became angry with David and said, "Why did you come down here, and with whom did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your impudence and your impertinence: you came down to watch the fighting!" But David replied, "What have I done now? I was only asking!"

7. Samuel I 17:30-39 (JPS tr. c/o sefaria.org)

And he turned away from him toward someone else; he asked the same question, and the troops gave him the same answer as before. The things David said were overheard and were reported to Saul, who had him brought over. David said to Saul, "Let no man's courage fail him. Your servant will go and fight that Philistine!"

But Saul said to David, "You cannot go to that Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth!"

David replied to Saul, "Your servant has been tending his father's sheep, and if a lion or a bear came and carried off an animal from the flock, I would go after it and fight it and rescue it from its mouth. And if it attacked me, I would seize it by the beard and strike it down and kill it. Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and that uncircumcised Philistine shall end up like one of them, for he has defied the ranks of the living G-d. The Lord," David went on, "who saved me from lion and bear will also save me from that Philistine."

"Then go," Saul said to David, "and may the Lord be with you!" Saul clothed David in his own garment; he placed a bronze helmet on his head and fastened a breastplate on him. David girded his sword over his garment. Then he tried to walk; but he was not used to it. And David said to Saul, "I cannot walk in these, for I am not used to them." So David took them off.

8. Samuel I 17:40-47 (JPS tr. c/o sefaria.org)

He took his stick, picked a few smooth stones from the wadi, put them in the pocket of his shepherd's bag and, sling in hand, he went toward the Philistine. The Philistine, meanwhile, was coming closer to David, preceded by his shield-bearer. When the Philistine caught sight of David, he scorned him, for he was but a boy, ruddy and handsome. And the Philistine called out to David, "Am I a dog that you come against me with sticks?" The Philistine cursed David by his gods; and the Philistine said to David, "Come here, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the beasts of the field."

David replied to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come against you in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the G-d of the ranks of Israel, whom you have defied. This very day the Lord will deliver you into my hands. I will kill you and cut off your head; and I will give the carcasses of the Philistine camp to the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth. All the earth shall know that there is a G-d in Israel. And this whole assembly shall know that the Lord can give victory without sword or spear. For the battle is the Lord's, and He will deliver you into our hands."

9. Samuel I 17:48-52 (JPS tr. c/o sefaria.org)

When the Philistine began to advance toward him again, David quickly ran up to the battle line to face the Philistine. David put his hand into the bag; he took out a stone and slung it. It struck the Philistine in the forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground. Thus David bested the Philistine with sling and stone; he struck him down and killed him.

David had no sword; so David ran up and stood over the Philistine, grasped his sword and pulled it from its sheath; and with it he dispatched him and cut off his head.

When the Philistines saw that their warrior was dead, they ran. The men of Israel and Judah rose up with a war cry and they pursued the Philistines all the way to Gai and up to the gates of Ekron...

Elah: The Location

10. Joshua Levinson, *The Transition from the Shefeilah to the Mountains*, in Israel, from Dan to Eilat (IDF), pg. 11
The Elah Valley is about ten kilometers southwest of Mount Tov. The valley was formed from the channels of two streams, between the Tarkumia (Tricomia) Valley and Beit Natif. This is a broad and fertile valley, protected in ancient times by the Azekah Fortress (Tel Zechariah). From here ascends the road to Bethlehem and Jerusalem. In the Elah Valley, between Azekah and Socho, the battle of intermediaries between David and Goliath took place. In truth, the foothills of the mountain was the main area of the battles between the Philistines and the Children of Israel.

11. Samuel I 18:6 (JPS tr. c/o sefaria.org)

When the [troops] came home [and] David returned from killing the Philistine, the women of all the towns of Israel came out singing and dancing to greet King Saul with timbrels, shouting, and sistrums.

Elah: The Miracle

12. Malcom Gladwell on David and Goliath <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ziGD7vQOwI8>

13. Malcolm Gladwell, *David and Goliath*, Introduction

Saul objected: "You cannot go against this Philistine to do battle with him, for you are a lad and he is a man of war from his youth." But the shepherd was adamant. He had faced more ferocious opponents than this, he argued. "When the lion or the bear would come and carry off a sheep from the herd," he told Saul, "I would go after him and strike him down and rescue it from his clutches."...

Slinging took an extraordinary amount of skill and practice. But in experienced hands, the sling was a devastating weapon. Paintings from medieval times show slingers hitting birds in midflight. Irish slingers were said to be able to hit

a coin from as far away as they could see it, and in the Old Testament Book of Judges, slingers are described as being accurate within a "hair's breadth." An experienced slinger could kill or seriously injure a target at a distance of up to two hundred yards. The Romans even had a special set of tongs made just to remove stones that had been embedded in some poor soldier's body by a sling. Imagine standing in front of a Major League Baseball pitcher as he aims a baseball at your head. That's what facing a slinger was like—only what was being thrown was not a ball of cork and leather but a solid rock...

He runs toward Goliath, because without armor he has speed and maneuverability. He puts a rock into his sling, and whips it around and around, faster and faster at six or seven revolutions per second, aiming his projectile at Goliath's forehead—the giant's only point of vulnerability. Eitan Hirsch, a ballistics expert with the Israeli Defense Forces, recently did a series of calculations showing that a typical-size stone hurled by an expert slinger at a distance of thirty-five meters would have hit Goliath's head with a velocity of thirty-four meters per second—more than enough to penetrate his skull and render him unconscious or dead. In terms of stopping power, that is equivalent to a fair-size modern handgun. "We find," Hirsch writes, "that David could have slung and hit Goliath in little more than one second—a time so brief that Goliath would not have been able to protect himself and during which he would be stationary for all practical purposes."...

What many medical experts now believe, in fact, is that Goliath had a serious medical condition. He looks and sounds 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 human growth hormone, which would explain Goliath's extraordinary size. (The tallest person in history, Robert Wadlow, suffered from acromegaly. At his death, he was eight foot eleven inches, and apparently still growing.) And furthermore, one of the common side effects of acromegaly is vision problems. Pituitary tumors can grow to the point where they compress the nerves leading to the eyes, with the result that people with acromegaly often suffer from severely restricted sight and diplopia, or double vision. Why was Goliath led onto the valley floor by an attendant? Because the attendant was his visual guide. Why does he move so slowly? Because the world around him is a blur. Why does it take him so long to understand that David has changed the rules? Because he doesn't see David until David is up close. "Come to me, that I may give your flesh to the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the field," he shouts out, and in that request there is a hint of his vulnerability. I need you to come to me because I cannot locate you otherwise. And then there is the otherwise inexplicable "Am I a dog that you come to me with sticks?" David had only one stick. Goliath saw two. What the Israelites saw, from high on the ridge, was an intimidating giant. In reality, the very thing that gave the giant his size was also the source of his greatest weakness. There is an important lesson in that for battles with all kinds of giants. The powerful and the strong are not always what they seem.

14. Sling stones, from the Lachish Museum

<https://www.worldhistory.org/image/2804/sling-stones-from-lachish/>



15. Samuel I 9:1-2 (JPS tr. c/o sefaria.org)

There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish son of Abiel son of Zeror son of Becorath son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite, a man of substance. He had a son whose name was Saul, an excellent young man; no one among the Israelites was handsomer than he; he was a head taller than any of the people.

16. Samuel I 18:7-9 (JPS tr. c/o sefaria.org)

The women sang as they danced, and they chanted: Saul has slain his thousands; David, his tens of thousands! Saul was much distressed and greatly vexed about the matter. For he said, "To David they have given tens of thousands, and to me they have given thousands. All that he lacks is the kingship!" From that day on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

Review Questions

- 1) What is Goliath's offer to the Jews?
- 2) How does the text highlight David's unlikely status as a warrior?
- 3) Why was Elah important?
- 4) How does Malcolm Gladwell explain David's victory?
- 5) How does the text undermine Malcolm Gladwell's theory?
- 6) Why is David's miracle important in the long-term?