

David's Heir: For 40 Days Goliath Has Challenged the Jews to a One-on-One, 1 Sam 17:16; David Leaves Bethlehem for Elah, v. 20; David Hears Goliath's Harangue & Regards It an Insult to the "Armies of the Living God," v. 26; David's Doctrinal Rational in Facing Goliath is Moses' Laws of Warfare, Deut 20:1-4; the Jewish Confession of Faith, "*Shama' Yisra'el*" becomes a Call to Arms & a Motivation for Courage in Combat, v. 3

2. David arrived at the Israeli camp at Elah just as Goliath was bellowing his daily harangue to Saul and his army. The giant's daily schedule is described in:  
**1 Samuel 17:16** - The Philistine came forward morning and evening for forty days and took his stand.
3. The first thing the Jews heard in the morning and the last thing they heard that night were the insulting barbs of Big Foot.
4. Over in Bethlehem, Jesse has told David to take some food to his brothers and cheese to King Saul and to run to the battlefield some fifteen miles away.
5. David gathered the goods, went to sleep, and got off to an early start the next morning:  
**1 Samuel 17:20** - So David arose early [ Hiphil imperfect of the verb **שָׁחַם** (*shacham*): to be caused to get up early ] in the morning [ **בִּקְרַח** (*boqer*): early dawn before sunrise ] and left the flock with a keeper and took the supplies and went as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the circle of the camp while the army was going out in battle array shouting the war cry.
6. When the noun *boqer* is used with the verb *shacham* it means to rise early in the morning. The Hiphil imperfect indicates there is a special purpose for the early start; in this case, David's run to Saul's encampment at Elah.
7. David got started before dawn and "came to the circle of the camp" as both armies were taking formation (vv. 20-21). He ran to the battle line to meet up with his brothers when Goliath began issuing his morning challenge to the Israeli army.
8. Goliath moved through the ranks of the Philistine battle array and as he began to approach the Israeli front line, the Jewish soldiers fled in fear.
9. The standoff in the Valley of Elah was caused by geophysical elements that prevented the free movement of troops by either side. But the ace held by Philistines was the daunting presence of the giant Goliath and his intimidating daily diatribe critical of the Jewish army.
10. Note that the soldiers of Israel cower and retreat without an arrow being flung. The presence of one man with a big physique, a loud mouth, and an attitude has neutralized the armies of the living God.
11. The Jews are in desperate need of a man who has within his soul the confidence and courage necessary to take on a giant in defense of his country.
12. PRINCIPLE: Without faith in God and His Word, the pressures of outside adversity are converted to internal stress on the soul.
13. The true test of faith occurs when a believer is placed in a hopeless and helpless situation where all human- viewpoint solutions have been exhausted and the only option left is to trust in the power of the Word of God.
14. The divine decree had scheduled that man to be on the scene at the very moment he was needed to defend the client nation.

15. By this time David is in his early twenties. He has won the approval of Saul as court musician and is on his staff as one of his armor bearers. But for years he has been growing in grace, taking in doctrine, and applying it to the challenges of his daily life.
16. All the challenges David has faced to this point were warm ups for that day's encounter. God had already given David multiple opportunities to apply doctrine to his life and circumstances.
17. Now the big test awaits and David arrives on the battlefield at just the right time to spare Israel an embarrassing defeat.
18. Saul is the present king of Israel, but David is heir apparent having been anointed by Samuel at Bethlehem. He is now being tested to determine if he can face a hopeless and helpless situation, remain mentally alert in the process while maintaining a relaxed mental attitude under pressure.
19. Several retreating soldiers gave David heads-up on what was going on:  
**1 Samuel 17:25** - "Have you seen this man who is coming up? Surely he is coming up to defy Israel. And it will be that the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel."
20. With these kinds of benefits offered for killing Goliath plus the fact it would be the honorable thing to do, David responded in:  
**1 Samuel 17:26** - Then David spoke to the men standing by him, saying, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised<sup>1</sup> Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?"
21. David was astounded that for forty days the army of Israel had taken such insults from an uncircumcised pagan, someone who did not have the protection or the blessings provided by the God of Israel.
22. Goliath was considered a giant because of his abnormal height, but according to Merrill F. Unger, "Skeletons recovered in Palestine attest the fact that men as tall as Goliath once lived in that general region."<sup>2</sup>
23. It was not uncommon for battles to be decided by one-on-one combat. The faceoff between Goliath and David illustrates this:  
**This event illustrates warfare of the time; that most of the army was ill-trained and no match for the well-trained elite who often engaged in individual combat. Thus Jonathan could fight the Philistine garrison single-handed (1 Samuel 14:6-15), and Moses withstood a number of shepherds (Exodus 2:16-19). These men depended on God, but their attempts were not foolhardy; rather they were acting rationally and therefore could expect God's help.**<sup>3</sup>
24. David receives this information and processes it in his soul's inventory of doctrinal ideas. The spiritual life of the believer in the Old Testament is the faith-rest drill.

<sup>1</sup> "In the Old Testament, uncircumcision represented unbelief and disobedience to the covenant of God (Jeremiah 6:10; 9:25)" (Steven Barabas, "Uncircumcised," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, gen. ed. Merrill C. Tenney [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976], 5:842).

<sup>2</sup> Merrill F. Unger, "Goliath," in *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, 3d ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 419.

<sup>3</sup> C. P. Weber, "Goliath," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, gen. ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 2:774.

25. David knows the process: (1) claim a promise, (2) apply a doctrinal rationale, and (3) reach a doctrinal conclusion.
26. David knew his doctrine which means he knew the Mosaic Law. He was familiar with the writing of Moses and especially his "Laws of Warfare" in:
- Deuteronomy 20:1** - "When you go out to battle against your enemies and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt, is with you.
- v. 2** - "When you are approaching the battle, the priest shall come near and speak to the people.
- v. 3** - "He shall say to them, 'Hear, O Israel, you are approaching the battle against your enemies today. Do not be faint hearted. Do not be afraid, or panic, or tremble before them,
- Deuteronomy 20:4** - for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.'" (NASB)
27. Deuteronomy 20:1's example of an enemy's assets is exactly what the Jewish army faced at Elah. David is able to see the assembled horses and chariots and personnel greater in number than Israel's.
28. Moses gives a commandment for courage, "Do not be afraid of them." David is not only unafraid of the Philistine army, he is unafraid of their hulking champion Goliath.
29. In verse two, the Levitical priests are called upon to provide rationales for not being afraid of the enemy. Their appeal is designed to draw on the soldier's doctrinal inventory for, without it, fear will dominate his soul and he will become vulnerable to the enemy.
30. In verses 3 and 4, the priest gives the rationales which, when recalled and applied, will provide the confidence and courage necessary to win the battle.
31. The priest introduces his oration with two words that became sacred in the Jewish mind: **שמע ישראל** (*Shama' Yisra'el*): "Hear, O Israel!"
32. These two words introduce the Jewish confession of faith which begins with Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and also includes 11:13-21 and Numbers 15:37-41.
33. These two words served as a vector to remind members of the Israeli army of the Shema, the "Jewish confession of faith."<sup>4</sup>
34. The Jews were not to be fainthearted, the Qal imperfect of the verb **רָחַק** (*rachak*): "do not have habitual lack courage in the face of danger."
35. This lack of courage is to be overcome so that the soldier will "not be afraid, panic, or tremble."

<sup>4</sup> Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed., s.v. "Shema."