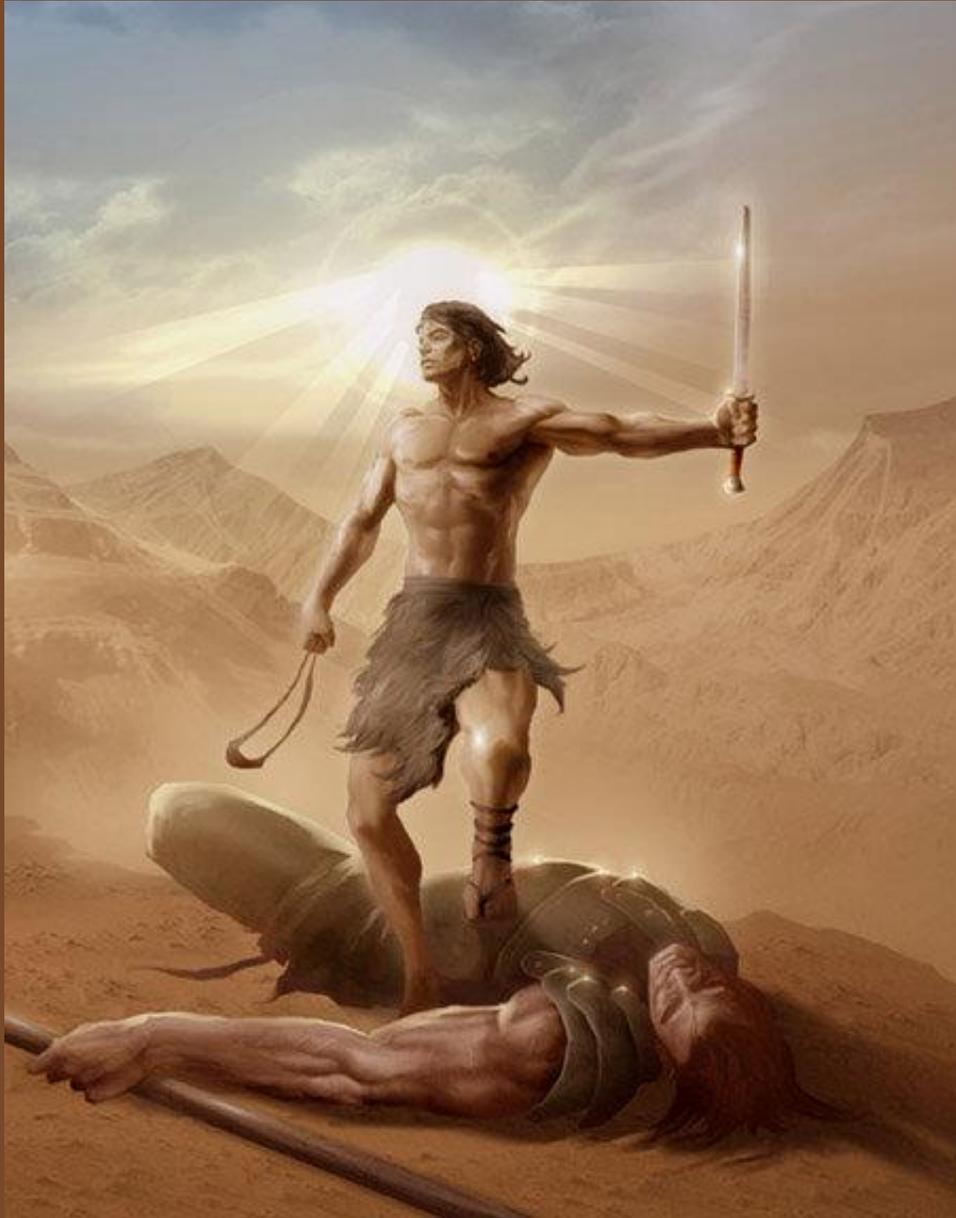


A SLING AND A STONE IN DAVID'S HAND



(I Samuel 17:40-49)

When we hear the name Goliath, immediately, we associate him with David and his sling in a battle between the two nations. The story here is one of a series of wars between the Philistines and Israel. The Philistines were descendants from Ham (one of Noah's son). They were Canaanites whom God told Israel to destroy.

They were the Jebusites, the Amorites, and the Girgashite, among others. Their territory extended from Sidon as you go toward Gerar, as far as Gaza; as you go toward Sodom and Gomorrah and Adamah and Zeboiim as far as Lasha (Gen.10). In their quest to keep their land and their people, they fought Israel. Because Israel did not rid themselves of their enemies entirely earlier, they had to face them through battles to preserve their lives. In this particular battle, the Philistines relied heavily on their champion by the name of Goliath of Gath. He was not an ordinary man for he was a giant. The Bible registers his height as being six cubits and a span [almost ten feet]. He wore a bronze helmet on his head and a coat of mail, and the coat weighed 5,000 shekels of bronze [about 125 pounds]. He had bronze shin armor on his legs and a bronze javelin across his shoulders, and the shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam; his spear's head weighed 600 shekels of iron [about 15 pounds]. And a shield bearer went before him (I Sam 17: 4-7).

That was overwhelming and frightening for Israel, as Goliath challenged them for forty days saying, "Choose a man for yourselves and let him come down to me." When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid (I Sam. 17:11). No one in Israel had the stature of that giant to face him eye to eye or one on one. Besides his height, Goliath was dressed for battle like no one else in Israel. That was a battle seemed for the strong, as Goliath came out morning and evening presenting himself for forty days. Interestingly enough, this number represents trials, probation and testing. It is mentioned 146 times in the Bible. Forty represented Israel's forty years wandering through the desert to reach the Promised Land due to their own fault. Now they are facing another trial in the time frame of the number forty. That's when the young man David comes in the picture, or to the rescue, as one might say. He was probably on his early twenties at that time. As King Saul's armor bearer, he was known to King Saul before this encounter. (I Sam. 16:21). He for sure lived close to King Saul and occasionally went back home to attend to his father's sheep as we read in I Sam. 17: 15: But David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem. So David was a young man with responsibilities to satisfy the king and his father, and not a kid as we read in the children's books. He was a man of valor and strength, as the Bible so describes him. David gave King Saul his resume when convincing the king that he was capable of fighting Goliath. He said to Saul: Your servant kept his father's sheep and when there came a lion or again a bear and took a lamb out of the flock, I

went out after it and smote it and delivered the lamb out of its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught it by its beard and smote it and killed it. Your servant killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God! David said, The Lord Who 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... (I Sam. 17: 34-37). What is most impressive in this picture is David's faith and zeal for God. This is what someone who knew him said while recommending him to Saul for his musician: I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite who plays skillfully, a **valiant man, a man of war, prudent in speech and eloquent**, an attractive person; **and the Lord is with him (I Sam. 16: 12)**. And David came to Saul and served him. Saul became very fond of him, and he became his armor-bearer. Saul sent to Jesse, saying: Let David remain in my service, for he pleases me. And when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, David took a lyre and played it; so Saul was refreshed and became well, and the evil spirit let him (16:21-23). That happened before that particular battle with the Philistines.

At the request of his father that day, David took food to his brothers who were involved in the battle. He witnessed the fear of Israel toward Goliath and said, Let no man's heart fail because of this Philistine; your servant will go out and fight with him (Sam. 17:32). David might not have had the visible strength that was displayed in Goliath, but the Lord was with him. He did not need Saul's armor, nor did he need to go in his own strength; he needed only to go in the strength of the Lord. The battle is the Lord's. He believed that and proclaimed that too. I do not come to you with man power; I come with the power of the Lord. As he made this proclamation, the Lord heard him and gave him His favor. So David was confirmed in the presence of the Lord. He confronted the Philistine by saying, You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of ranks of Israel, Whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands (I Sam. 17:45-46a).

That was a bold statement of faith. David's weapons were only two insignificant things which caused Goliath to mock him and at the same time feel scorned. David's perceived attitude was that of disrespect toward Goliath's strength. He did not run away from him, but he came to confront him with a sling and five stones. What were the possibilities that David would be successful? None perhaps, in the eyes of man. But David had something that no one there had:

faith for one, and the zeal for God for second. When he refused to wear Saul's armor, it was not because it did not fit him. That young shepherd would be stronger without it, because God was with him. His dependence on God achieved His favor and all it took was for David to take the first step- to confront the giant and the rest is history, as we know it. Those smooth stones he picked up from the brook, only one was going to do the job under the direction of the One David put his trust in.

This seemingly children's story is in reality a story for adults. It was not that David had confidence on his own strength; it was not done for show, for this was a real battle. David put his life at risk to save his nation, and of course to receive the deserved reward promised to the man who would kill the giant. David was not an ordinary young man, for he was the anointed future king who would take his position someday and fulfill God's plan – past and future. His kingship would last for a long time, even after his death, because it was through his descendants that our Messiah the King of kings would come. And His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. King Saul did not succeed because he was the people's choice for their king. But David succeeded because he was God's chosen king to represent His Son's kingship on earth someday. That little stone inside a sling brought Israel a great and awesome victory over their enemy all because God was with David. Isn't it comforting to know that God is with us too, and that He has given us His armor to fight the giants of our soul? Look not at the size of your giant, but at the power God has given you to overcome it. A stone and a sling were all David needed. When that stone met the giant head, it knocked him down for good. The secret lies on your submission to God and your standing firm against the devil. That is the stone that will cause the enemy to flee from you. And you will realize that he is not that big after all!