

# 1 Samuel 17:50-58

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*David and Israel are victorious against the Philistines and their champion Goliath.*

*David's faith in the God of Israel and his skill with a sling caused him to prevail over the Philistine Goliath. A sling and a stone were the only physical weapons David used. With his sling, David struck the Philistine and killed him; but there was no sword in David's hand. A sword was the most prevalent weapon that people from that era put their trust in. The mention of the lack of a sword might picture that David's trust was in the ways of God rather than the ways of man. God had placed David in humble circumstances, shepherding sheep. Yet through David's industry and courage, God prepared David for this moment, when He demonstrated His power through an unexpected source.*

After Goliath was downed by *David's stone*, he *ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him and cut off his head with it*. David predicted he would *prevail* in this manner by telling Goliath in verse 46, "I will strike you down and remove your *head* from you." The fact that *David* was able to draw Goliath's *sword* and take off his *head* again shows that while *David* was young, he was not a boy. He was clearly physically stout. In 1 Samuel 16:18, one of *Saul's* servants describe *David* as "a mighty man of valor, and a warrior" indicating that *David* was much more than a mere *youth*.

The text tells us that *David drew Goliath's sword out of its sheath and killed Goliath with it*. In an earlier sentence the text says *David struck the Philistine and killed him*. It seems likely that the text is telling us that once Goliath went down, he was done for, but *David* ended his life with the sword. It was not necessary for *David* to *cut off his head* in order for Goliath to be dead. Cutting off the *head* of a leader was a common way to celebrate a victory. At the end of *Saul's* life, his *head* will be removed and sent around by the *Philistines* as a trophy:

"They cut off [*Saul's*] head and stripped off his weapons, and sent them throughout the land of the *Philistines*, to carry the good news to the house of their idols and to the people."  
(1 Samuel 31:9)

This single event, brought about by *David's* faith, courage, and marksmanship, turned the tide of the entire battle by striking fear in the *Philistines* when they *saw that their champion was dead*. *David's* victory brought courage to the *men of Israel and Judah* who *arose and shouted and pursued the Philistines as far as the valley, and to the gates of Ekron*. This shows that Goliath's bargain was vain. He had said that if he were killed, the *Philistines* would serve *Israel*. They apparently had no intention to do so. It might be that *Saul* had the same thought, and if he lost, he intended to tell the *Philistines* that *David* was "just a *youth*" and "it didn't count."

The *Philistines* ran rather than submitted to *Israel*, but they paid a severe price. There were *slain Philistines all along the way to Shaaraim, even to Gath and Ekron*. It may have been several

days of pursuit then *the sons of Israel returned from chasing the Philistines and plundered their camps. Shaaraim, Gath and Ekron were Philistine city-states along the seacoast approximately where the Gaza strip is today.*

*Then David took the Philistine's head and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his weapons in his tent. Interestingly, Jerusalem had yet to become a city of Israel, being a Jebusite city at the time. Yet David took Goliath's head there. It appears David wished to keep Goliath's weapons, perhaps as his share of the plunder. David later requests Goliath's sword for his own use when he is running from Saul (1 Samuel 21:9, 1 Samuel 22:10).*

*Saul, forgetting who David's father was, when he saw David going out against the Philistine, said to Abner the commander of the army, "Abner, whose son is this young man?"*

*And Abner said, "By your life, O king, I do not know."*

*The king said, "You inquire whose son the youth is."*

Beyond being the *commander of the army*, Abner was also Saul's cousin (1 Samuel 14:50). Abner would be loyal to the house of Saul until 2 Samuel 3 where Abner eventually joins David and is killed by Joab, another *commander*. David laments greatly over the death of Abner in 2 Samuel 3:31.

*Abner eventually finds David when he returned from killing the Philistine, then Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the Philistine's head in his hand. Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?"*

*And David answered, "I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."*

In those days and in that culture a person's surname was in the format of, "*son of (father's name)*" So David's full name would have been "*David son of Jesse*" or "*David ben Yishai*" in Hebrew. When Saul attempts to murder David, it is evident he never forgot *whose son this youth is*, often calling him derogatorily "the son of Jesse" rather than David (1 Samuel 20:30, 1 Samuel 22:13).

It has been widely discussed as to why King Saul would not know who David's father was, seeing in 1 Samuel 16:22 it says, "*Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Let David now stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight."* Additionally, in 1 Samuel 16:21 David became Saul's armor bearer whom he loved, and he would have been familiar with him, as an armor bearer was trusted with the king's life. One thought is that Saul had many servants and could recognize their faces but really knew little or nothing about them. This is common today for CEOs of large corporations and leaders in government. It is likely that Saul loved David because he found him useful, and his interest was not so much in David as in what David could do for him. We will soon see that Saul's perspective toward David will turn sour, and Saul begins to view David as a threat to his power.

## Biblical Text

<sup>50</sup> Thus David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and he struck the Philistine and killed him; but there was no sword in David's hand. <sup>51</sup> Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. <sup>52</sup> The men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted and pursued the Philistines as far as the valley, and to the gates of Ekron. And the slain Philistines lay along the way to Shaaraim, even to Gath and Ekron. <sup>53</sup> The sons of Israel returned from chasing the Philistines and plundered their camps. <sup>54</sup> Then David took the Philistine's head and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his weapons in his tent. <sup>55</sup> Now when Saul saw David going out against the Philistine, he said to Abner the commander of the army, "Abner, whose son is this young man?" And Abner said, "By your life, O king, I do not know." <sup>56</sup> The king said, "You inquire whose son the youth is." <sup>57</sup> So when David returned from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the Philistine's head in his hand. <sup>58</sup> Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David answered, "*I am* the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."