

1st Samuel

Lesson 39

d) The Chasing of the Philistines

(1) A Summary of What the Israelites Did (17:52-53)

Israel had heard the words of David too. The chasing of the Philistines ensued just as David had foretold. Here is a summary of what the Israelites did. Verse 52.

“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.”⁵³ The sons of Israel returned from chasing the Philistines and plundered their camps.” (17:52-53)

It is my opinion that verse 52 has a copy error in it. The Hebrew word for valley is *gai* or *gay*. The Hebrew word for Gath is *gat*. I believe that somewhere in the making of the copies of the original text, and the copies of the copies, the word for Gath was accidentally change to the word for valley. The sentence should read, *“The men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath, and to the gates of Ekron.”* This makes perfect sense because the writer goes on to say that the Philistines were slain *“even to Gath and Ekron.”* In addition, as we have already mentioned in a past verse in this chapter, the two armies were already in the valley of Elah at the brook near Socoh. What valley would the Philistines have run to because they were already in the valley. This point is another reason why the copy error is plausible.

Gath and Ekron are two of the five major Philistine cities in the Philistine tribal area that we know today as the Gaza Strip. Of the five cities, three were near the coast, but Gath and Ekron were near the easter border of the Philistine area and right on the edge of the Valley of Elah.

The town of Shaaraim sat in the valley of Elah also, but it was in the tribal area of Judah. At the brook where David killed Goliath, Shaaraim sat behind the Philistine army. Once Goliath was dead, the Philistines ran toward their tribal area to the west, through Shaarim, and on to Gath and Ekron the two major walled cities. The five cities of the Philistines were the only walled cities in the area where the men could run and the gates be shut to protect them from the Israelites. Each city supported many unwalled villages that surrounded each city. The Philistine warriors did not run to their homes in their villages because the villages could not protect them. Ekron and Gath could protect them. When the writer tells us that Israel *“pursued the Philistines as far Gath, and to the gates of Ekron,”* he is probably telling us that those Philistines who ran to Gath were all killed before they reached the city. He is also telling us that some of those Philistines who ran to Ekron made it behind the gates which stopped the pursuit of Israel.

Notice the interesting last line in this portion of the passage, and do not run past it too quickly. *“The sons of Israel returned from chasing the Philistines and plundered their camps.”* What does this sentence mean? It means that once Goliath was dead, and the army of Israel crossed the brook to fight, the Philistines left all their belongings in the camp and ran for their lives. Everything they owned, tents, bedding, weapons, food, etc., was left behind at their camp by the brook.

(2) A Summary of What David Did (17:54)

The writer then inserts a summary of what David did. Verse 54.

“Then David took the Philistine’s head and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his weapons in his tent.” (17:54)

From the brook in the valley of Elah where David killed Goliath, it was about thirteen miles to Jerusalem. As we have said, the verse is a summary of what David did with the head and the weapons. Based on the context that will come next, David did not leave the Israelite camp to take Goliath’s head to Jerusalem and put his weapons in his tent, meaning his home tent in Bethlehem.

The writer, in this summary, is telling us what ultimately happened to the head and the weapons, but not at this time. By the way, the Hebrew word used here for *tent* is *obel*, and it means *dwelling*. It is not meant to mean a tent at the battleline.

In addition, Jerusalem was not yet a major city in Israel. The northern portion of what we know as Jerusalem was still in the hands of the Jebusites in Benjamin's land. It would be twenty years before David will defeat the Jebusites and take the citadel for himself while he is king. South of the Jebusite city, in Judah's land, Jerusalem was in the hands of Israel. But it was no more than a village at the time. We do not know why David would take the head of Goliath there at this time in the storyline. However, if the skull of Goliath was somehow preserved, we can understand how David took the skull as a trophy to Jerusalem when he captured the citadel and made it his capital city of the nation.

As far as the weapons of Goliath, David took them as his prize. In chapter 21, we will find Goliath's sword wrapped in a cloth in the sanctuary at Nob. In Acts 15:16, the tent at Nob will be called "*the Tabernacle of David*." However, it was not the actual Tabernacle that was still located in Shiloh. We will soon speak of that when we arrive there in the text.

(3) A Summary of What Saul Asked

(a) Who Was the Conqueror?

(i) Abner Did not Know the Name of the Conqueror (17:55a)

After inserting the summary, the writer returns to give a summary of what Saul asked right after he saw David kill Goliath. "Who was the conqueror?" Saul asked his uncle, the commander of the army. Verse 55a.

"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?" (17:55a)

All Saul knew about David was that he trusted him enough to be his armor bearer, and he was also his personal musician. Evidently, Saul did not know much about David's family. He needed to know about them. He was about to place them on a royal status in the nation and free them from all governmental burdens.

(ii) Abner Found the Name of the Conqueror (17:55b-56)

Abner could not answer Saul's question. Saul directed Abner to find the name of the conqueror. Verse 55b.

"And Abner said, "By your life, O king, I do not know."⁵⁶ The king said, "You inquire whose son the youth is." (17:55b-56)

Notice the respect of the uncle to the king, who was his nephew. But more than that, notice the directive of the king, not to his uncle, but to his commander. "...inquire..." Saul ordered.

(iii) Abner Delivered to Saul the Conqueror (17:57)

David was carrying the head of the giant and his weapons as he headed back to the tent of Saul. Abner saw David coming. Abner delivered to Saul, the conqueror. Verse 57.

"So when David returned from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the Philistine's head in his hand." (17:57)

The wording is extremely visual here. He had a bleeding head in one hand and at least the sword in his other. We are not told about the javelin, the spear, or the shield of Goliath.

(b) Whose Son are You? (17:58)

In his presence, with the head of Goliath, Saul asks, "Whose son are you?" Verse 58.

"Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David answered, "I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite." (17:58)

In one way, we are surprised that Saul does not ask David what his name is. In verse 56 and hear in verse 58, Saul wants to know the name of David's father. In another way, it is not a surprise that

Saul wants to know the name of David's father. Saul must put a decree in the records that Jesse's family will never be subject to the governmental burdens of Israel.

Be that as it may, the story of what happen between David and Saul on the day David killed Goliath was not over. There with Saul, David acquired a new fast friend.

David had another Psalm in him at this time. Here it is.

For the choir director; on Muth-labben. A Psalm of David. ¹ I will give thanks to the LORD with all my heart; I will tell of all Your wonders. ² I will be glad and exult in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High. ³ When my enemies turn back, They stumble and perish before You. ⁴ For You have maintained my just cause; You have sat on the throne judging righteously. ⁵ You have rebuked the nations, You have destroyed the wicked; You have blotted out their name forever and ever. ⁶ The enemy has come to an end in perpetual ruins, And You have uprooted the cities; The very memory of them has perished. ⁷ But the LORD abides forever; He has established His throne for judgment, ⁸ And He will judge the world in righteousness; He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity. ⁹ The LORD also will be a stronghold for the oppressed, A stronghold in times of trouble; ¹⁰ And those who know Your name will put their trust in You, For You, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You. ¹¹ Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion; Declare among the peoples His deeds. ¹² For He who requires blood remembers them; He does not forget the cry of the afflicted. ¹³ Be gracious to me, O LORD; See my affliction from those who hate me, You who lift me up from the gates of death, ¹⁴ That I may tell of all Your praises, That in the gates of the daughter of Zion I may rejoice in Your salvation. ¹⁵ The nations have sunk down in the pit which they have made In the net which they hid, their own foot has been caught. ¹⁶ The LORD has made Himself known; He has executed judgment. In the work of his own hands the wicked is snared. Higgaion Selah. ¹⁷ The wicked will "return to Sheol, Even all the nations who forget God. ¹⁸ For the needy will not always be forgotten, Nor the hope of the afflicted perish forever. ¹⁹ Arise, O LORD, do not let man prevail; Let the nations be judged before You. ²⁰ Put them in fear, O LORD; Let the nations know that they are but men. Selah. (Psalm 9)

Chapter 18

4. The Story of the Sickness of King Saul

a) A Summary of What Jonathan Did (18:1-4)

At this point, beginning on the day that David killed Goliath, the story of the sickness of King Saul really began to develop. Nevertheless, in the development of this story, David finds a new friend. First, the writer gives a summary of what Jonathan did. Chapter 18, verse 1.

"Now it came about when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself. ² Saul took him that day and did not let him return to his father's house. ³ Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. ⁴ Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt." (18:1-4)

This report is remarkable, and it shows the true character of Jonathan. We must not forget that the battle successes of King Saul against the Philistines were all victories planned and instigated by Prince Jonathan. Do you remember the defeat of the Philistines at Geba, where we first met Jonathan? How about the defeat of the Philistines at the Pass of Michmash where Jonathan and his armor bearer together, without the help of any other warrior from Israel, but with the help of the LORD, struck fear in the lives of the Philistines, and they melted away in all directions? As far as we know, Jonathan was the conqueror of Israel. King Saul had done little, and the successes we know of were attributed to his son Jonathan. But this success, on this day, was David's. Not Jonathan's. We have to wonder why Jonathan did not volunteer to face Goliath. Surely the thought had crossed the mind of the royals. If Jonathan had volunteered, surely the LORD would have helped him as He helped him at Michmash. The threat of one giant surely was not as fearful as the threat of a

whole camp of thousands of Philistines against Jonathan and his armor bearer. Be that as it may, if Jonathan had been a consideration, he was passed over. Then, in desperation, Saul announced the reward of his daughter's hand in marriage to the man who conquered the giant. That gift alone meant Jonathan could not step up to volunteer. It was strictly against the law of the LORD for a man to marry his sister, at least since the days of the Exodus. Jonathan could not be the conqueror. David entered the picture. A young man not old enough to fight in the battle, but David was old enough to take a wife. We have to wonder if David was even interested in marrying Saul's daughter. We have to wonder if David was even interested in his family being eternally free from the bondage of Israel's governmental requirements of taxes and forced labor for national projects. After all, David did ask what the reward would be when he said to the Israeli warriors, *"What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel?"* (17:26) The answer to him was, *"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."* (17:24-25) If David won, he would become a rich royal in the nation, married into the king's family, and free from the debt of taxes and forced labor. The deed was done. Goliath was dead. The rewards had not been immediately transferred to David at that moment, but they were hopefully on the way. David was the new conqueror of Israel. Jonathan had been set aside from that position. Yet! Jonathan's true character has shown. He was not immoral, impure, hostile, jealous, angry, argumentative, or in disagreement with David. Those qualities you should remember because we have already discussed how these were all characteristics of Saul's character. The Apostle Paul lists those qualities as the deeds of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-20). No, Jonathan had the other qualities. He looked at David with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Jonathan exhibited the fruit of the Spirit in his life (Galatians 5:32). Jonathan's soul was knit together with David that day. We saw the same phrase used with Jacob's love for his son Benjamin in Genesis 44:30. It means Jonathan and David were bound together in life from two souls to one soul together. It was the love relationship between the two men who, as we will see, will affect David greatly for the rest of his life.

David was now about seventeen years old. We met Jonathan twenty years before in the story at Geba as a soldier in the Israeli army. Jonathan must now be at least thirty-seven years old. He was probably even older than that. Think of it this way. David could have been Jonathan's son. In life, those of us who come along with young people, often look to them like a son. I am currently sixty-six years old, yet, a man by the name of Bobby Haynes who just turned eighty years of age, looks to me as his son. For almost thirty years, Bobby worked for me in my ministry at my last church staff position. Travis Brice, who joined the LORD in heaven this year, told me many times that he thought of me as a son. He was seventy-eight years old. Although we met together in each other's company fewer than a dozen times, we were pen pals for more than twenty years, writing to each other almost every day of the work week and often late into the evenings. There was Travis Terrell who joined the LORD in heaven this year due to Covid 19. He was much younger than I, but I looked up to him like a father. Our souls were knit together in brotherly love from the moment we met in October 1990 at a Wednesday night choir rehearsal. I cannot stop here. There were the Pittman brothers, Albert and Ryan. They looked to me as a son. Twenty years ago, when I was in the hospital due to a fall on the Danbury Lodge project that I was building for my last church staff position, they were with me every day for a little more than two years. I picked them up every morning for a 45-minute drive to the build site. At the hospital, they told my wife that they would charge hell with a water pistol for me. They separately told me I was like a son to them even though they both had great sons. Then before I picked up the Pittman brothers at five in the morning, I picked up Ed Toney. Sara, his wife always had a cup of coffee and an egg sandwich for me. They both are like parents to me and I am like a son to them even though they have three wonderful sons. And what about Sam Davis? Sam joined the LORD in heaven this year too. From the time he

retired from sheet metal work, he was with me almost every day, treating me like a son, for he thought of me like a son. Then there is John Kopriva, a decade older than I, who has told many people that I was family since we met in 1999. Quincy James, now with the LORD, a retired attorney, hovered over me like a helicopter father from when I met him in 1993. Jack Kitchens, although I only knew him for about three years before his death, strapped me in like a son, as those who knew him can picture, and would not let me go. Earl Havens, and his wife, Bertie King Havens, in 1974, in my first church, latched on to me with everything they had, basically adopted me in Longview, Texas, and made sure I had food every day and even called me their adopted son. I have more men that I want to give tribute to, but that will have to wait until the next lesson.