

THE GREATNESS OF GOLIATH OF GATH: HIS PHILISTINE
BACKGROUND, CULTURAL MILIEU AND PHYSICAL SIZE

by

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Within the bounds of scripture, and temporal history itself, one of man's greatest heroes is David the shepherd boy who defeated the giant Goliath in mortal combat in the valley of Elah. Much has been written about David and the heroics which his faith in God inspired. Little has been said about the greatness of the foe whom he battled. But the fame of the victor is essentially a measure of the greatness of the vanquished. It is the purpose of this study to elucidate the various influences that made Goliath the champion of the Philistines: one of the most formidable adversaries of all time.

A study of sacred and secular history reveals that there were many peoples who contributed to the greatness of Goliath. Among them were the giant Anakim, the Hittites, the Canaanites, the Philistines and the Aegeans including the ancient Hellenes, Mycenaeans and Minoans.

From the giant Anakim Goliath inherited his fearsome nature and gigantic form. Even as these physical aberrations arose out of the immoral chaos that preceded the deluge and became mighty men of renown, so too had Goliath attained fame in the crucible of war. From the Philistines with their Hellenic background he had learned the ways of war from his youth, honing his military skills to perfection. His advanced armaments owed their origin to various peoples. From the Hittites came the superior iron in his spearhead and also the fearsome three-man chariot force that backed him up. From the Mycenaeans and Minoans came the skills to fashion his beautiful sword and his magnificent coat of mail. From the debased paganism of the Canaanites in which he was steeped, he was imbued with a reckless abandon for the confrontation and the hope of immortality should he perish on the field of conflict.

As this ten foot tall half ton behemoth arrayed in his battle panoply faced the stripling shepherd youth across the valley, it looked like the mismatch of the ages. However, Goliath failed to properly evaluate the strength of the God of Hosts in whose authority David had come. This fatal error became his nemesis and tipped the balances of warfare unalterably in David's favor. Despite his greatness, Goliath's doom was sealed as he cursed the God to whom he owed his very being. It was indeed a mismatch, but only to the eyes of faith!

Accepted by the Faculty of Grace Theological Seminary
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INTRODUCTION

When one reads of the encounter between David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 17 one is immediately struck by the apparent mismatch which the duel represented. At an initial glance, the words of Saul to David would seem to be correct: ". . . Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth" (1 Sam 17:33). From the human perspective it would be no contest. To the eye of faith however, the mismatch was in David's favor, for he and the God in whom he had placed his faith would win the day and show to all generations the truth: "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

The purpose of this study is twofold: First, to shed light on the life and times of this great man in order to more fully understand the background of his final encounter with David. Second, to demonstrate that Goliath embodied the finest features of several cultures and influences which made him one of the mighty men of renown, an adversary to be reckoned with.

Perhaps the foremost factor in Goliath's life was his decendancy from the sons of Anak which gave him his overwhelming physical size and strength. The second major influence was his close association with the Philistines

among whom he grew up. The third major force to shape this great man was the Canaanite culture and religion which superbly fit him for his dangerous life as a warrior. By observing these and other facets of Goliath's life, it is possible to build a composite picture of why he was such a fearsome adversary.

From the Biblical account given of him, one might well conclude that Goliath was of the stock of the giant Anakim who arose in the pre-flood world and were later destroyed in the Noahic deluge. The appearance of a very similar race of giants in Canaan in the post-flood era would suggest that this unusual group was carried genetically through the flood in the loins of Noah. When the Philistines settled in the area of Phoenicia along the Eastern Mediterranean they encountered these giants and found in them a perfect match for their ways of warfare. The Philistines themselves were a fierce and aggressive warfaring people who teamed up ideally with their new found and fearsome cohorts. Coming from the Aegean area the Philistines had brought with them mighty weapons of warfare peculiar to that region--weapons that could strike terror into the hearts of their foes. Their great long spears with their thongs of leather reminded the Israelites of a weaver's beam. These spears could be hurled great distances with uncanny accuracy. The great bronze helmet worn by Goliath would add height and grandeur to his already considerable stature and would lend a measure of protection

not accorded the average Israelite soldier. Added to this armor was the great bronze corslet, the greaves so typical of Aegean warriors, and his great, long sword of which it was said: "There was none like it."

Aegean influence was also evidenced in the practice of sending a shield bearer to precede the champion into combat. The shield borne was often the height of the warrior himself which in Goliath's case would be some ten feet--a formidable barrier indeed.

Not the least of the Aegean influences was the method of warfare known as "championship battle." This concept was particularly suited to the Philistines because it enabled them to utilize to the greatest advantage the giant Anakim whom they had recruited into their armies. Victory by one great man over his adversary would demonstrate the blessing of the gods and insure ultimate victory by the entire army. The Philistines were not only superbly equipped as they went into battle but they were also highly skilled in the use of their weapons. The Biblical description of Goliath as a "man of war from his youth" is not a mere exercise in idle words. Aegean and later Greek history both reveal how youths were taught from an early age the care of the body, participation in athletic contests, and the art of warfare. It can be safely concluded that from his earliest years Goliath had undergone extensive physical training and had honed to a high degree of

proficiency the use of the weapons and tactics that had now made him the champion of the Philistines.

In addition to the Aegean influence, the Philistines also brought with them fighting advantages which arose in the Hittite empire and beyond. Although the Hittite kingdom was well past its zenith, and indeed in a state of rapid decline, it had only recently relinquished its monopoly in the manufacture of a high grade iron. Precisely how the Philistines gained access to this skill is not known, but because they came from the "Sea Peoples" who in turn originated in various areas of the Aegean, it is assumed that one of these groups learned the art of iron making from the Hittites and then spread their knowledge to the other groups. Because of their monopoly in this skill, the Philistines were able to construct strong and effective weapons such as the head of Goliath's spear, while at the same time denying this technology to the nations against whom they fought.

Further Hittite influence is revealed in the use of the iron-wheeled chariot with its three-man crew. The introduction of this vehicle and method of chariotry by the Philistines enabled them to mount devastating blitzkrieg attacks with superior firepower against their hapless enemies. The potential of such a force backing the champion would add to his aura of invincibility.

The cultural milieu of Goliath was primarily Canaanite. A cursory study of his life and times clearly reveals that the customs, religion and language of the

Canaanites quickly dominated and absorbed most of the peoples coming within their sphere of influence. Indeed, it was the debased and licentious religious practices of the Canaanites that created the greatest threat to the nation Israel. Despite their background of monotheism and their noble teachings, there was an almost inexplicable allurements of Canaanite paganism to the ordinary Israelite. It was not until after the Babylonian captivity centuries later that the nation was cured of this downgrading and debilitating influence.

The adoption by the Philistines of the Canaanite deities is well documented and it was precisely this influence that added to the fearsome nature of Goliath of Gath. The Canaanite pantheon was built around supernatural but man-like deities who fought constantly. Their belligerence, quarrels, battles, death and resurrection are carefully recorded in many ancient texts. The glory of battle, the curse of the gods and the fearlessness of death all seem to be apparent in the boasts of Goliath. To his unregenerate heart the gods inspired a reckless abandon in battle and hope for immortality if death should overtake him on the field of warfare. He had been trained from a youth not only in the ways of warfare but in its psychology also. His mind was filled with confidence as he cursed David by his gods and doubtless recalled the many times they had apparently given him the victory in days gone by. This day, he was sure, would be no different.

And so it was that Goliath and David met in the vale of Elah. Goliath, a finely-tuned and gigantic fighting machine was the product of the greatest methods of warfare of his day. David, a mere shepherd boy, was armed only with his staff and sling and an unshakeable faith in the Lord of Hosts whom he served. The outcome was indeed sure, but only to the eye of faith.

CHAPTER I

GOLIATH'S ROOTS

The Philistines: A Nation on the Ascendancy

The Origin of the Philistines

For many years the ultimate origin of the Philistines has been a subject of considerable conjecture among scholars. After a rather exhaustive study of the problem N. K. Sandars concludes: "Of the 'Peoples of the Sea,' and their part in the history of the times, the pattern is splintered and infinitely complicated."¹ Within the sphere of scripture the Philistines (who were listed among the Sea Peoples) first appear in the days of Abraham who journeyed in the land of Gerar where he encountered Abimelech, king of the Philistines (Gen 20:21,26). The fact that they appear so early in Canaan has led T. D. Proffit² to conclude that they had originally been Semites who through sojourning in the Aegean became Aegeanized and then returned to their native land in a mass migration about 1200 B.C.--some 800 years after the time of Abraham. This view, however, is an isolated one

¹N. K. Sandars, The Sea Peoples (Thames and Hudson, 1978), p. 198.

²For a full presentation of this view see: T. D. Proffit, "Philistines: Aegeanized Semites," Near East Archaeological Society Bulletin, new series 12 (1978), pp. 5-30.

and will not be pursued further. Others view this early reference to the Philistines as an unhistorical anachronism and discard it on this account. The majority of historians, however, would view this early reference as a valid one and would harmonize it with the general restlessness and transience of many groups of people during this time and in the centuries to follow. Of this era, Allen Jones has observed: "The late Helladic Age, especially the latter part, was a time of great restlessness and migration in the Eastern Mediterranean area."¹

The Bible itself states the immediate origin of the Philistines as Caphtor which is traditionally associated with the island of Crete (Amos 9:7). The prophet Jeremiah (47:4) also links them with Caphtor, while Ezekiel (25:16) and Zephaniah (2:5) link them with the Cherethites who are often associated with Cretans. Although the context of these verses indicates an immediate rather than an ultimate origin, it does suggest that the Philistines came into the Eastern Levant from the direction of the Aegean area. This conclusion is supported by Raymond Weill who states: "Keftiu (a term used for Crete; Caphtor in the Bible) to the Egyptians in 1500 B.C. and Phoenicia to the primitive Hellenes meant the entire Creto-Aegean-Asianic world."² Evidence based on

¹Allen H. Jones, Bronze Age Civilization - The Philistines and the Danites (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1975), p. 92.

²Raymond Weill, Phoenicia and Western Asia (London: Harrap, 1940), p. 18.

ancient Egyptian documents and the introduction of characteristic Minoan pottery into the Eastern Mediterranean area has led most scholars to conclude that the Philistines did indeed originate in the Aegean area and what would later be the land of Greece in particular.

Exactly why they migrated has never been fully explained. What is known is that historically, stability and a measure of prosperity in this area depended on a balance of power which had existed between the two empires of the Egyptians to the southwest and the Hittites to the northwest. With the weakening and ultimate demise of these empires as viable forces in the area, the way was opened for the rise of many smaller kingdoms to assert their influence and bring instability and warfare throughout the mideast. Among these restless peoples would be the Philistines as they came by land and sea into the Eastern Mediterranean to establish their rule and influence.

The weakening of the Hittite and Egyptian empires has been carefully documented. For centuries the Hittites had occupied a region extending from Northern Palestine to their eastern capital of Carchemish on the Euphrates and west into the land of Turkey where they had a magnificent capital at Khattusa. Twenty five thousand tablets unearthed in this site in 1907 served to confirm Joshua's description of the entire western Fertile Crescent as the "land of the Hittites" (Josh 1:4). The Hittites occur regularly in Bible history and were encountered by Abraham (Gen 23:3-20), Esau

(Gen 26:34), Joshua (Josh 11:3), Solomon (1 Kings 11:1) and Ezra (Ezra 9:1). Their empire reached its zenith under the Old Kingdom (1850-1550 B.C.) ruler Mursil I who in 1550 succeeded in sacking Babylon far to the East. After some years of declension under heavy Egyptian pressures the Hittites again reasserted their influence as far south as Lebanon under Suppiluliuma (1385-1345), the greatest of the New Kingdom monarchs.

Long years of conflict between Egypt and Hatti drained the strength of both empires and they met in open conflict for the last time at the battle of Kadesh in 1286-1285 B.C. The Egyptians emerged victorious in the great chariot battle against superior Hittite tactics but they were too exhausted to pursue their foundering enemy. This battle did however spell the de facto end to the greatness that had characterized Hatti.

Through the centuries, the empire had been plagued by several weaknesses.

First, theirs was never a maritime power: they depended on Ugarit and the untrustworthy Lukka for a naval force; secondly, their reliance on a feudal system gave much power to great vassals and subject rulers, while their feudal army was dangerously dependent on its chariotry, an over-specialized force.¹

In addition to these weaknesses, independency had continually plagued the Hittites whose laws granted leniency

¹Sandars, "Sea Peoples," p. 140.

toward conquered feudal aristocracies. Restricted death penalties demonstrated a commendable humanitarianism but this laxity toward those conquered ultimately became a major factor in the demise of the empire. In 1265 Arzawa and the other western vassals broke away, blocking the trade route leading to northwestern Anatolia and the tin mines of Central Europe. Because Hittite history was largely a struggle to control the trade routes and the metal sources on which the prosperity of the state relied, the loss of this route was a serious blow. When the Sea Peoples moved into the land they cut the southeastern route which led to the region around modern Elazig in which the richest copper mines of the Middle East were located. These warrior masses had overtaken the Mycenaean palaces on the Greek mainland, and had brought about the fall of Troy. They overwhelmed Anatolia, burned Khattusa, and carried on an extensive campaign of destruction and conquest, administering the final coup de grace to the Hittite Empire.

As for Egypt, it too had been in a state of declension for many years. Like the Hittite empire it was dangerously dependent on capricious mercenaries within its army and was exhausted from maintaining over-extended borders. Its power had waned following the expulsion of the Hysksos and the Battle of Megiddo and it was in a weakened condition when the attacks from the Sea Peoples began in the reign of Rameses II (1290-1224 B.C.). Earlier mention of the Philistines had been made in the Amarna letters of 1400 B.C.,

but their strength at that time was much less and their desire for conquest somewhat restrained. When they attacked Egypt during the reign of Merneptah in about 1220 B.C. they had formed an alliance with the Libyans and had come into the land from the west. They came intending to stay as evidenced by the fact that they brought their women and children in ox carts with them. Although the Sea Peoples were defeated by Merneptah they soon reappeared in the land during the reign of Rameses III in about 1189 B.C., coming both by sea and by land this time. The epic battle which resulted from this invasion is magnificently recorded on the temple wall at Medinet Habu.¹ As in the previous encounter, the battle went to the Egyptians but it left the nation greatly weakened and discouraged. The misleading bombast of Rameses is presented in resumé in the Harris Papyrus:

I extended all the frontiers of Egypt and overthrew those who had attacked them from their lands. I slew the Denyan in their islands, while the Tjekker and the Philistines were made ashes. The Sherden and the Weshesh of the Sea were made nonexistent, captured all together and brought in captivity to Egypt like the sands of the shore. I settled them in strongholds, bound in my name.²

In fact, Rameses settled many of the Philistines in Canaan as vassals and took others into his army as mercenaries. As Egyptian military power continued to wane the Philistines

¹For an excellent account of this battle with accompanying pictures see: Sanders, "Sea Peoples," pp. 125-129.

²The Philistines and the Other Sea Peoples. (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, Winter, 1970), p. 2.

became a de facto independent power, maintaining a flourishing trade both by land and by sea, adapting themselves to their new environment and progressively assimilating the language and culture of Canaan. Their influence on the area would be pervasive, the most lasting effect being the new name that the land adopted--Palestine.

Philistine Expansionism

For many years after settling along the coastal plain, the Philistines were content to dwell within that area but eventually began to covet the trade routes to the north and the summer pastures of the Shephelah to the east. In the days of Shamgar during the era of the Judges they had oppressed Israel only to suffer the slaying of six hundred men by Shamgar's oxgoad which may imply their early denial of iron and weaponry to those around them. As they pushed further north they pressed upon the tribes of Dan and Judah eventually forcing the former out of the area altogether (Judg 14-18). In the days of Samson an almost complete dominance of the Philistines over Israel existed and the latter was in danger of losing her national identity and monotheism through intermarriage and the progressive adoption of pagan deities. The extent of Philistine domination during this period is vividly illustrated by the plea of the men of Judah to Samson when they said: ". . . Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us? . . ." (Judg 15:11). Although Samson was able to bring limited relief

from the Philistine yoke, he himself through moral laxity succumbed to them and spent his last years in blindness, grinding in the prison house of Gaza.

In Eli's time the Philistines enjoyed their greatest victories over Israel. In the encounter at Ebenezer (1 Sam 4) a multitude of Israelite soldiers was slain and the Ark of God was taken into the Philistine city of Ashdod. This victory coupled with the earlier Ammonite invasion from the East, resulted in abject discouragement for the nation and lacking in faith, they turned to Samuel and asked for a king. They felt that they could never match the solidarity of the Philistines on the battlefield without the strong leadership of a king.

After Saul was chosen to lead the nation he enjoyed a brief moment of victory at Michmash aided by the daring exploits of his son, Jonathan, and his armor-bearer. But the victory was limited and shallow and as Saul fell further into sin his courage and ability to lead the nation quickly waned. When he and his armies faced the Philistines in the Valley of Elah they were terrified by the giant of Gath who roared his epithets and challenges across the valley. The Bible account states that at Goliath's words the men of Israel were dismayed and greatly afraid and fled from him (1 Sam 17:11,24).

As for Goliath, his pride and confidence would have been supreme because his was a nation on the ascendancy. He

was a confident champion backed by an army on the move. Behind David cowered the terror-stricken men of Israel who, with their king, trembled at their fearsome adversary. To Goliath, the outcome was sure: ". . . I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field" (1 Sam 17:44). Was he not the champion of the Philistines?

The Anakim: Mighty Men of Renown

The Origin of the Anakim

Even as many nations have legends about a universal flood in their history, so many also have legends and myths about men of great stature, commonly called giants. Whether or not these legends originated from the Biblical accounts of ancient giants is not known, but there is much factual evidence of giant creatures, including men, in antiquity. For example, the great footprints in the Paluxy riverbed in Texas give evidence of humans of great stature who lived concurrently with the dinosaurs.¹ The fact that other gigantic creatures of antiquity such as the mammoths, cave bears, and huge birds like Aepyornis have been discovered should not make it unusual that giant men also once roamed the earth.

In Genesis chapter six the reader is introduced to a race of "nephilim," a Hebrew word translated "giants" in the Authorized Version. That this is a reasonable

¹For further reading see: John Morris, Tracking Those Incredible Dinosaurs (San Diego: CLY Publishers, 1980).

translation is substantiated by the fact that this word is translated in the LXX by the Greek word "gigantes." Exactly how this race began has been a matter of conjecture and debate for many years. The Bible account reads as follows:

And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all whom they chose . . . There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bore children to them, the same became mighty men who were of old, men of renown" (Gen 6:1,2,4).

Differences in interpretations of this passage arise mainly over the expression "sons of God." Scholars including Martin Luther, Matthew Henry, H. C. Leupold and C. I. Scofield take the expression to mean men of the godly line of Seth who married ungodly women and hence brought upon their union the curse of God.

The other major view interprets the sons of God as fallen angels who either co-habited with sinful women to produce offspring or who greatly influenced sinful men to do the same. Most recently, Henry Morris upholds this latter view and argues forcefully that this expression has reference to fallen angels who possessed and controlled evil men and women and the children borne to them. His conclusion to the matter is as follows:

Having gained essentially complete control over both minds and bodies of the antediluvian parents, these fallen 'sons of God' could then, by genetic manipulation, cause their progeny to become a race of monsters.

The latter also then would be under their control and possession as well."¹

It is not within the scope of this study to seek to determine which interpretation is more reasonable but some further observations can be made. First, it should be noted that whenever this race of giants is encountered, it is always opposed to the work and the people of God. Second, these giants arose from a deplorable time of sin and rebellion against God. It is not surprising therefore to find them within a very similar context in post-diluvian history, namely, scattered throughout the region of godless Canaan.

This brings us to our third observation, that these post-diluvian giants were likely the same race of men that Moses made mention of in Genesis 6:4 in the expression, "and also after that." There is no Biblical evidence that the Anakim, Rephaim, Emmim and Zamzummim were substantially different from the pre-flood Nephilim. Fourth, since they appeared in kind after the flood it seems most reasonable that they were carried through that cataclysm genetically in the loins of Noah. Fifth, since man was created "very good" in God's eyes, this trait of degraded giantism could not have been latent within the genetic structure of Adam. If it resulted from a providentially caused genetic mutation or aberration, this must have occurred at the fall or when

¹Henry M. Morris, The Genesis Record (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), p. 173. See also William A. Van Gemeren, "The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1-4," Westminster Theological Journal 43:2 (Spring, 1981), pp. 320-48.

the sons of God took wives of the daughters of men. In either case, it surfaced as a visible trait when God's will was callously violated. Sixth, it might be suggested that since the Anakim arose from within the descendants of Canaan, they might have represented in part the curse pronounced on him in Genesis 9:25. Finally it should be noted that genetic giantism can still occur when two male chromosomes appear within a fertilized cell.¹ This observation should serve only to demonstrate the plausibility of a genetic basis for the Biblical giants.

The Location of the Anakim

After the flood, children were born to the three sons of Noah: Shem, Ham and Japheth (Gen 9:18, 10:1). To Ham was born Canaan who was cursed of the Lord to be a servant of servants (Gen 9:25-27) because of his part in his father Ham's sin (Gen 9:20-24). From the land of Ararat some of these descendants of Noah moved south into the lands east of the Mediterranean Sea. Canaan became the father of Sidon, his firstborn, and Heth (Gen 10:15), the latter, becoming a resident in the area of Hebron. Now Hebron is one of the oldest cities of antiquity and was founded by Arba (Gen 35:27, Josh 15:13) who built it seven years before Zoar in Egypt (Num 13:22). Arba became the father of Anak (Josh 15:13) from whom the name Anakim arose. Because the Anakim

¹See Irving Solomon, "Giantism," Encyclopedia Americana, vol. 12 (Danbury: Grolier Inc., 1981), p. 729.

are equated with the "children of Heth" in Genesis 23:5 we can conclude that they not only arose out of the environs of Hebron after the flood but also that they were direct descendants of Canaan, the 'son' of Noah.

For a period of time after they settled in Canaan, the Anakim must have proliferated and eventually inhabited most of the land. On several occasions we read the expression ". . . a people great and many, and tall as the Anakim" (Deut 2:10,21). Not only were they numerous and gigantic, but they built fortified cities with walls ". . . up to heaven" (Deut 1:28; Josh 14:12,14). A few of the Anakim became leaders of nations such as Og, king of Bashan (Deut 3:1-11), but he was evidently an exception for the Anakim were ultimately overwhelmed politically and absorbed by the nations that came up against them. Thus we find that although they originally occupied much of Canaan, they were first expelled from east of the Jordan, then from the central mountains and ultimately died out even in the coastal plain, their last stronghold.

The Names of the Anakim

Wherever the Anakim were encountered they were given specific names which described their stature and characteristics. When first mentioned in Genesis six they are called "nephilim," a plural Hebrew word to collectively describe this monstrous race. The word finds its origin in the hiphil form of the verb "naphal" which means "to fall." Since the

form is causitive we conclude that it could be loosely interpreted: "those who cause to fall." The name therefore has reference not primarily to their depraved origin (i.e. "fallen ones") but rather to the ferocity with which they attacked those who came up against them. Beecher says of them: ". . . their gigantic size and strength coupled with their fierce disposition caused all to fall before them."¹ They were evidently savage men who fell with impetuosity upon their enemies and revelled in the atmosphere of violence that characterized their times and brought down the judgment of God in the form of the Noahic Deluge.

After the flood when this race of giants again arose and settled into the land of Canaan they took on various names given to them by the peoples who encountered and ultimately displaced them.

Now Arba, whose name means "strength of Baal," settled in the city of Hebron which, because of his fame, also took on the name "Kirjath-arba." Joshua 14:15 tells us that Arba ". . . was a great man among the Anakim." Perhaps this expression has reference to his being the progenitor of the post-diluvian giants since he was the father of Anak (Josh 15:13) from whom the Anakim derived their name. The name Anak itself means a necklace or neck chain and can carry with it several possible ideas when in reference to the Anakim.

¹W. J. Beecher, "Giants," in vol. 2 of A Dictionary of the Bible, ed. James Hastings, 6 vols. (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1903), pp. 166,167.

Harkavy¹ in his Hebrew-Chaldee dictionary takes it to mean something that is stretched or long, hence: giant. Davidson notes in his lexicon² that the Arab equivalent means long-necked and hence takes this to be a physical trait of the Anakim. Others take the word to mean 'men of neck' and conclude that these giants were thick-necked. Whatever the original implications of the name it is quite evident that the Anakim became notorious for their size and ferocity. The unbelieving spies who saw them said: ". . . we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight" (Num 13:33). That their ferocity was great and their prowess in battle unequalled is attested to by the proverb: ". . . who can stand before the children of Anak!" (Deut 9:2). Indeed, nearly the entire nation of Israel was discouraged before them (Deut 1:28) and only Caleb urged the people to ". . . go up at once, and possess it [the land]; for we are well able to overcome it" (Num 13:30). It was with the same measure of faith that David faced Goliath and confidently asserted: "This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the

¹Alexander Harkavy, Student's Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary of the Old Testament (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1914), p. 537.

²B. Davidson, The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons Limited, 1966), p. 608.

wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel" (1 Sam 17:46).

A third name given to the giants was 'Rephaim,' a Hebrew term first used in Genesis 14:5 where it is recorded that Chedorlaomer and his allies defeated the Rephaim at Ashteroth-Karnaim, east of the Jordan River. In the days of Moses and Joshua these giants lived in Bashan where Og was the last of their kind east of the Jordan (Deut 3:11). West of the Jordan they inhabited the Valley of Rephaim south of Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:18) and lived in the forests of the land of the Perizzites, a nomadic tribe within the land. The plural term Rephaim is derived from two separate Hebrew words **רָפָא** and **רָפַח** both of which are translated as "giant" or in the plural "giants." Young suggests that the term Rephaim means "fearful one."¹ The verb **רָפָא** means to heal, cure or restore and hence derived the meaning "to become strong." The verb **רָפַח** is used of the hands when they become weak, feeble or limp through fear or discouragement. The verb is used in Jeremiah 6:24 where it describes the effect on the Israelites when they heard the prophecy of the Babylonians who were soon to invade their land: "We have heard the fame of it; our hands wax feeble; anguish hath taken hold of us, and pain, as a woman in travail." It is used in like manner in Jeremiah 49:24 and 50:43. The term

¹Robert Young, Analytical Concordance to the Bible (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), p. 389.

Rephaim therefore vividly describes not only the strength of the Anakim but also the debilitating effect that their presence had on their enemies.

A fourth term used to describe the giants was the term Zuzim and its possible cognate form Zamzummim. The former term is used in Genesis 14:5 of those great people living east of the Jordan River. The word comes from the Hebrew word **ז** which means to be prominent or to project forward. It carries with it the idea of strength. The latter word Zamzummim was given to the giants by the Ammonites (Duet 2:20) and sounds almost as terrifying as the people it depicts! The meaning of this word is not clear and it is found only in Deuteronomy 2:20. It is variously interpreted: murmerers, babblers, powerful, vigorous. Davidson¹ suggests that the word derives from the Hebrew stem **ז** which means to pour out or shake. If this is so, it might again have reference to the effect these men had on those who faced them in battle; it was as if they were shaken up and poured out before them!

The last word used to describe the Anakim is Emmim, a name given to them by the Moabites. The meaning of the word is certain; it means "terrible." The implications are likewise clear; it was a terrifying experience to face one of the Anakim in mortal battle.

¹Davidson, Hebrew Lexicon, p. 239.

These observations lead us to conclude that Goliath arose from an ancient race of giants notorious for their vicious antagonism against the things of God as well as their military prowess and mighty acts of renown. On the day that Goliath met David in the Valley of Elah, his heart was filled with pride in his ancestry, fame and abilities. He faced his paltry foe with confidence and disdain, knowing that his reputation would not only remain unsullied but would be further enhanced by his quick and decisive victory. Steeped in pagan darkness, he uttered from his lips the fatal curse. His rejection of the God who made him was complete; his judgment was at hand.

CHAPTER II

GOLIATH'S CULTURAL AND POLITICAL MILIEU

Canaanite Influences

With regard to Goliath's cultural and political background, several general observations can be made. As with his "roots," there were various influences that shaped his life and made him what he was. Foremost among these influences were the Canaanites and the Philistines. As we have previously noted, the Anakim as a race were dominant in only one area, that of military warfare. Because of their weaknesses in other areas they tended to be absorbed and influenced by the peoples who moved in amongst them. Hence we find that Goliath's social, cultural and military background can be seen most clearly as it is reflected in Canaanite and Philistine society.

The Canaanites apparently moved into Palestine from the north about 3200 B.C. and settled throughout the land and north into Syria. They were a sedentary people who lived in fortified cities surrounded by farms. For this reason they settled first in the Mediterranean plain, but over the years their religion, language and culture spread over the entire region. In the period between the fourteenth and eleventh centuries B.C. the area actually occupied by the Canaanites was greatly reduced.

"Hebrews broke into Palestine from the east and spread rapidly into the hills and gradually onto the plains. The Sea Peoples, known in southwestern Palestine as 'Philistines,' occupied most of the coast of Palestine and possibly even some areas north of Phoenicia. Arameans, sweeping over eastern and northern Syria, effectively isolated the Canaanites in the great sea ports of southern Syria"1

Despite their numerical decline, the Canaanites exercised great influence on the invading peoples. The first of these influences was their language. Within the group of North Western Semitic languages, Hebrew, Moabite and Phoenician can be correctly termed "South Canaanite." For example, Isaiah calls Hebrew "the language of Canaan" (Isa 19:18), and Phoenician inscriptions, as well as the names of Canaanite persons and places mentioned in the Old Testament show this description to be correct. Kathleen Kenyon has noted in her studies that this was the language eventually adopted by the Philistine as well.² She states:

In the early Philistine levels were found seals in Cypro-Minoan script, which was presumably that which was in use among the newcomers. By about the tenth century B.C. the finds suggest that there was a transition to the use of the Hebrew-Phoenician script.³

The fact that the Anakim had lived within the land much longer than the Philistines would lend weight to the argument that Goliath had learned this language from his youth. In

¹Harry T. Frank, Bible, Archaeology and Faith. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 45.

²For further reading on the origin and transition of the Philistine language see: Keith N. Schoville, Biblical Archaeology in Focus (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), pp. 298, 299.

³Kathleen M. Kenyon, Archaeology in the Holy Land, 4th edition (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1979), p. 217.

the time of David there is certainly nothing to suppose that the Philistines and Israel, though deadly enemies, did not speak essentially the same Semitic tongue.

The second Canaanite influence on the Philistines was their religion.

"Canaanite religion seems to have laid greater stress upon fertility than any other of its time and area. This may be partly explained by the acute tension of peasants entirely dependent upon capricious rains. In fertile Mesopotamia nourished by two mighty rivers, and in Egypt fertilized by the regular and dependable overflow of the Nile, the situation was somewhat different. Fertility of the soil and adequacy of water could more or less be taken for granted."¹

Within the land of Canaan the beneficial rains were much less certain. Because life itself was dependent upon the productivity of the land, the fertility of the flocks and the birth of children, these struggles of life and death became personified in Canaanite religion. Through religious ritual the worshiper reenacted and participated in the struggles of the gods, for these were in fact his own struggles for life. Anyone coming within the land and experiencing such uncertainties and dangers would naturally want to take advantage of the established ways of assuring fecundity and prosperity. Fertility goddesses for household use were therefore common among the Canaanites and would be a constant reminder of the presence of the gods and their activities. Participation in fertility rites with their excessive use of wine, their eroticism and frenzy were all an attempt to place oneself in a certain relationship to the gods and to seek to attain their

¹Frank, Bible, Archaeology, p. 81.

blessings. It would be only natural to defend such a way of life against those who sought to undermine and destroy it. To Goliath, David and his nation with their monotheism and exalted morality, posed just such a danger. He was not fighting a mere military battle but was rather defending an entire way of life. All that he had learned from a youth was at stake. Surely the gods were with him and he would destroy the enemy before him, preserving for himself and his nation what seemed to be their only hope of survival and blessing.

Philistine Influences

Their Social Habits

In their everyday life, the Philistines were generally a hard-working agrarian people. With the rising of the sun they would leave their walled cities to work in the surrounding fields or stay within the city to carry on their work as potters, forgers of metal, weavers of cloth and other industrial pursuits. For those living closer to the hill country there would be the tending of flocks while many along the seacoast were engaged in the mercantile industry. Their aggressiveness in production and trade is attested to by the fact that they subordinated the other Sea Peoples and the Canaanites whose land they entered. Their dominance was economic as well as military.

However, when the workday was over the Philistines were given to socializing and drinking beer. Throughout the

areas of Philistine occupation Cypriote pottery resembling the Mycenaean ware of Argos has been found. This pottery was much superior to the native wares of Canaan and was painted red and black in geometric designs with swans pluming themselves painted on the sides. Many of the jugs found were provided with a strainer spout obviously intended to strain out the beer from the barley husks (see figures 1,2).

"It is not difficult to infer from the ubiquity of these wine craters and beer jugs that the Philistines were mighty carousers. In this respect again, archaeology is in full agreement with Biblical tradition, as we see from the story of Samson, where drinking bouts are mentioned several times in connection with the Philistines."¹

The account given in Judges 16:23-25 vividly describes the event.

"Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand. And when the people saw him, they praised their god: for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us. And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison house, and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars."

Perhaps it was the thought of such a celebration that lightened the heart of Goliath as he contemplated what he thought would be an easy battle. A quick thrust of the spear and his victory would once again provide an occasion for a national celebration. And he would once more be the conquering hero, the champion of the Philistines.

¹William F. Albright, The Archaeology of Palestine (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 115.

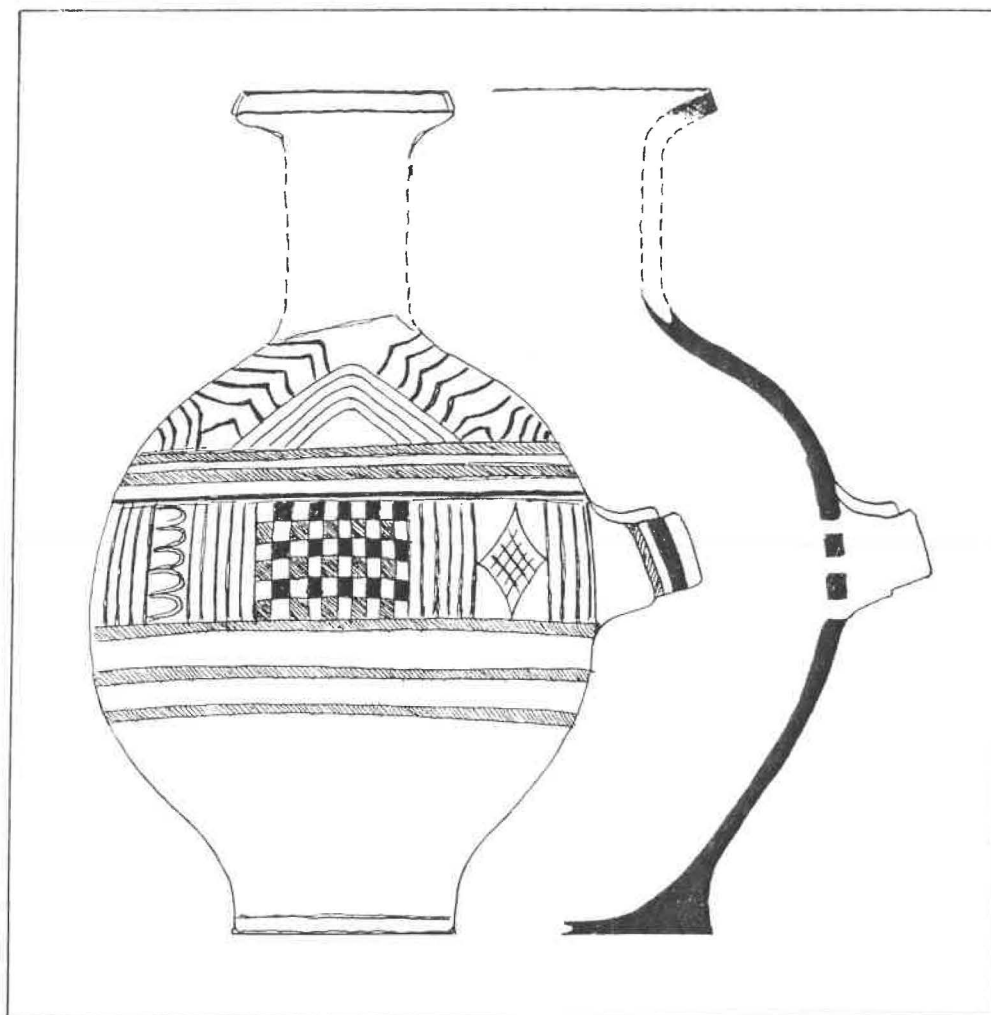


Fig. 1. Philistine strainer spout jug from Beth-Shemesh. Adapted from Trude Dothan, The Philistines, p. 134.

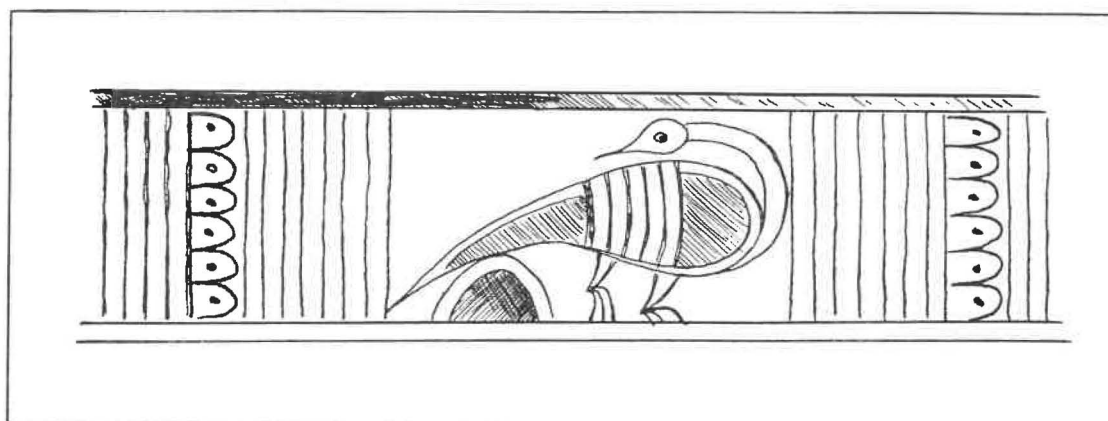


Fig. 2. Frontispiece of the above.

Their Art

Philistine and Canaanite sites are replete with examples of the art which characterized their society. Living as they did at the cross-roads of ethnic, cultural and political movements, they were greatly influenced by artistic renditions from abroad. Even if they did not adapt these skills as their own, they were at least available for their use and enjoyment.

Their Minoan bi-chrome pottery which they introduced into Canaan reflected an appreciation for beauty and design. One of their favorite scenes was that of a bird preening its feathers with its neck characteristically craned backward. In other cases, the artist has depicted a swan with its bill thrust forward, in which case the wing generally looks something like a shop-worn thunderbolt (see figures 3,4).

Bronze scimitars and gold-leaf pectorals found within the land give evidence of Egyptian influence. "Silver vessels with long spouts and a high-loop handle like a modern teapot and finished with a shapely fluted body derive directly from Crete."¹ In another site, a decorative knife with a silver blade damascened in gold was found. The gold foil covering the handle may indicate a technique practised by Anatolian metal-workers.

¹John Gray, The Canaanites (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), p. 161.

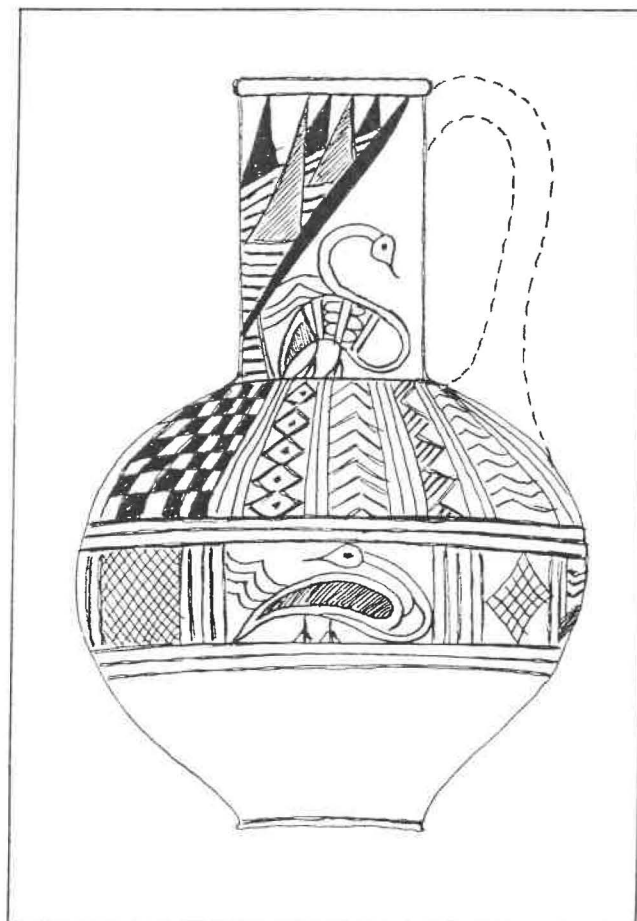


Fig. 3. Philistine jug with white slip from Azor.
Adapted from Trude Dothan, The Philistines, p. 176.

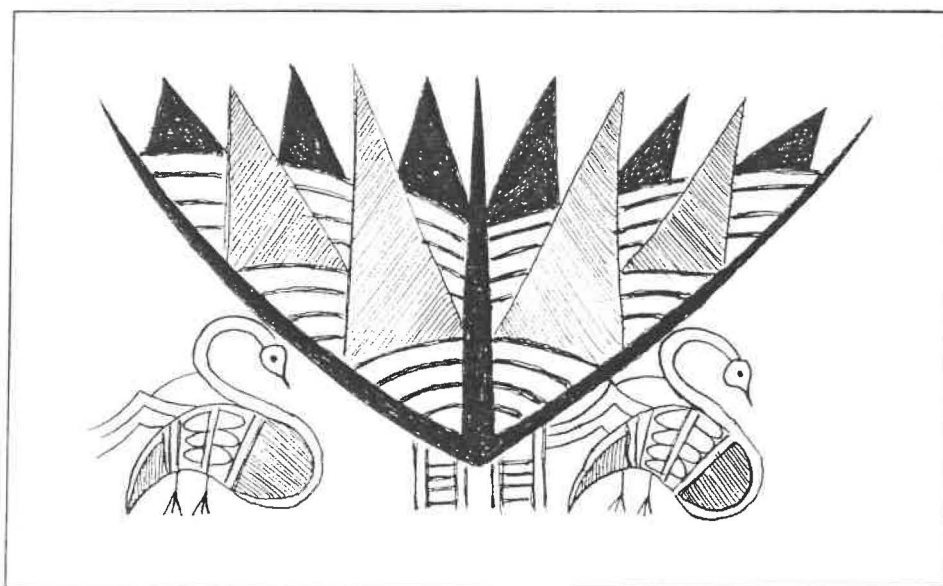


Fig. 4. Lotus flower pattern used in Philistine decoration. Adapted from Trude Dothan, The Philistine, p. 176.

From the Canaanites they may have learned ivory-carving which was especially prominent in the coastal cities. "Low relief or incision on flat plaques for inlay was their specialty, probably a by-product of furniture making, for which the fine cedar of Lebanon and Amanus was an incentive."¹

From the Minoans, the Philistines learned not only the art of pottery design but they were doubtless also influenced by them in the making of their swords. Only one Philistine sword had ever been definitely identified and it is a bronze sword of the Shardana type now in the British Museum. It is, however, very similar to the long, bronze swords of the Minoans of which there are many outstanding examples (see figures 5,6,7). Since the handle of the Philistine sword is missing we can only surmise at what it might have looked like. Since Goliath's sword was unique it may have been beautifully decorated like its Minoan counterparts described by H. R. Hall in the following words:

"The hilts of these swords were plated with gold and decorated with incised groups of lions and ibexes, and their pommels were of ivory or of translucent banded agate These splendid weapons were hung from belts, probably of leather covered with gold."²

Since the Philistines were a war-like people it is safe to assume that their art was nowhere better shown than in their armor and armaments.

¹Gray, "Canaanites."

²H. R. Hall, Aegean Archaeology (London: Philip Lee Warner, 1915).

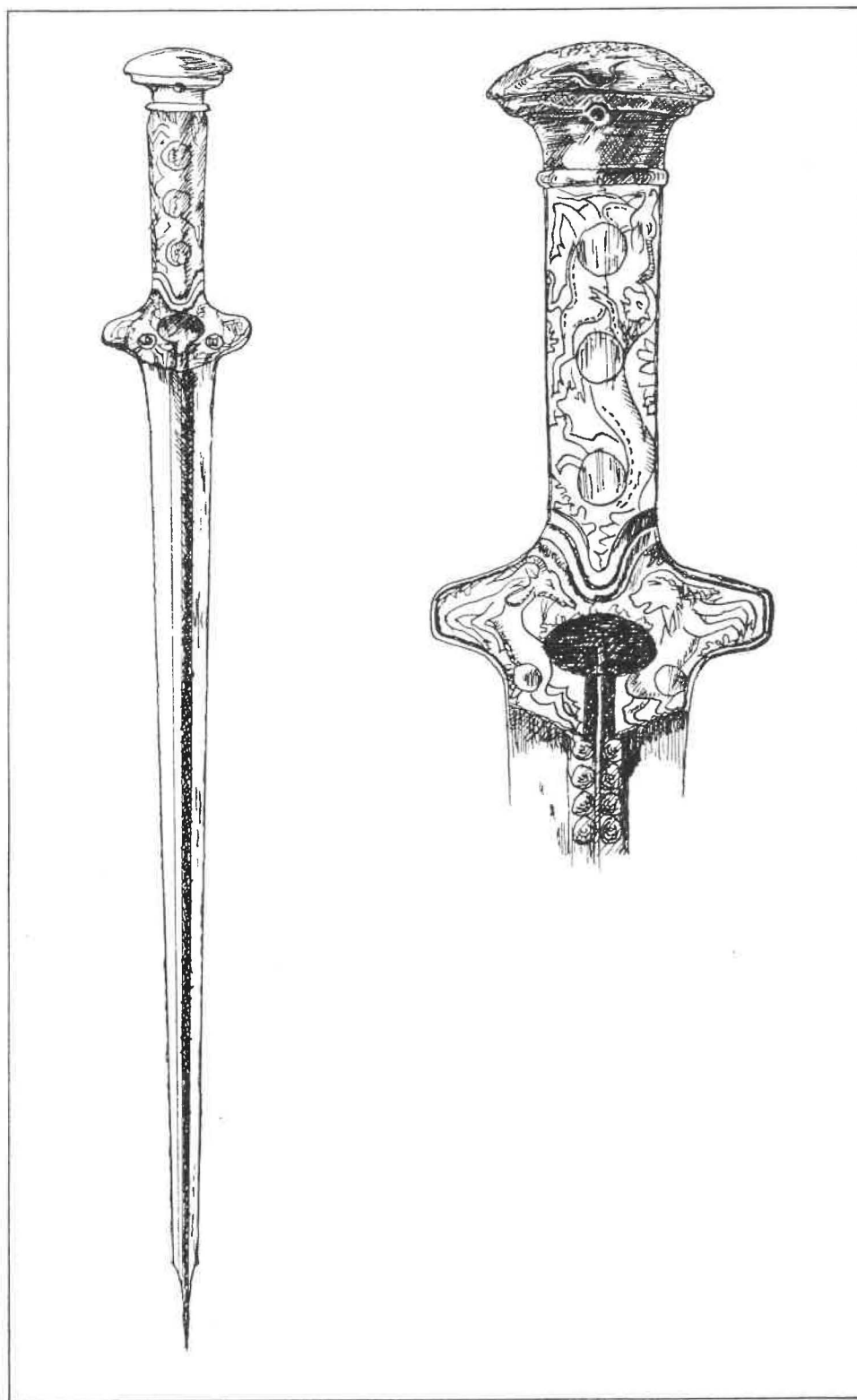


Fig. 5,6. Minoan bronze swords from Zafer Papoura. Candia Museum. Adapted from Hall, Aegean Archaeology, p. 248.

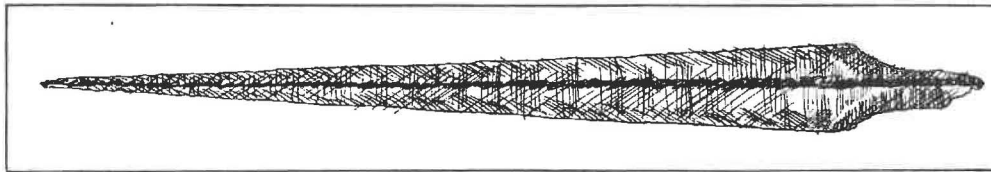


Fig. 7. Bronze Philistine sword of the Shardana type; British Museum. Adapted from Hall, Aegean Archeology, p. 252.

Their Metallurgy

The smelting of a poor quality iron had been practised for centuries prior to the coming of the Philistines into the coastal plain but it was the Hittites who had greatly improved the smelting process and the resultant metal. This stronger metal enabled the Hittites to construct chariot wheels strong enough to support a three-man crew even in fairly rough terrain. The strength of their empire was dependent in part on their near monopoly of this process and when they were overrun by the Sea Peoples, the latter quickly learned their smelting methods and carried them south into the land of Palestine. The Philistines were therefore highly skilled in the working of metals.

"Excavations have produced small smelting furnaces at a number of sites. Gerar in the region of Gaza is a case in point. More recently furnaces have been found at Tell Qasile near Tell Aviv. Both copper and iron were worked in these places."¹

This ability to smelt and work metals enabled the Philistines to send well-equipped armies into the field of battle. Their skill at metal working would be especially evident in the coat of mail which Goliath wore. This protective armor had to meet the three criteria of strength, lightness and mobility and was very difficult to produce. The Philistines not only made such things but to further enhance their military supremacy they denied their technology to those around them. And so we read in 1 Samuel 13:19-22:

¹J. A. Thompson, The Bible and Archaeology (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), p. 80.

"Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears: But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock. Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads. So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found.

In the light of this situation it is not surprising that without a strong faith in the Living God, the Israelites were exceeding fearful as they faced the superbly-equipped Philistine army. Without divine help their situation was hopeless.

Their Political Structure

The Philistine political structure¹ was characterized by diversity within unity. In times of peace there was considerable latitude for pursuing individual pursuits, but in times of military confrontation there was a unity which gave strength to the nation. The governmental and military strength of the Philistines lay in the sphere of the pentapolis, the five cities of Ashdod, Gaza, Ashkelon, Gath and Ekron. Since these cities are listed in varying orders it is not possible to definitively conclude which one possessed the right of hegemony, but Gath and Ashdod would seem to be

¹The principal material in this section is taken from an excellent article by W. J. Beecher on the Philistines in: W. J. Beecher, "The Philistines," in vol. 3 of A Dictionary of the Bible, ed. James Hastings, 6 vols. (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1903), p. 845.

the principal powers. This fact is attested to in the proverb: "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph" (2 Sam 1:20). Besides these main cities the Philistines had many others including: Gerar, Gezer, Timnah, Ziklag, Gob and Jabneh. Also, many Philistines lived in unwallled towns (1 Sam 6:18).

Their political structure was unique. Their governmental leaders were designated by the peculiar word סֶרָנִים (seranim) which is found only in the plural form (see Josh 13:3, Judg 16:5 where it is translated in the A.V. 'lords'). The word has no near Hebrew cognates and its most likely meaning is that designated by the Greek 'tyrannos.' These lords were regarded as the representatives of national power, and are to be distinguished from the שָׂרִים 'captains' who were the men in command of the military. It is thought that in some cases the two offices may have been combined into one position of authority. In the biblical accounts the seranim act only in concert and never independently. Although each individual city had its own army, these armies were combined in times of war and put under one command. Some hold that King Achish of Gath may have been the commander-in-chief in David's day, but this is not a certainty.

The City of Gath

The city of Gath from whence Goliath came was not only a prominent city within the Philistine political

structure but it apparently held a strategic position geographically as well. Although its precise site has been a matter of debate, there is considerable evidence to suggest that it be identified with Tel es-Safi, a site on the edge of the Shephelah. The city was originally a Canaanite site occupied by the Gittites (Josh 8:3). It was here too that a group of the Anakim including Goliath, resided (1 Chr 20:4-8). The name of the city is derived from a Hebrew word meaning winepress. The word is also ". . . commonly found in the Ras Shamra Texts referring to land-grants and feudatories, and it may be that in the Hebrew text it means 'ancestral plot' or the like rather than winepress."¹ If it can be identified with Tel es-Safi its strategic importance becomes immediately recognizable.

"The tel stands about four miles west of the Judean Shephelah and effectively guards the mouth of a major defile leading into the Judean hills, viz., the Wadi Ajjur, which is a continuation of the Vale of Elah. On the other hand, it literally dominates a rolling plain that spreads out at its feet to the south, west and north for a radius of about seven miles. Within this area, no other town occupied such a commanding position. Tel es-Safi is undoubtedly the most prominent site within the northeastern Philistine plain."²

As Goliath approached the fair-countenanced youth who had dared to confront him, he doubtless remembered the bitter setbacks his armies had suffered at the hands of

¹John Gray, Archaeology and the Old Testament World (New York: Harper Torchbooks, Harper and Row Publishers, 1962), p. 125.

²A. F. Rainey, "Gath of Philistia," Christian News from Israel, vol. XVII, No. 4 (Jerusalem: American Institute of Holy Land Studies, 1966), p. 34.

Jonathan and Saul. But today it would be different. Their march from the city of Gath into the heart of the Shephelah would be unimpeded. His decisive victory would begin the rout of these ill-equipped and disorganized Israelites who had proven to be such a vexing thorn in their side. Beyond and above his cultural, political and technological supremacy, he stood as the greatest of many great warriors. His confidence was supreme; his skills and weapons would fail neither him nor the expectant nation awaiting the battle.

CHAPTER III

GOLIATH'S RELIGION

Pervasiveness and Syncretism in Near Eastern Religion

Although relatively little is known of the religion of the Philistines, this aspect of their lives can be best seen and interpreted against the background of Near Eastern religious practices and beliefs. The Philistines had gods who were Semitic, and, like the Israelites, they were deeply influenced by the Canaanite pantheon.

It has been previously noted that Canaanite religion was very closely associated with the cycle of food production and life, and was consequently a very integral part of daily life. It is the purpose of this section to develop this pervasiveness and show how it arose and then resulted in a broad syncretism.

Because the Canaanites were direct descendants of godly Noah, they would have been familiar with belief in a higher power. This is so also, because of the law written on the heart, and the intellectual and conscious demand for a creator and designer that is inherent within all men. Coupled with this propensity was a desire to rationalize the vicissitudes of life: drought, famine, childbirth, war and death.

Turning as they did from the true God, they developed a polytheistic, pagan hierarchy of gods to explain these events and to assist in the struggles of life. Their foolish hearts being darkened, they worshipped the creation rather than the Creator and fashioned in their minds a multitude of gods who were no gods at all. They were religious but ungodly.

Their debased religiosity was particularly evident in times of war and was constantly associated with violence not unlike that which characterized the pre-flood civilization. The circle of violence became complete as they created gods in their own image and then sought to emulate the jealousy, greed, fury and revenge of these deities. Because their gods fought, they fought, and every war was a holy war. Militarism was therefore encouraged by the examples of the pantheon and it also became a practical necessity because of the constant battles which aggressive nations engaged in. The flow of people in Old Testament times, especially in the centuries just prior to 1100 B.C., created times of great upheaval and insecurity. They were times of the rising and falling of empires and the interaction of religious systems. There was tremendous personal and national need for security and blessing in both war and peace. Oppression was constantly threatening from without and economic calamity from within.

Lacking as they did an absolute reference and standard within their system of worship, these polytheistic

systems became very syncretistic in their beliefs. They not only recognized the power of foreign gods (as illustrated vividly during the time the ark was in the house of Dagon in Ashdon--1 Sam 5:7), but they often sought to incorporate them into their pantheon. Like the New Testament Greeks (Acts 17:23), they worshipped and feared all of the gods. Their systems thus became increasingly complicated and parallels between the gods of neighboring countries were common. These gods often represented the same personage but appeared under a different name. For example, Ishtar of the Babylonians is often associated with Ashtoreth of the Philistines.

The Curse of the Gods

Goliath, like all others, was a product of his times and ancestry. He knew the gods of the pantheon well and perhaps would have included in his beliefs the God of Israel, except for the impossibility of the situation. He knew that the Jehovah of Israel was unique and exclusive and if accepted would involve the renouncing of all other gods. To do this would involve too great a change in all that he knew and it was not within his darkened heart to exercise such faith. He would do therefore what must be done. He would curse his unworthy opponent by his gods and then engage him in vicious and mortal combat.

The cursing of an enemy or opponent was a common practice in the ancient world. It was practised by those nations through which the Philistines passed and from whence

they came. They would have been familiar with the curses of the Hittites whose land they had ravaged and whose kingdom they had destroyed. From an ancient Hittite tablet comes the following battle curse against the Kashkeans:

"The Kashkeans have begun war. They boast of their power and strength. They have made light of you O gods! See! Zithariyas is appealing to all the gods; he brings his complaints before you. So pass judgment on his case, all ye gods! . . . Blot out the Kashkean country, O gods! Let every single god take thought for his place of worship and win it back!"¹

From the Aegean area, from which they had come, the Iliad of Homer would later record the battle curse of Menelaos against Alexandros as they engaged one another in mortal combat over Helen. "Next, Menelaos son of Atreus lifted up his hand to cast, and made a prayer to father Zeus: 'King Zeus, grant me revenge on him that was first to do me wrong, even on goodly Alexandros, and subdue thou him at my hands; so that many an one of men that shall be hereafter may shudder to wrong his host that hath shown him kindness.'"²

In cursing David, Goliath was simply following the established ritual of pagan warriors. He was earnestly seeking the assistance of the gods who shaped his life and destiny. To his opponent David, divine assistance was assured by his faith in God and the evidences of the Lord's

¹A. Goetze, "Hittite Ritual before Battle," in Ancient Near Eastern Texts, ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 354.

²Homer, Iliad, 3. p. 55.

help in days gone by. In his disdain he made reference to Goliath as 'this uncircumcised Philistine who hath defied the armies of the living God.' To the Philistines, mutilation of the body was utterly abhorrent and in this respect they had refused assimilation. 'Uncircumcised' was the worst taunt by which their enemies might assail them.

And so it was a battle of the uncircumcised Philistine versus the shepherd boy of Israel. There was no fear in Goliath's heart nor was there pity in his eye. Like the gods he worshipped, he was steeped in violence and cruelty. He would vent his fury on David as Anat had poured out her fury on Mot, the god of drought and death.

" . . . And behold! Anat fought in the vale, battled between the two cities, smote the people of the seashore, vanquished the men of the rising sun. Heads were like balls beneath her, palms (of hands) about her like locusts, the palms of warriors like cut corn piled in heaps. She did press the attack girded with heads to the waist, with palms on her sash; she plunged both her knees in the blood of the guards, her skirts in the gore of the warriors."¹

When Mot appears on the scene we read: "She seized Mot son of El, ripped him open with a sword, winnowed him in a sieve, burnt him with fire, ground him with two mill stones, sowed him in a field; verily the birds ate the pieces of him, verily the sparrows made an end of the parts of him piece by piece."²

¹G. R. Driver, Canaanite Myths and Legends, Old Testament Studies Number III (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1971), p. 85.

²Ibid., p. 111.

Would not Goliath do the same? In the strength and name of his gods he cursed his foe: "Come unto me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field" (1 Sam 17:44).

The Gods of the Philistines

Within the nation of Philistia there were known to be at least three gods commonly worshipped: Dagon, Ashtoreth and Baalzebub. Dagon stood at the head of the Philistine pantheon and had temples at Gaza, Ashdod, and Beth-shan. He was apparently a god who governed in some way the production of food, his name being derived from a Semitic word meaning either fish or grain. He was a god of antiquity and was mentioned in the Tel-el-Amarna letters and in Mesopotamian cuneiform signs in the third millennium B.C. It is most interesting to note that when the Philistines captured the ark of God and placed it in the temple of Dagon at Ashdod, the Lord did to Dagon exactly what Anat is purported to have done to her enemies when she destroyed them, namely, He cut off the palms of his hands and caused his head to fall to the ground (1 Sam 5:4).

The second Philistine god to be mentioned is Ashtoreth, an ancient goddess of fertility, love and war. She was a Semitic goddess appearing under various names in ancient literature and was very appealing to men's baser instincts. The Israelites worshipped her soon after coming into the land (Judg 2:13, 10:6), and years later, when Saul

was slain by the Philistines, his armor was put into the temple of Ashteroth in Beth-shan (1 Sam 31:10). She is often depicted on clay tablets as a naked female with prominent breasts and is associated with the home more often than with a sanctuary. She would have been sought then in prayer to assist with fertility. This notion is strengthened by her association with the Phoenician god of healing, Eshmun. Her role as patroness of fertility was later usurped by Anat but in the first millennium B.C. in Phoenicia she was more prominent than Anat.

The third Philistine deity was Baal-zebub, a Semitic god known as "Lord of the Flies."

"This was no derogatory phrase for in the summer and autumn this area swarms with all sorts of flies, gnats, mosquitoes, and other winged pests of the Shephelah. Since Baal-zebub is associated with the giving of oracles it is probable that he was thought to give oracles by his flies."¹

Goliath therefore called upon his gods for assistance. It would be a holy war: the Lord of Hosts against the Philistine pantheon. Despite Goliath's greatness the battle would be the Lord's. The outcome was sure.

Centuries later Martin Luther would voice in his immortal hymn the confidence of the one whose faith rests in the God who changes not.

"Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side,
The Man of God's own choosing.

¹Edward E. Hindson, The Philistines and the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), p. 27.

Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth is His name,
From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle."

CHAPTER IV

GOLIATH'S MILITARY BACKGROUND

The Armies of the Philistines

Their Tradition and Training

From the earliest accounts of the Philistines it can be seen that they were a fierce and warlike people. From every historical perspective this would seem to be so.

From archaeological evidence in Ashdod, G. Ernest Wright, Trude and Moshe Dothan and James L. Swauger have all concluded that the Philistines there had been hired as mercenaries to protect the Egyptian borders.¹ "If the Philistines were to hire themselves out to the Egyptians as mercenaries, it would be a good guess that these tribes were more than ordinarily belligerent."²

It is also known from archaeological evidence that the Philistines were greatly influenced by the Mycenaeans, as, for example, in pottery making. It was from these people too that they adopted the use of the long sword which they later introduced into Canaan. Of these Mycenaeans Lord Taylor has observed:

¹For this conclusion see: Allen H. Jones, Bronze Age, pp. 99,100.

²Weil, Phoenicia, p. 100.

"A strong impression created by their monuments is of the dominant accent placed upon war by the Mycenaeans. It would almost seem as if they loved strife for its own sake. This element in their nature is conspicuous from the very first, as witness the rich and varied warlike equipment buried in the earliest of the Mycenaean tombs and shaft graves."¹

Prolonged contact with these warlike people was almost certainly a factor in the development of the Philistines.

In his studies, John Bright has also attested to the warlike tendencies of the Philistines. He concludes:

"They were not, apparently, a particularly numerous people, but rather a military aristocracy which ruled a predominantly Canaanite population They seem however, to have been formidable fighters with a long military tradition."²

Goliath therefore embodied not only the huge stature and fierce nature of the Anakim as previously observed, but also the warlike nature and training of the Philistines among whom he lived. Of his training it says simply that he was a ". . . man of war from his youth" (1 Sam 17:33). This phrase can best be understood within the context of Aegean and later Greek values pertaining to the body, sports, and military training. It was from this culture that the Philistines had originally come.

To the Greeks, the care of the body was vital and strength, grace and form were stressed in athletic events. Socrates himself is purported to have said: "What a disgrace

¹Lord Wm. Taylor, The Mycenaeans, Vol. 39, Ancient Peoples and Places (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Pub., 1964), p. 139.

²John Bright, A History of Israel, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), p. 185.

it is for a man to grow old without ever seeing the beauty and strength of which his body is capable."¹

Within most Greek cities the physical training of youth began at an early age and was under the direction of public officials.

"The instructors taught wrestling, and ball playing, the use of weapons and the care of the body. The gymnasiums were attended mostly by youths from thirteen to nineteen, who devoted their nineteenth year to military training."²

Javelin throwing, racing in the nude or dressed in armor were also a part of this training. Within their philosophy, competitiveness was stressed relentlessly to the extent that winners were highly praised while losers were considered disgraced.

It is not at all unlikely that it was this philosophy and these values that the Philistines learned in their Aegean background and which they inculcated into their own youth. It was within this society with its military tradition and extensive training that Goliath had grown up and matured. Through the years he had emerged victorious over fierce competition and had, in the crucible of war, become the battle-hardened champion of the Philistines. Fighting was his vocation and to it he had given his all. The entire nation looked to him for victory. He was sure that he would not fail them.

¹Quoted in: William Hale, Ancient Greece (Horizon Magazine), p. 156.

²Ibid., p. 158.

Their Battle Array and Tactics

A typical Philistine army would consist of chariot units and an infantry made up of archers and spearmen. The nation could muster very large armies (1 Sam 13:5) and they would march into battle under review of their lords, passing by in hundreds and thousands.

The presence of a large chariot force indicated a strong feudal society since both horses and chariots were incredibly expensive to purchase and maintain. The chariot-eers were an aristocratic, elite fighting force directly under the military commander. The Egyptians called such fighting men 'maryannu' which means literally, 'young hero.' In Ugarit,

"... the field commanders had the status of feudal vassals, and ranked equal with the priests and members of the royal family. They were specialists in chariot fighting appointed directly by the king himself and from him received their grants of land in perpetuity."¹

The chariots driven by the Philistines were constructed with iron wheels which, because of their relative strength over wood, enabled them to carry a three-man crew (see figure 8). This chariot was adapted from the Hittites and carried both an archer and a javelin thrower in addition to the driver. Since the chariot was not in use in Israel yet, its presence in the Philistine army gave them a tremendous advantage. It provided great mobility through distracting flanking attacks or frontal assaults.

¹Sanders, Sea Peoples, p. 38.

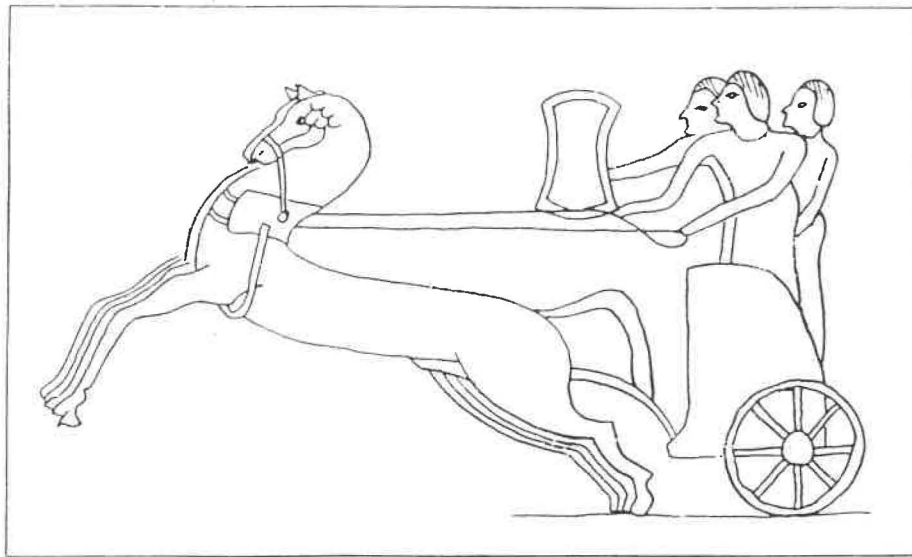


Fig. 8. Hittite chariot in the Battle of Kadesh.
Adapted from Yigael Yadin, The Art of Warfare, p. 88.

"After the chariot forces had confused, scattered and trampled the enemy by storming through their ranks and used their javelins to wound and kill, the phalanx (of infantry) would follow up the charge from the flanks or the center and finish the battle with their piercing axes and spears."¹

The bowmen in the back would provide long range support and killing power with their steady hail of bronze or iron-tipped arrows (1 Sam 31:3).

The infantry itself was made up of sections of ten men, platoons of fifty, companies of two hundred and fifty and battalions of about twelve hundred men. When they went into battle they marched in long lines with relatively few abreast, coming in parallel to the front of the enemy lines. When they came within fighting distance they would turn 90 degrees to face the enemy along a broad front to make maximum use of their firepower.

In the hand-to-hand combat that followed, the Philistine soldiers fought in groups of four, each soldier armed with either a long sword or a pair of spears. If they routed the enemy and were successful in the battle they often resorted to pillaging their enemies (1 Sam 13:17,18; 23:1), and exacting a heavy tribute in one form or another (1 Sam 13:19-22). At other times they treated their vanquished foes with utmost cruelty as witnessed in the accounts of Samson (Judg 16:21,25) and King Saul (1 Sam 31, 1 Chr 10).

Such was the army that backed the giant of Gath.

¹Y. Yadin, The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands, Vol. II (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), p. 50.

Victory By Championship Battle

When the Philistines faced the Israelites in the Valley of Elah, their commander in chief chose not to commit his forces to the battle but rather to confront the enemy with his champion from Gath. It was possibly a new method of warfare to the Israelites but had been practised by other nations for many centuries. Historical evidence points to this method of warfare among the Aegean nations, the Hittites and the Egyptians.¹ From the 20th century B.C. there is the record of Sinuhe the Egyptian who faced a mighty man of Retenu in such a battle. As the confrontation reached a climax we read:

"Then he came to me as I was waiting, for I had placed myself near him. Every heart burned for me; women and men groaned. Every heart was sick for me. They said: 'Is there another strong man who could fight against him?' Then he took his shield, his battle axe, and his armful of javelins. Now after I had let his weapons issue forth, I made his arrows pass by me uselessly, one close to another. He charged me and I shot him, my arrow sticking in his neck. He cried out and fell on his nose. I felled him with his own battle axe and raised my cry of victory over his back, while every Asiatic roared. I gave praise to Montu, while his adherents were mourning for him. . . . Then I carried off his goods and plundered his cattle. What he had planned to do to me I did to him."²

This method of battle held a distinct advantage for the Philistines because it enabled them to pin their hopes of victory on their unassailable champion. They were certain

¹Edward E. Hindson, The Philistines (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971), p. 34.

²James Pritchard, Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 20.

that with the help of their gods he would prevail over the best that Israel could send to engage him in battle. When David the shepherd boy appeared across the valley dressed only in his cloth attire and armed only with a sling they were sure that they would win the day. With eager anticipation they awaited the certain outcome and the rout that would follow.

Goliath's Personal Armor

As the champion of the Philistines, Goliath would have been outfitted with the finest and most beautiful armor and weapons that his nation could afford. The description of him in 1 Samuel 17 bears out the ancient saying: "Bronze for the leaders and leather for the soldiers."

Archaeology has thrown considerable light on the nature of weapons and armor used in the ancient Near East. In addition, some actual weapons have been discovered and literary texts, including the Bible, give details concerning the nature and use of arms and weapons. In the light of these finds it is possible to compose a fairly accurate description of the panoply and arsenal taken by Goliath into battle that fateful day.

The use of armorbearers was a common practice in those days. The purpose of the armorbearer was three-fold. First, he was to protect his master from flying missiles of any sort with the great shield that he carried. Second, he would kill those whom his chief had felled (1 Sam 14:13). Third, if calamity befell them and the champion was sorely

wounded, it would be the unhappy lot of the armorbearer to slay his foundering master (1 Sam 31:4, Judg 9:54).

The shield carried by the armorbearer would have been very large indeed as they were normally about the height of those whom they were intended to protect. Such shields were common in Egypt, Assyria and among the Mycenaeans. Among the latter, there were two kinds found, the first roughly in the form of a figure eight and the second called the 'tower' shield, having straight rims at the sides but an upward curve in the top edge. A lateral convexity gave the armorbearer some protection from the sides as well as the front. Because this type of shield was so large it could not be made of metal but was often constructed of wood or wicker-work and overlaid with leather. There are hints that metal was used sparingly for additional strength and for decorative purposes. In addition to polishing any metal on the shield before going into battle, the leather was treated with oil to make it glisten. This type of shield was known to the Hebrews as the 'tzinnah' shield and was carried into battle by a leather shoulder strap.

The helmet worn by Goliath was described by a Hebrew word 'koba' thought by some to be of Hittite origin. Since no accurate description of Goliath's helmet is given we cannot be certain of its actual construction and appearance. Discoveries have revealed that in the ancient Near East there were many kinds of helmets in use. They were worn by

Summerian and Akkadian soldiers in the third millennium B.C. One such royal helmet discovered was made from solid gold. The Assyrians wore caps of iron with flaps of leather to protect the ears and neck. The Egyptians made their helmets of quilted linen cloth so that they would be cooler in their very hot climate. Some of these helmets came down to the ear while others covered the neck down to the shoulders. The Philistines and others of the 'Sea People' are depicted as wearing helmets with a feathered crown although some have concluded that the crown was made of leather, folded linen or some other non-metallic material. The later Greeks wore simple helmets covering only the head but later developed the Corinthian helmet which covered much of the neck and face as well. The Homeric heroes wore elegant bronze helmets that flashed in the sun and were topped with horse hair.

Of Goliath's helmet, we can conclude several things. First, because it was made of bronze it served to demonstrate that he was highly regarded, as this type of helmet was reserved for kings and military rulers. Second, it was probably highly decorated and very attractive as history has revealed that helmets were constructed to have aesthetic appeal as well as being functional. Third, it would probably have been a fairly high helmet as most of the Aegean helmets were of this structure. Fourth, being metal, it would likely have been lined with cloth or leather to make it more comfortable. Fifth, it did not have a facial shield

accompanying it. As to its shape, we can only guess that it was perhaps a stylized bronze rendition of the typical Philistine feathered crown (see figure 9).

The coat of mail which Goliath wore was also made of bronze and was sufficiently noteworthy to mention in the sacred text. Such scale armor has been discovered at Ras Shamra, Boghazkoy, and Alalakh dating from the fifteenth century B.C. From the Nuzi archives, one coat of mail is said to have consisted of 680 pieces of metal while another had a total of 1,035 scales. For a man the size of Goliath, a coat of mail may well have required over 2,000 pieces of metal of varying sizes. These scales were overlapping and had small holes in them through which a strong thread passed, fastening it to an inner garment of cloth or leather (see figure 10). The coat was usually in two pieces, front and back, the two being held together by lacing up the side. The front section passed over the shoulders for support and added protection. The weight of Goliath's coat of mail is somewhat speculative. Unfortunately, the weight of the shekel varied from place to place and there were diverse kinds of shekels. Among these shekels were the light, heavy, common, royal and temple shekels. They varied in weight from .351 ounces to .573 ounces. If the accepted weight of the common shekel is used, Goliath's armor would have weighed about 130 pounds (5000 shekels).

In addition to the shield borne by his armorbearer, Goliath himself would have carried on his left arm a smaller,



Fig. 9. Stylized feathered helmet as suggested by the Philistine coffin lids from Beth-shan and the Medinet Habu reliefs. Adapted from Hindson, The Philistines, p. 65.

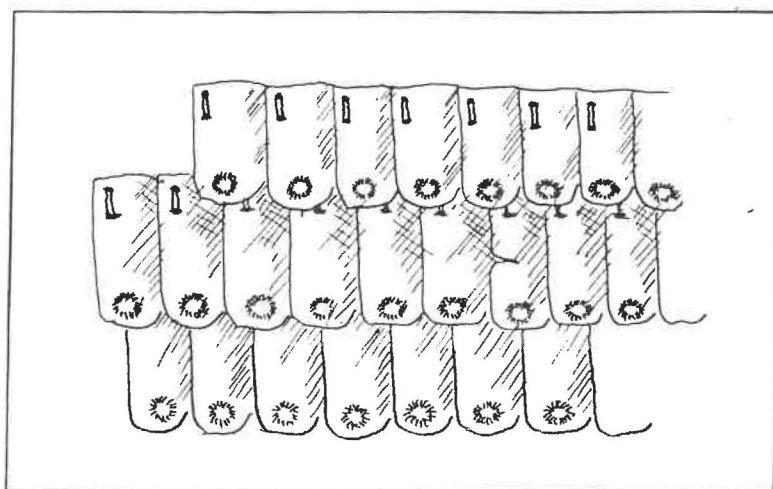


Fig. 10. Part of Pharaoh Sheshong's scale armor (tenth century B.C.). Brooklyn Museum. Adapted from Yadin, Warfare, p. 354.

round shield for personal protection. This was the typical shield shown in use by all of the Sea Peoples in the Medinet Habu relief. This shield would have been made of leather and was held by a hand grip behind and sometimes used a neck strap for support also. In the battle of Hector and Aias, the latter had a shield made from seven layers of ox hide and coated with bronze. Shields found in the warrior graves in Mycenaea were also made of leather with bronze trim and a ten inch diameter disc in the center often shaped like a spike. On his arm also, Goliath may well have worn a large metal armlet, another indication of military prominence (2 Sam 1:10).

Below the bronze scale-armor the typical soldier normally wore a skirt, not unlike a kilt, made of leather. It was held in place at the waist by a belt or girdle which was often very ornate and expensive and was used to carry the sword or dagger sheath. Such girdles were made by the wise woman of Proverbs 31:24 to sell to the merchants, were worn by warriors (2 Sam 20:8) and were given as rewards and tokens of high esteem (2 Sam 18:11, 1 Sam 4).

Between the knees and the shoes Goliath wore a pair of bronze greaves or shin armor (see figure 11). This armament was also relatively rare at this time and did not become commonplace until the coming of the Greeks. Neither the Egyptians nor any of their foes are depicted as wearing them during the Late Bronze Age (1500 - 1200 B.C.), but they do appear in the Aegean area and an actual pair has

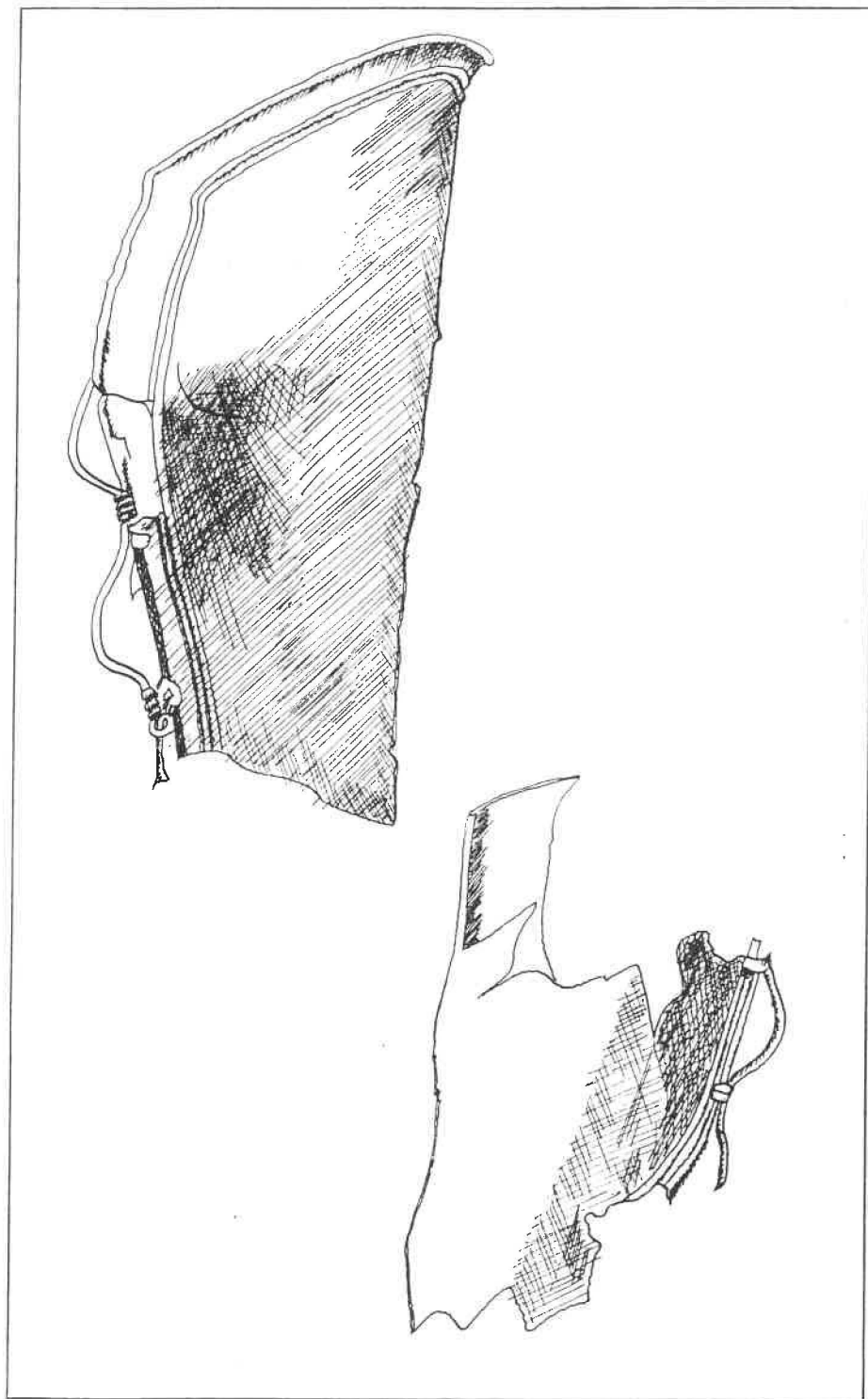


Fig. 11. Bronze greaves; Enkomi, Cyprus. British Museum. Adapted from Hall, Aegean Archaeology, p. 246.

been unearthed on the island of Cyprus. These greaves were shaped to fit the warrior's legs and then lined with leather for comfort. There were stiff wire loops running down their sides through which leather thongs were laced around the back of the leg. In addition to the lacing, a holding band went around the leg just below the knee and to it was attached a vertical strip which fastened to a button or peg on the greave. With these shin guards on, Goliath appeared as a well-greaved soldier, the most frequent epithet used by Homer to describe the Achaeans.

It is open to debate as to whether or not the javelin of bronze that Goliath carried between his shoulders was the same weapon as his spear. Many commentators consider them to be the same weapon, but there is some evidence that they were two different missiles. It is firmly established that ancient warriors distinguished between the javelin and the spear. The former was considerably lighter, thinner and had a smaller head on it. The Bible account states that Goliath's javelin was made of bronze, which would have reference to its head, while it also states that his spear had a head of iron. The javelin could be hurled great distances and was normally thrown before the spear. Possibly Goliath did not want to waste his javelin on this unworthy opponent.

Perhaps the most novel piece of equipment in Goliath's arsenal was his great amentum spear which to the Israelite was unknown. The writer says only that the staff of it was "like a weaver's beam" (1 Sam 17:7). Historically,

this expression has been interpreted as describing the great size of Goliath's spear, but more recently has been shown to have reference rather to its structure and usage.¹ The term used by the Hebrews referred to the heddle loop on their looms which was similar to the looped, leather thong found on Goliath's spear. These types of spears and javelins are pictured in use among the ancient Mycenaeans and Egyptians and later, the Romans. It was the latter who first called them amentum spears.

In Goliath's day, the amentum spear was peculiar to the Aegean area and Egypt and had only recently been introduced into Canaan. It consisted of a leather thong with a loop at its end, attached to the spear near the center of gravity. This leather thong which was perhaps eighteen inches long was wrapped around the shaft several times in preparation for throwing. The index and second fingers were then engaged in the loop, while the shaft was gripped by the rest of the hand. When the spear was hurled, two advantages were gained from this device. First, the unwinding of the thong created a rifling effect which gave the spear greater accuracy and penetrating power. Second, the leverage gained from the amentum enabled the spear to be hurled much greater distances at a much higher velocity. With a ten foot

¹See: Yigael Yadin, Goliath's Javelin and the _____ . Palestine Exploration Quarterly (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1955); and E. Norman Gardiner, Throwing the Javelin. The Journal of Hellenic Studies, Vol. XXVII, 1907.

arm-span it is not unreasonable to assume that Goliath could have thrown his spear as much as 100 miles per hour for a very great distance.¹ In experiments made by General Reffye for the Emperor Napoleon, it was found that a javelin which could be thrown only 20 metres by hand could be thrown 80 metres with an amentum (see figures 12,13).

The historical description of the great size of Goliath's spear need not be doubted. It's great head of iron weighed about sixteen pounds in addition to the weight of the wooden shaft. In the early Mycenean shaft graves, huge spear heads two feet in length have been unearthed, their leaf shaped blades having been securely fastened to a wooden shaft. In order to balance the very heavy head, the shaft must needs have been of great length and in one artistic rendition the spear, if shown to scale, must have been at least ten feet in length.² "The spears of the champions in the Iliad were also of heroic proportions. Ajax fought with a pike that was 22 cubits (at least 33 feet) long."³

¹A pitcher hurling a baseball 100 m.p.h. (146 f.p.s.) and having an armspan of 6 feet would spin his arm at a terminal velocity of 146 f.p.s. or 7.7 r.p.s. (pivoting in the center of the armspan). If Goliath had an armspan of 10 feet plus an amentum loop of 2 feet, in order to throw his spear 100 m.p.h. he would have had to spin his arm only 3.9 r.p.s. to reach the terminal circumference velocity of 146 f.p.s. With his great strength it is quite feasible that he could have hurled even a 40 pound spear at this speed.

²For further discussion see: A. M. Snodgrass, Arms and Armour of the Greeks (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University press, 1967), p. 16.

³Homer, "Iliad," Vol. 15, p. 678.

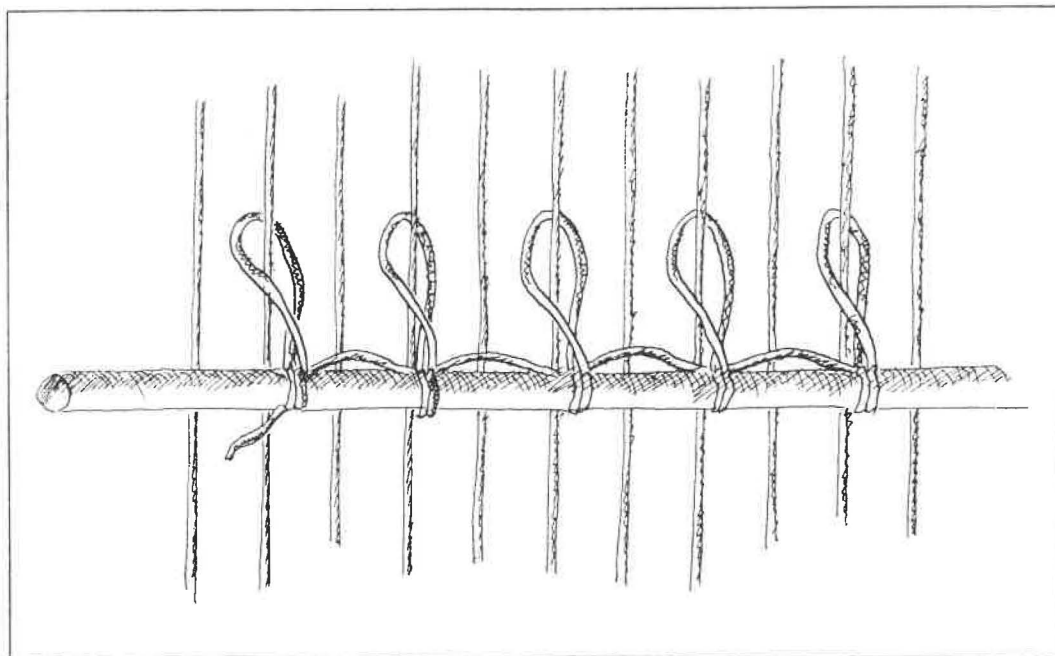


Fig. 12. Loops or leashes on the heddle rod of an ancient weaving loom. Adapted from Yadin, "Goliath's Javelin," P.E.Q., 1955, p. 60.

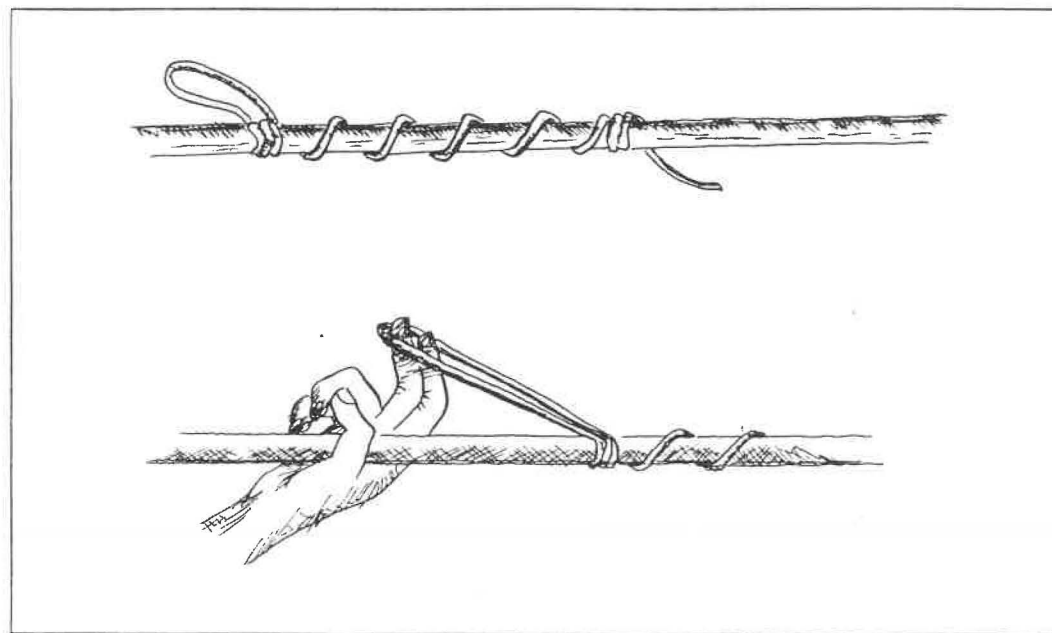


Fig. 13. Leather thong or amentum shown on a spear shaft with the throwing position. Adapted from Yadin, "Goliath's Javelin," P.E.Q., 1955, pp. 65,66.

The final piece of equipment worn by Goliath was the sword which hung by his side. It was much longer than the dagger-type weapon used by the Canaanites and Israelites and had come from the Aegean area also. Within the warrior graves of Mycenae have been found various instruments of war that fused the skills of the Minoans with Mycenaean military ambitions. The long sword which was developed was one such weapon. Of these swords, A. M. Snodgrass writes: "Certainly they were admired and imitated by foreign peoples extending from Palestine to the Danube."¹ Unlike their shorter predecessors, they were of one-piece construction and therefore not weak at the hilt. The hand guards were simply cruciform or horned and the blades were made of bronze and double edged. In some cases the blades were nearly three feet long and they were encased in elaborate sheaths hung from the belt. Goliath's sword would have had an iron blade and, as previously noted, was most likely of unsurpassed beauty.

Words would almost fail to describe the scene as Goliath met David in the valley. As he stood in the morning sun facing his opponent, Goliath was a picture of magnificent beauty. His helmet, coat of mail and greaves of bronze shone brightly. On his arm he bore a decorated shield and in his hand he held his huge amentum spear. Across his shoulder the sun glinted on his bronze javelin and from his

¹Snodgrass, Arms, p. 32.

belt hung his highly decorated sword of which it was said: "There was none like it" (1 Sam 21:9). His opponent was clad in his drab shepherd's outfit and was armed only with a simple sling and five smooth stones chosen from the nearby brook. Even aesthetically it was a mismatch, not to mention the vast technological advantage of Goliath's weapons.

The outcome was obvious only to David who fearlessly ran to meet his foe in the name of the Lord of Hosts whom Goliath had so foolishly defied.

CHAPTER V

GOLIATH'S PHYSICAL SIZE

Historical Giantism

Secular history is replete with legend and folklore of giants. In Greek mythology there was a revolt of giants against Olympus and their subsequent destruction by Zeus and Hercules. In Norse legend, Thor often battled huge creatures and the North American Indians feared giant ghouls called windigos. The legends of Jack the Giant Killer and Paul Bunyan are familiar to many.

Closer to reality are many reports of giant men, some of which are well verified.

"Historical cases of giant structure include the third century Roman emperor Maximinus, who was reported to be nearly 8 feet tall. An eighteenth century Englishman named Charles Byrne measured almost 7 feet 6 inches. Still taller were a nineteenth century Swiss named Constantin, at 8 feet 6 inches, and a Russian named Machnov at 9 feet 4 inches."¹

Still another giant of recent date was an American, Robert Wadlow (1918-1940). Accurate statistics on the physical size of this man are available. He experienced a normal birth but began to grow abnormally fast when he was two years old following a double hernia operation. At 21 years of age

¹Erika Bourguignon, "Giant," vol. 12 of 30 vols., Encyclopedia Americana (Danbury, CT: Grolier Inc., 1981), p. 727.

he weighed 491 pounds and when he died at age 22 he was 8 feet 11 inches tall! His shoe size was 37AA, his arm span was 9 feet 5 3/4 inches and he consumed 8000 calories of food daily.¹

In addition to these and other historical giants, "human skeletons of extraordinary size have been found in the Mentone cave and in Scotland; in one instance (at Logie-Pert, Forfarshire) five such skeletons were found together. It is obvious that in these cases, the giantism was racial and not the result of disease."²

Causes of Giantism

In common usage, the term giant has reference to anyone of great height, while giantism (or gigantism) technically and medically has reference to an underlying pituitary giantism and eunuchoid giantism. The former results from the secretion of excessive amounts of growth hormone by the pituitary gland which, in adolescence, stimulates the growing points of the bones to rapid and prolonged growth. If this disorder occurs in an adult it is called acromegaly and results in a large nose, prominent lower jaw and wide teeth spacing. This type of giantism also results in sexual underdevelopment and a general weakening of the body, which in turn usually results in death in the twenties. The latter disorder occurs when the testes atrophy before

¹Guinness Book of World Records, eds. N. McWhirter, S. Greenberg, D. Boehm and S. Topping (New York: Sterling Pub. Co. Inc., 1980), p. 15.

²A. T. Mahan, "Giant," vol. 9 of 20 vols., The American Peoples Encyclopedia, ed. F. J. Meine (Chicago: The Spencer Press, 1956), p. 9-557.

puberty and fail to produce testosterone in the developing years. Such giants exhibit various abnormalities such as scanty beard growth, excessive arm span and enlarged breasts. Other types of known giantism are Marfan's syndrome and cerebral giantism. As was previously noted, it has been demonstrated that in some men who are excessively tall, a combination of XYY chromosomes (i.e. two 'male' chromosomes) produces excessive 'maleness' and hence excessive growth.

Since all known causes of giantism result in abnormalities which are detrimental, it is safe to assume that the excessive height of Goliath and the other large men of the Bible was not of these types. The Biblical account indicates that these men were great physical specimens who were otherwise normal except for their great height and physical strength. The fact that they constituted a race of men is further indication that there was a genetic basis for their great size.

Biblical Linear Measurements

In 1 Samuel 17:4, the height of Goliath is given as six cubits and a span, and is found in the most reliable manuscripts. As such, it would preclude interpretations that tend toward normalcy.

In ancient times the cubit was normally the length of the forearm from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger. Since men's arms varied in length, therefore the length of the cubit varied also. Attempts at standardization were

difficult and invariably various measures of length for any given unit of measurement occurred between countries and even within the same country.

A cursory study of ancient metrology will yield dozens of varying values of the cubit within the ancient Near East. For example, Berriman¹ lists five different cubits as follows:

| | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| Roman Cubit | 17.49 inches |
| Assyrian Cubit | 19.44 inches |
| Sumerian Cubit | 19.8 inches |
| Royal Cubit | 20.63 inches |
| Palestinian Cubit | 25.25 inches |

Other researchers list cubits that vary from 17.5 inches to over 25 inches.

Within Palestine the Siloam inscription on Hezekiah's tunnel states its length as 1200 cubits while its actual length is 1749 feet. This yields a cubit length of 17.49 inches. The terminal points of measurement are not, however, known for sure. Thus, this calculation is as approximate as the inscription's 100 cubits from the tunnel to the surface. Most have concluded on the basis of this evidence that the Palestinian cubit is about 18 inches and this is the figure most frequently used. This is close to the minimum value of the cubit.

Since the length of the cubit varied with time as well as place, it still remains to find what its length was in David's day as opposed to Hezekiah's day (some 300 years

¹A. E. Berriman, Historical Metrology (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1953), p. 29.

later than David). To this question, Ezekiel's writings may provide a clue. Ezekiel lived only about 100 years after Hezekiah, and in his writings (Ezek 40:5, 43:13) are recorded the measurements of the new temple in reeds consisting of ". . . the cubit and an handbreadth," that is, a cubit common to his day plus a handbreadth. Since the measurements of the arrangements and proportions of Ezekiel's temple are essentially the same as those of Solomon's temple, it would seem that the former was intended to be a replica of the latter. This being the case, the cubit common to Ezekiel's day was one handbreadth shorter than the common cubit utilized in Solomon's day. If the former is equal to about 17.5 inches, the latter would then be about 20.5 inches, utilizing six handbreadths per cubit. Thus, in David's time, it would seem more likely that the cubit measured greater than 18 inches and closer to 20.5 inches.

There is other evidence that the Phoenician cubit of David's day was greater than 18 inches. A common metrological theory holds that

" . . . the weights used by any given system are based on the cube of its linear measure when filled with water at 4 degrees centigrade. This theory is called the 'primary closed system of weights and measures.' This principle was used in ancient times by the Sumerians, the ancient₁ Babylonians and the Egyptians. It is still used today."¹

By utilizing this theory, Ben-David demonstrated how the

¹For a full presentation of this argument see: Arye Ben-David, "The Hebrew-Phoenician Cubit," Palestine Exploration Quarterly, January-June, 1978 (London: Office of the Fund), p. 26ff.

measurements of Barclay's Gate in the Western Wall of the Temple Mount, and Petrie's measurements of the Tombs of the Judges, if calculated at 560 mm. to the cubit (22.05 inches which is the Egyptian Builder's cubit), yields a theoretical weight of the Phoenician tetradrachmae of 14.65 grams. This weight is only 5% greater than the actual average weight of 940 Phoenician tetradrachmae excavated in this area. His conclusions: "The above example proves conclusively that the 22.5 inch Builder's Cubit was also used in Phoenicia and that this, and not the 20.6 inch Royal Cubit, was the Hebrew-Phoenician Cubit."¹ Ben-David would thus make the common Hebrew cubit of that era some 5 inches longer than that indicated by the Siloam inscription of Hezekiah's day.

Because Israel was located on the trade routes between Egypt and Babylonia, she was influenced over the centuries by the standards of these two countries, both of which have yielded empirical evidences of their weight and measurement units. In Egypt, the Royal Cubit of 20.6 inches was first accurately calculated utilizing the base of the pyramid of Snefru (about 2700 B.C.). In later history this Royal Cubit came to be known

". . . as the Philaeterian-Ptolomaic cubit; as of 129 B.C. when the Roman province of Asia was founded, this measure became the standard cubit throughout the Roman provinces of the East, including Palestine."²

¹Ibid., p. 27.

²Ibid.

Within Babylonia, this same cubit was in use as evidenced by the famous Gudean cubit (Gudea was king of Lagash, 2050 B.C.), and the Nippur cubit dating from about the same time. Berriman calculates the Gudean cubit at just under 20 inches.

Still others have calculated a longer Palestinian cubit. Sir Isaac Newton utilizing Talmudic writings indicating 3 cubits from head to foot and assuming an average height of $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet applied the principle of limits to this and other evidence he considered relevant and concluded that the Sacred Cubit of Moses was 24.88 inches.

In a very recent study, Albert Zuidhof, in doing some rather rigorous calculations on Solomon's Bronze Sea, has concluded:

"We may assume that the Hebrews used cubit rods derived from the Royal Egyptian Cubit of seven handbreadths, as their craftsmen had originally learned their trade in Egypt (Exod 38:21-23, and cf. 32:4; Acts 7:22). Computations based on the biblical dimensions further confirm that the cubit of seven handbreadths (28 fingers or 20.4 inches) was used for the tabernacle."¹

With regard to the span, it was equal to 3 palms which put its length near 9 inches. If the cubit then is assigned a measurement of at least 20.5 inches and the span as 9 inches, Goliath's height would be at least 11 feet!

Goliath's Physical Dimensions

It would take an expert to accurately extrapolate the physical dimensions of an athletic giant the size of

¹Albert Zuidhof, "King Solomon's Molten Sea and ()," Biblical Archeologist, Summer 1982, Vol. 45 No. 3, p. 180.

Goliath. However, it is safe to conclude that he was of truly gargantuan proportions, almost incomprehensible to our normal frame of thinking. The following table gives a calculated projection of some of the possible physical measurements of such a man.¹

| | | | | |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Height | 5'2 | 6' | 9' | 11' |
| Weight | 120 lb. | 200 lb. | 550 lb. | 800 lb. |
| Neck | 13" | 17½" | 38" | 51" |
| Chest | 33" | 43" | 85" | 105" |
| Biceps | 13" | 15" | 32" | 50" |
| Arm Span | 5' | 6' | 9' | 11' |
| Foot Length | 10" | 12" | 27" | 40" |
| Calories (per day) | 2400 | 3500 | 9000 | 13,600 |

¹These estimates and extrapolations are given by the author. Goliath's weight fully armed may have been close to one half ton!

CHAPTER VI

GOLIATH'S LAST BATTLE

The Valley of Elah

The Valley of Elah was so named after the giant terebinth trees which grew there in ancient times. The Philistines had come up this valley from their great fortress in Gath and had encamped on the hill Azekah to the west of the valley. Its broad expanse would favor their fighting techniques, especially their formidable chariot corps anxiously awaiting the battle.

The Israelites had camped on the east side of the valley which lay between the two armies and extended in a southwesterly direction. The two armies had faced each other for forty long days of testing and twice each day Goliath had come down from the Philistine camp and part way across the valley to hurl his challenge at his terrified foes. The stand-off would soon be brought to a climax, for on this day the armies were arrayed against each other and were shouting for the battle. The tension mounted.

Further to the north, the valley branched in several directions and it was down one of these wadis that David had hurried with the food sent by his father to his three brothers. He had arisen before daybreak and arrived

in the expanse of the valley just as the armies had been put in battle array. As David talked with some of the soldiers, Goliath came across the valley exclaiming with defiant insolence: "Choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me."

David was amazed at the huge stature, fearsome visage and mighty armaments of the Philistine champion. But even more, he was appalled at the audacity of this uncircumcised pagan who callously defied the armies of the Living God. His holy anger was stirred within him and he immediately volunteered to engage him in mortal combat. There was a cause and he would face the giant not in his own strength but in the name of the Lord of Hosts.

Never before had the outcome of a battle seemed so sure. Goliath, a half-ton behemoth of muscle and bronze against a mere stripling--a teenage shepherd boy. Surely the outcome could be seen only by the eye of faith.

The Mismatch

Mismatch of the ages,
 The outcome seemed so sure.
 Brawn and brass--huge fighting mass
 Against a paltry shepherd lad.

How could this be a contest fair?
 A fighting soldier from his youth,
 Huge in stature, fierce in form,
 A mighty spear by him was borne.

A coat of mail, made of brass,
 5000 shekels was its mass.
 A helmet too, and greaves below
 A shield, a sword, a bearer too.

His voice alone caused fear and fright
Not one in Israel dared to fight
This Philistine from Gath who came
His greatness to proclaim--Goliath was his name.

Now David was a shepherd lad
The youngest of his kin.
Compared to this great man of Gath
Perhaps a little thin!

But in his duties day by day
So faithful he had been.
He kept his father's sheep alone
He often yearned for warmth, for home.

Out on the lonely hills at night
In stillness he had wondered
How the mighty God of all
Could hearken to his feeble call.

But in his youthful years he came
By faith to know that wondrous name.
The Lord of Hosts--Jehovah Sabaoth
That one at whom this man did scoff.

Alone, he would not be again
By faith his life was changed.
There was no foe he could not fight
The God of all--He was his might!

The bear had come, the lion too
The flock of sheep they would undo
Fierce and strong . . . that all could see
Their vicious work was not to be!

For in the Spirit David went
The Lord of Hosts--by Him was sent.
He slew the lion and the bear
O mighty God, Deliverer!

Now this great man of Gath had come
In pagan darkness steeped.
He didn't know the God of All
In fact, His name blasphemed.

But David did not fear his form
Nor at his word did quiver
The God who helped him in the past
Was with him now--forever.

As these two men came face to face
The mismatch seemed more sure.
Untested youth, he seemed to stand,
Against the greatest in the land.

Goliath cried: "Am I a dog!
I curse you by my gods.
Your ruddy flesh, your face so fair,
I'll give them to the birds of air!"

Then David answered in reply:
(And ran to meet his foe)
"You come to me with spear and shield,
But to the God of all, you'll yield!"

"The God who saved me from the bear
Through whom I slew the lion
This God whom you have now defied
In all the earth be glorified!"

"You threaten in the arm of flesh,
You threaten God above.
Your head will go--your carcass share
With beasts of earth and fowls of air."

The stone was smooth
The aim was sure
The God of Hosts,
He would endure.

The brow was bare,
The stone sank in
His body fell.
His soul? . . . in Hell.

A mismatch it had surely seemed.
It was--to faith's keen eye.
For who can stand against our God
And His Blest Name defy!

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