

Word Study: A Man Inbetween



WORD STUDY – A MAN INBETWEEN

1 Samuel 17:4: “And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height [was] six cubits and a span.”

I read something this morning in the Talmud that sent me to 1 Samuel 17 and the old story of David and Goliath. The Jewish Talmud is the second holiest book(s) in Judaism, the first being the Torah. I do consider the Torah, depending on the context either the first five books of the Bible or the Old Testament, to be inspired. Some Jews include the Talmud in their definition of the Torah, but I do not as I do not consider these fifty some volumes of work to be inspired. I do, however, consider it to be filled with a lot of wisdom and

knowledge that could aid us in our study of the inspired Word of God. It's accuracy on history is probably about as dependable as any historical record so take what I say in this study with much reserve.

There is much talk today of the Nephilim or the giants that are mentioned in the book of Genesis and the giants that the Hebrews encountered when they reached the Promised Land causing them to chicken out of their planned conquest. The teachings about these Nephilim, giants or sons of God has been creeping into mainstream Christianity with regularity during the past few years and the belief that these giants will again appear on earth. One teaching is that they will come in space crafts, another is that they are hidden away in the hollow chambers of earth itself. Most of these teachings, at least to me, have a higher crap content than fertilizer.

One basic teaching is that Goliath was a Nephilim, part of a race of giants who somehow managed to survive Noah's flood. So if you are such a believer, you may not want to read further as I am going to be a real spoiler here.

First, the Septuagint gives Goliath's height as four cubits and a span, about six feet nine inches. The Masoretic text gives it as six cubits and a span, about nine feet nine inches. Recent discoveries from the Dead Sea Scrolls have established that the Septuagint is a more reliable text than Masoretic text. So I tend to go with the Septuagint that he was about six foot nine, still a formable size but not the near mythological size of Jack and the Bean Stalk.

What I found interesting in the Septuagint is that in the Talmud in Sotah 42b it is taught that Goliath was the great grandson of Orpah. If you recall Orpah (which means neck or fawn) was the sister of Ruth. She was a Moabites. Moab was the result of an incestuous relationship between Lot and his daughter. Lot was the nephew of Abraham.

Now keep in mind that Ruth and Orpah were sisters and cut from the same jib. Orpah made a choice to go with her mother-in-law Naomi back to Israel where she embraced the Hebrew faith. Orpah chose to stay in Moab where she embraced her family's faith and according to the Talmud married a Philistine. Keep in mind that Ruth was David's great grandmother and in her line the Messiah Jesus was born.

So let's follow this line of thought. Three generations later these two distant cousins Goliath and David are now to meet on the battlefield. Scripture refers to Goliath as a champion. Every modern English version of the Bible I checked uses the word champion except Young's Literal who, by the nature of their title – literal, gave the literal meaning of the words that practically all translators render as champion. Young's Literal calls him a duelist. That is the best Young's Literal can do and still it is a paraphrase because the words for champion in the Hebrew are ish habanayim or literally the man from the inbetween. Now I suppose we could interpret that as the man who is standing between or preventing two armies from fighting each other. I suppose that is true but such a position could have been presented with other words. I believe the writer chose these words carefully because if indeed Goliath was a distant cousin of David, he not only stood between the two armies keeping them from attacking each other but he was a distant relative who stood between the Jewish faith and the pagan faith.

Had Oprah chose like her sister to go with Naomi, this story would be quite different. In fact Goliath might have been fighting along side of David. The Talmud goes further by disputing the fact that David struck Goliath in the forehead with a stone. For one thing Archaeological discoveries have shown that the helmet worn by the Philistines at this time had a forehead covering extending down the nose to prevent such a mishap that allegedly occurred to Goliath. To penetrate such a piece of armor as well as the thick forehead bone would have

had to have the force to knock the old boy on his back. But the Bible says he fell forward. Finally, the Hebrew word mitsach which is usually translated as forehead is identical to the word mitschat which is the lower part of the leg. David could have struck him in that part of the leg which made it impossible for him to keep standing and thus he fell forward.

But the real unveiling is still to come. According to the Talmud before David lops off Goliath's head he jumps on Goliath's back, pulls back his head and says: "Hear this word before you die, were not the two woman from whom you and I were born sisters? Your mother was Oprah and my mother was Ruth." He then said: "Open your eyes and see your slayer." What Goliath saw was an angel who reveals it was the name of God that he mocked that has brought about his demise.

Oh well, interesting twist. We can't be sure how accurate that all is, but I have noticed recently that the Bible talks a lot about grandchildren and the influence of the grand parent. In this case the decision of Goliath's great grandmother resulted in this humiliating death. Had his great grandmother Oprah made a different decision to follow Naomi, we might have been reading a different story in I Samuel 17. In many cultures or I should say most cultures, the grandparents are honored, respected and cared for by the family. I think the Bible is trying to tell us that the decision grown children make with their parents will have a profound effect upon their own children. Grandparents are very important to their grandchildren. I think this generation needs to really consider that. Because if you have children and parents you are the ish habanayim, the inbetween person.