

BIBLE BRIEFING

“Giantology”

Second Samuel 21:15-22

Introduction

What was the name of the giant David did not kill?

There are a lot of giants in the Bible. Goliath – the giant David did kill is perhaps the most famous giant of Bible, but there were numerous others, including some among the Israelites. Let me give you some examples of the often-related family branches of ancient giants:

1. Nephilim

"The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men that were of old, the men of renown." (Genesis 6:4 RSV)

"And there we saw the Nephilim, the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim; and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them." (Numbers 13:33 RSV)

2. Rephaim

"In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him came and subdued the Rephaim" (Genesis 14:5 RSV)

"For only Og the king of Bashan was left of the remnant of the Rephaim; behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron; is it not in Rabbah of the Ammonites? Nine cubits [i.e. about 13 feet / 4 meters] was its length, and four cubits its breadth, according to the common cubit." (Deuteronomy 3:11 RSV)

3. Anakim

"tall as the Anakim" (Deuteronomy 2:21 RSV)

"And Joshua came at that time, and wiped out the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the hill country of Judah, and from all the hill country of Israel; Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities." (Joshua 11:21 RSV)

4. Emim

"In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him came and subdued the Rephaim in Ashterothkarnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shavehkiriathaim" (Genesis 14:5 RSV)

"The Emim formerly lived there, a people great and many, and tall as the Anakim." (Deuteronomy 2:10 RSV)

5. Goliath and his descendants, who we encounter in our text, seem to be cases of individual giants.

For David, giants were more than interesting; they were potentially deadly! He defeated one – Goliath. But he failed to defeat another - Ishbi-Benob.

David's men stepped-up to the task; and they did so repeatedly.

It's a picture for us of training for the transition. David would not always be able to fight; but God's work must go on.

We need to be training for transitions – even if we are still young, or young at heart.

I'm not just talking about transitions in the church as we get older. You need to be training for transitions at home, too. You train up children in the way they should – What's the next word? GO! It can be a hard transition. In fact, it can ruin families.

It can also ruin churches. We don't want that to happen... So we'd better see how to make the transitions when they become necessary.

David makes a transition. He fights in his last battle. Let's see what we can glean from him.

First we will note that, Transition Is Not Retirement.

2 Samuel 21:15 When the Philistines were at war again with Israel, David and his servants with him went down and fought against the Philistines; and David grew faint.

Put this in the category of a lesson learned. Let's compare this to Second Samuel 11:1, which reads,

2 Samuel 11:1 It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out *to battle*, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

Remaining at Jerusalem, David spied Bathsheba bathing on her rooftop. You know the rest of the story – how he committed adultery, then murder to cover his sin.

He wasn't about to remain behind again! If the king was supposed to be out to battle, then that's where he'd be.

Where am I supposed to be? Where are you supposed to be? It sounds like a mystical, philosophical question; but it's not. God has given you a spiritual agenda; He makes your spiritual appointments. Be where you are supposed to and you will avoid a slew of temptations.

More to our point: Be where you are supposed to be and you will be prepared for, and preparing others for, your inevitable transition.

It was another spring. The Philistines thought they'd test David's strength and resolve. After all, how long could he remain in top physical condition? Sooner or later his strength would fail... And that time was now.

Age may catch up with you. Or it could be something else. Don't put-off serving the Lord thinking you have time.

2 Samuel 21:16 Then Ishbi-Benob, who was one of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose bronze spear was three hundred *shekels*, who was bearing a new sword, thought he could kill David.

David was in some real trouble. He was fighting a giant; a descendant of Goliath. The focus shifts to his men. There were one of two possible decisions for his men to make:

1. They could withdraw and let him fight it out on his own, risking defeat.
2. Or they could come alongside and fight with him, assuring victory.

Too often we withdraw when we ought to come alongside.

2 Samuel 21:17 But Abishai the son of Zeruiah came to his aid, and struck the Philistine and killed him. Then the men of David swore to him, saying, "You shall go out no more with us to battle, lest you quench the lamp of Israel."

Kudos to Abishai for several things:

1. For one – He saw that David was in trouble. He was paying attention – which is a pretty hard thing to do while you are fighting your own battle!
2. For another – He was a skilled warrior. He didn't depend upon David to fight his battles; he prepared himself.
3. For another – He followed through. He didn't just distract the giant for a while. He took him on and slew him dead.

David's fighting days were over. But he was not useless. He would continue as [the lamp of Israel](#). He was only retiring from battle, only due to age. He would have even more time to devote to leading his people; to writing; to planning.

- being changed to bring change -

So, although transition is not retirement... Transition Is A Requirement.

Young guys who step-up are a sign of spiritual health in a fellowship. Old guys may rule; *but young guys are cool!*

2 Samuel 21:18 Now it happened afterward that there was again a battle with the Philistines at Gob. Then Sibbechai the Hushathite killed Saph, who was one of the sons of the giant.

It reads as though the Philistines only sent out one giant every season. Not a bad strategy, since **every one of them** – starting with Goliath – would be cut down by David or one of his men.

If the Philistines represent our spiritual adversaries, then we can note at least two things:

1. You will be attacked the same way, by the same adversaries, over and over again. It can be a mistake to think you've totally, completely, overcome something you once struggled with. It doesn't mean you will constantly be defeated; it means you need to constantly be ready and on guard.
2. Though the same in one sense, your adversaries always seem to have renewed vigor. It was a giant each time – but a new, younger, stronger giant.

This time it was Sibbechai who did the honors, not Abishai. There's a lesson to be learned. Abishai didn't become the 'giant-killer.' He didn't take it over as 'his' ministry.

Too often we act as if we own some ministry or function in the church serving the Lord. Look at the army of David: As long as the giant was killed, it really didn't matter who did it. No one man owned that ministry.

The hardest thing about transition is believing it is required. It is stepping aside.

A while back I was at a worship conference at CC Costa Mesa. Phil and Evan Wickham were leading. Their dad, John Wickham, was backing them up. Now John and his wife – their mom – Lisa were the Phil & Evan Wickham of my generation! I want to be careful drawing conclusions because I don't really know them personally. But they seem to have transitioned into new roles... And it is a great example.

[2 Samuel 21:19](#) Again there was war at Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaare-Oregim the Bethlehemite killed *the brother of Goliath* the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear *was like a weaver's beam*.

Here they came again! Yet another hero stepped forward to meet the challenge.

Ministry is about multiplication. You multiply yourself. It may not seem like much, but if you think about it – multiplying yourself can really add up!

Let's say you win and disciple one person to Jesus Christ per year. Doesn't sound like much, does it? Then you do it again the second year... And so does the first person you won and discipled. At the end of the first year there were two. At the end of the second year, there would be four. Then eight... sixteen... thirty-two... sixty-four... one hundred twenty-eight... And so on.

A story is told of a craftsman who presented the Persian king with a beautiful, hand-made chessboard. The king asked what he would like in return for his gift and the craftsman surprised the king by asking for one grain of rice on the first square, two grains on the second, four grains on the third etc. The king readily agreed and asked for the rice to be brought. All went well at first, but the requirement for grains demanded over a million grains on the 21st square, more than a million million on the 41st; and there simply was not enough rice in the whole world for the final squares.

2 Samuel 21:20 Yet again there was war at Gath, where there was a man of *great* stature, who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number; and he also was born to the giant.

Year-after-year... Giant-after-giant. Your enemy is relentless. So must be your vigilance.

I'm not sure why we need to know how many fingers and toes this guy had. It does suggest that they were getting bigger... Stronger... Weirder...

It might suggest a level of preparation on the part of the Jews. They knew details about their enemy; they had what we might today call good intel.

There's a recent vTV ad in which two kids come to a vending machine and there is only one soda left. One of them says they should settle it by thumb wrestling. The other says, "Sure," but then you see that he has an enormous thumb!

2 Samuel 21:21 So when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea, David's brother, killed him.

Just like Goliath before him, he came out and defied the armies of Israel. Just like David before him, Jonathan (David's nephew) slew him.

2 Samuel 21:22 These four were born to the giant in Gath, and fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants.

God's work goes on. We should always be ready to step aside and give it to those He has raised-up after us. We will never be done; never retire. But we will – if we are biblical – transition.

