GOLIATH'S ARMOR AND ISRAELITE COLLECTIVE MEMORY[1]

by

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As the armies of Saul and the Philistines faced each other in the Elah Valley, a man stepped out of the Philistine camp, challenging any Israelite to a battle to the death. A young shepherd, David, meets his challenge, slays the Philistine with a slingshot, and the rest, as they say, is history. Or perhaps it is legend. These, in any case, are the two options scholars have proposed in discussing the episode. In this article I will argue that while both views can marshal significant evidence in their favor, neither is ultimately satisfactory. In their stead, the present article suggests that the battle between David and Goliath—or, more accurately, the final redaction of this battle—is a response to burgeoning Greek national identity, and maintains a literary dialogue with the Greek epic tradition.[2]

Against history

There is an established school of scholarship for whom the David and Goliath narrative is a historical account or at least one that contains a historically accurate kernel. In his study of biblical warfare, Y. Yadin speaks of the battle narrative as a precious historical resource: "The

[1] A number of scholars have read versions of this paper and contributed greatly to its formation. My thanks to Robert Alter, Andrea Berlin, Lowell Edmunds, Doug Olson, Steve Weitzman, and Yael Zerubavel. Thanks also to Jim Miller for his helpful comments following my presentation at the 2001 SBL meeting, and to Emily Glodek for her assistance.

[2] After completing this essay I came across I. Finkelstein, "The Philistines in the Bible: A Late-Monarchic Perspective," *JSOT* 27 (2002), pp. 131-67, in which Finkelstein argues that the biblical representation of the Philistines is anchored in late-monarchic reality. Though the articles are fundamentally different, Finkelstein anticipates my argument on a number of significant points.

detailed Biblical description of the weapons of Goliath is one of the most important documents for an understanding of Philistine armaments, their features and attributes, at the beginning of the Davidic period."[3] N. Bierling has sought to reconstruct a history of the Philistines in Palestine, drawing largely on biblical passages, including the David-Goliath battle, treating these as historical sources.[4] 1 Samuel xvii also figures prominently in the growing scholarly literature on the pre-Alexander contact between Israelite and Greek cultures, particularly with a view to Homer.[5] Speaking of the single-combat between David and Goliath, J. E. Miller writes: "It is possible that this form of warfare was introduced to the Israelites by the Philistines under conditions such as described in this story."[6] But while pre-Alexander cultural contact between Israelite and Greek culture is uncontroversial, the battle of David and Goliath is a problematic witness to such contact.

First, the accepted redaction date of the Deuteronomistic historiography (DtrH), of which—since Noth's *Uberlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*[7]—the Book of Samuel is considered a part, is late and getting later all the time. There is no need to survey the various scholarly positions concerning the redaction of DtrH.[8] Suffice it to say that scholars who favor an earlier redaction date it post-586 (usually no earlier than the mid-sixth century BCE), while scholars who favor a later date locate the work—or at least the David narrative—well into the Persian period

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[3] Y. Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands in Light of Archaeological Study* (2 Volumes; New York, 1963), Vol. 2, p. 265.

[4] N. Bierling, *Giving Goliath his Due: New Archaeological Light on the Philistines* (Grand Rapids, 1992). Goliath is discussed at pp. 147-50. See also Finkelstein's discussion, "The Philistines in the Bible," pp. 131-33, and the literature cited therein.

[5] From the Semitist side the figure of Cyrus Gordon looms large. See his *Homer and the Bible: The Origin and Character of East Mediterranean Literature* (Vintnor, NJ, 1967); for a survey of scholarship from the classicist side, see W. Burket, "Homerstudien und Orient," in J. Latacz (ed.), *Zweihundert Jahre Homer-Forschung: Ruckblick und Ausblick* (Colloquium Rauricum 2; Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1991), pp. 155-81, and, from a more archaeological perspective, S. Morris, "Homer and the Near East," in I. Morris and B. Powell (eds.), *A New Companion to Homer* (Mnemosyne Supplement 163; Leiden, 1997), pp. 599-623; J. P. Brown, *Israel and Hellas* (BZAW 231; Berlin and New York, 1995); J. E. Miller, *The Western Paradise: Greek and Hebrew Traditions* (Bethesda, Md., 1997).

[6] Miller, *The Western Paradise*, p. 70.

[7] M. Noth, *Uberlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* (Halle, 1943), translated into English as *The Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup 15; Sheffield, 1981).

[8] Such a survey is to be found in T. Romer and A. de Pury, "Deuteronomistic Historiography (DH): History of Research and Debated Issues," in A. de Pury, T. Romer and J.-D. Macchi (eds.), *Israel Constructs its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research* (JSOTSup 306; Sheffield, 2000), pp. 24-141.

or even later.[9] Since the narrative framework of 1 Samuel xvii sets the battle of David and Goliath prior to David's kingship—the end of the 11th century BCE—treating the narrative as historically accurate assumes faithful transmission over the course of half a millennium or more. This lengthy period of time gives one pause, particularly with regard to the details of the narrative—the nature of the battle, the weaponry, and the armor—in which the historian is often most interested.[10] And while feal transmission over centuries is possible, it is unlikely in the case of 1 Samuel xvii, a text that contains different layers and versions. The chapter is extant in two versions: the MT and a shorter version in the Old Greek translation. The relationship between the two versions is the subject of debate among text and literary critics.[11] The issue has not been definitively settled, but most scholars accept E. Tov's view that the LXX version is the earlier and the MT a later expansion.[12] In all probability the MT has been reworked based on earlier versions of the battle that were in circulation.

Archaeological evidence concerning the Philistines does not accord with the biblical description of Goliath. Goliath's armor does not fit what is known of Philistine armor from other sources, as K. Galling

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[9] See, e.g., John Van Seters' argument that the Davidic Succession Narrative (or, as he calls it, Court History) was composed after the Deuteronomistic History and is dependent upon it. See J. Van Seters, *In Search of History* (New Haven, 1983), pp. 317-21. For a more recent statement, see Van Seters, "The Court History and DtrH," in *Die sogenannte Thronfolgegeschichte Davids: Neue Einsichten und Anfragen*, A. de Pury and T. Romer (eds.) (OBO 176; Freiburg, Schweiz, 2000), pp. 70-93. Van Seters' analysis, which applies only to 2 Samuel ii-iv; ix-xx and 1 Kings i-ii, has exerted influence on the David narrative as a whole. Alexander Rofé's late dating will be discussed below.

[10] Even Baruch Halpern, whose recent book is a defense of the historicity of the biblical David narrative, classifies the battle with Goliath as unhistorical. See B. Halpern, *David's Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King* (Grand Rapids, MI, and Cambridge, U.K., 2001), pp. 4-13.

[11] The most important and comprehensive discussion is the cooperative venture of D. Barthélemy, D. W. Gooding, J. Lust and E. Tov, *The Story of David and Goliath, Textual and Literary Criticism: Papers of a Joint Research Venture* (Fribourg, Switzerland, and Gottingen, 1986).

[12] Tov's argument is also found in E. Tov, "The Composition of 1 Samuel 16-18 in the light of the Septuagint Version," in J. H. Tigay (ed.), *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism* (Philadelphia, 1985), pp. 98-130. A recent article by Graeme Auld and Craig Ho provides literary support for Tov's conclusions by explaining the MT additions as an attempt to model David's election story after Saul's (G. Auld and C. Ho, "The Making of David and Goliath," *JSOT* 56 [1992], pp. 19-39). My analysis is not dependent upon the acceptance of either position vis-à-vis the relationship between the MT and LXX versions of the battle.

argues persuasively in "Goliath und seine Rüstung":[13] the head gear is unlike the distinctive feathered helmets of the Egyptian reliefs at Medinet Habu;[14] Goliath's chain mail (שריון קשקשים) is Mesopotamian-Syrian; and the great shield, requiring a shield bearer, is unlike the small round shields of the Philistines portrayed in Egyptian reliefs. In light of this evidence, Galling concludes that the author of the episode does not provide a historically accurate portrayal of Philistine battle-gear, rather represents an electric combination of offensive and defensive gear drawn from various types of armor.[15]

Finally, the David and Goliath narrative appears to be later than and derivative of other strata within DtrH. As scholars have long recognized, the name Goliath appears only twice in the entire narrative: in v. 4 and v. 23, the latter being an awkward interpolation. Elsewhere David's rival is called "the Philistine." The curious distribution of the name has led many scholars to the conclusion that the name Goliath originates in a similar story found in 2 Sam. xxi 19:

> And there was again war with the Philistines at Gob; and Elhanan the son of Ja'are or'egim, the Bethlehemite, slew Goliath the Gittite; the shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam.[16]

The priority of this passage to 1 Samuel xvii is widely accepted: If the slaying of Goliath had originally been associated with David it is hard to imagine that Elhanan would have been credited with the same feat. It is quite possible, however, for David to be glorified through the appropriation of other heroic traditions.[17] Consider also 2 Samuel xxi 19's characterization of the spear as "like a weaver's beam" (מנור ארגים). The word ארגים, 'weavers,' appears as part of the hero's name as well, "Elhanan the son of Ja'are *or'egim*." Most scholars take this as a scribal error, a dittography, copied from the description of Goliath's spear. Thus Driver asserts that, "It is evident that ארגים [= in Elhanan's

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[13] K. Galling, "Goliath und seine Rüstung," *VT* 15 (1966), pp. 150-69.

[14] Medinet Habu is an Egyptian temple complex that dates to the mid 12th century BCE, not much earlier than the narrative setting of the David story. On Medinet Habu, see Yadin, *The Art of Warfare*, Vol. 2, pp. 333-345.

[15] See Finkelstein, "The Philistines in the Bible," pp. 141-48.

[16] Biblical translations are from NJPSV, unless otherwise indicated.

[17] See, e.g., P. K. McCarter, *I Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary* (AB 8; Garden City, NY, 1980), p. 291; A. Caquot and P. de Robert, *Les livres de Samuel* (Commentaire de l'ancien testament 6; Geneva, 1994), p. 202; Halpern, *David's Secret Demons*, p. 8.

name] has found its way into the text here by accident from the line below, though the error must be older than LXX."[18] Despite the widespread acceptance of this view, two points deserve notice. First, the dittography, if it is such, is egregious. In a textually unproblematic passage (absent, e.g., homoioteleuton, homoioarchton and the like), the scribe inserted the noun "weavers" into the personal name of the protagonist, producing the unsyntactic and senseless chain "Elhanan son of Ya'are *weavers*." The dittography explanation is widely accepted because there is no real alternative; there is no way to connect the word ארגים in Elhanan's name with the description of Goliath's spear. But—and this is the second point—2 Sam. xxi 19 is ambiguous as to *whose* spear shaft is like a weaver's beam. The Hebrew can be read quite naturally as indicating that it is Elhanan's spear, *not* Goliath's, that is like a weaver's beam: "And there was again war with the Philistines at Gob; and Elhanan the son of Ja'are, [of the?] weavers,[19] the Bethlehemite, slew Goliath the Gittite; the shaft of his [= Elhanan's] spear was like a weaver's beam." If so, the reference to the weaving equipment is original to 2 Samuel and the characterization of David's Goliath as bearing a spear whose shaft is like a weaver's beam (1 Sam. xvii 7) was taken from the Elhanan story and—like the name Goliath—added to the David narrative.[20] It should be noted that the above argument is intended to support, not establish, the priority of the Elhanan narrative, a view that is already widely accepted among scholars.

Furthermore, J. Grønbaek has shown that the battle of David and Goliath fits poorly into the broader narrative of David's rise. The women that greet the forces returning from the Philistine campaign sing that "Saul has slain his thousand; David, his tens of thousands" (1 Sam. xviii 7)—David's glory was established on the field of battle and no mention is made of the slaying of Goliath.[21] If so, it would

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[18] S. R. Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel* (Oxford, 1960), p. 354.

[19] The proposed reading is still textually problematic. One would expect איש (ה)ארגים or something to that effect.

[20] If the weaver's beam refers to Elhanan's weapon and is tied to his family's vocation, Yigael Yadin's learned and original hypothesis regarding the Philistine curved spear is unnecessary. See Y. Yadin, "Goliath's Yavelin and the מנור ארגים," *PEQ* 86 (1955), pp. 58-69.

[21] J. Grønbaek, *Die Geschichte vom Aufstieg Davids (1.Sam.15-2.Sam.5): Tradition und Komposition* (Acta Theologica Danica 10; Copenhagen, 1971). Grønbaek writes (p. 90):

appear that the David and Goliath story was inserted into an existing stratum of DtrH, which again indicates its late date relative to the composition of DtrH. In light of these arguments, McCarter concludes, that the David and Goliath narrative grew in several stages. The earlier tradition reflected in 1 Samuel xviii 6-7 was overshadowed by a preliminary version of David's victory over the Philistine champion, which, at a later time, "attracted" elements from other biblical stories, before finally taking on its present form.[22] The borrowing from within DtrH—the name "Goliath" and perhaps the characterization of his spear—and its insertion into an existing Davidic legitimation-tradition indicate the David and Goliath narrative belongs to a late stratum of the book and is derivative of the earlier strata, thus not a reliable historical witness of the battle. Even if there is an early (historically accurate?) tradition of David defeating the Philistines collectively or a single Philistine champion, the present form of the narrative is late.[23]

Against fiction

There are strong arguments against understanding the battle of David and Goliath as history. The late redaction date of the narrative, its inconsistencies and borrowings, and the lack of archaeological support argue against the historical approach and have led several scholars to view the David and Goliath story as fiction.[24] As O. Eissfeldt has stated: "wiewohl Davids Sieg über Goliath vielleicht mit grösserem

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"Man kann sich dennoch des Eindrucks nicht erwehren, daß die Kampfschilderung und die Darstellung des Zweikampfes ursprünglich *keinerlei Beziehungen zueinander gehabt haben*" (emphasis added).

[22] See the reconstruction offered by McCarter, *I Samuel*, p. 298.

[23] See also the arguments of Rofé, who points to a number of late characteristics in 1 Samuel xvii such as *plene* orthography, late vocabulary, and syntactic phenomena known from rabbinic Hebrew, from which he concludes that "the story of David and Goliath was written during the Second Commonwealth, probably in the late Persian period." A. Rofé, "The Battle of David and Goliath: Folklore, Theology, Eschatology," in J. Neusner, B. A. Levine and E. S. Frerichs (eds.), *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia, 1987), pp. 117-151, quote at p. 134. Rofé ignores the possibility that linguistic differences can result from differences in dialect and register, and assumes diachronic change throughout. See also Finkelstein's criticism, "The Philistines in the Bible," p. 143, n. 16.

[24] For a discussion of scholars expressing doubt as to the historic veracity of the David narrative as a whole, see O. Kaiser, "Das Verhältnis der Erzählung vom König David zum sogenannten deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk: am Beispiel von 1 Kön 1-2 untersucht," in *Die sogenannte Thronfolgegeschichte Davids*, p. 98.

Recht zu den Legenden gerechnet werden kann."[25] But the understanding of David and Goliath as pure fiction is no less problematic, since it fails to account for the not typically Israelite (or, paradoxically, not typically biblical) elements in the narrative, many of which suggest historic contact with a Greek or Aegean culture. The David and Goliath narrative is in many ways anomalous, though its anomaly has been dulled by the familiarity of the story. Military prowess, for one thing, is an unusual way to legitimate the future king of Israel, and very different from Saul's election or any other established mode of biblical election (birth to a barren woman, divine election, angelic announcement and so forth).[26] And if David is to be legitimated by combat, why Greek combat? For, as most scholars have long recognized, David and Goliath engage in a contest of champions, a μονομαχία, a form of battle known almost exclusively from the Greek epic tradition.[27] R. de Vaux has argued against identifying the contest of champions as a Greek combat, suggesting that it is sufficiently attested in the Hebrew Bible and Near Eastern literature—but his argument is tellingly wanting.[28] While de Vaux cites many biblical and Near Eastern sources, they are often beside the point and bespeak a failure to distinguish the unique characteristics of the contest of champions. For example, most of the battles in 2 Sam. xxiii 9-21 and 2 Sam. xxi 15-22 contain no reference to a contest of champions, rather report the wholesale slaughter of Philistines by individual warriors—a very different matter indeed. 2 Sam. xxiii 20-21 (Benaiah's battle with a single Egyptian warrior), which is, according to de Vaux, "no doubt . . . the report of a single combat,"[29] is nothing of the sort. Single combat is not two individuals fighting, rather a contest of two champions that represent their respective sides in battle—a context

[25] Cited in Galling, "Goliath und seine Rüstung," p. 150, n. 2.

[26] Many judges exhibit military prowess but these are leaders of tribal militias for whom military prowess is an end unto itself. David, in contrast, is the paradigmatic king and the root from which the messianic shoot is to spring. Here, military might legitimizes an office that extends far beyond military leadership.

[27] The most famous examples are the battles of Paris and Menelaos and of Hector and Ajax in Books 3 and 7 of the Iliad, respectively.

[28] R. de Vaux, "Les combats singulières dans l'Ancien Testament," *Bib* 40 (1959), pp. 495-508, appeared in English as "Single Combat in the Old Testament," chapter 7 of de Vaux, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, D. McHugh translator (Garden City, N.Y., 1971), pp. 122-35.

[29] De Vaux, "Single Combat," p. 126 ("Les combats singulières," pp. 498-9).

absent from Benaiah's battle. And while the episode of the twelve warriors who battle before Abner and Yoav (2 Sam. ii 12-17) is a ritualized military encounter, it is not single combat: the twelve warriors are not champions,[30] and there is no indication their struggle is anything more than a prelude to the inevitable battle. As for the extra-biblical sources, de Vaux admits that "Mesopotamian historical texts provide no examples" of single combat,[31] so he cites mythological battles between individual gods (Tiamat and Marduk, Yahweh and Rahab etc.) that are patently not contests of champions. The Egyptian tale of Sinuhe is the only Near Eastern story that approximates the Greek μονομαχία, but even here there are significant differences.[32] If anything, de Vaux's article demonstrates the incongruity of the battle of champions in 1 Samuel xvii within the Near Eastern literary corpus, thereby strengthening the probability that the scene has its roots in another—a Greek—cultural tradition.

The Greek context of 1 Samuel xvii is further evident in Goliath's panoply, which—following Homeric convention—consists of a helmet, a breastplate of scales, greaves, and a large shield requiring a bearer. Such gear is not common in the Bible.[33] "Greaves" (מצחת נחושת), "the spear's head" (להבת החנית),[34] and "mail armor" (שריון קשקשים) are all *hapax legomena*, and the institution of the shield bearer is unknown from other biblical contexts. Another rare element is the helmet (כובע or קובע),[35] which appears in passages that are either late or part of prophetic visions rather than war narratives proper.[36] Finally, the narrative likely contains a calque from Greek: in v. 4 Goliath is called איש הביניים, a phrase that literally means "the man of the in-between." This *hapax legomenon* has been a stumbling block for both translators

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[30] They are נערים, a military term whose precise meaning is debated but does not mean champion, and in any case not in the context of David and Goliath, where it is used disparagingly: "When the Philistine caught sight of David, he scorned him, *for he was but a boy* (נער), ruddy and with a beautiful look" (v. 42, NJSPV translation altered).

[31] De Vaux, "Single Combat," p. 131 ("Les combats singulières," p. 504).

[32] See Miller, *Western Paradise*, p. 71.

[33] See the analysis of Brown, *Israel and Hellas*, pp. 163-70.

[34] להבה exists, but not in the meaning 'blade'.

[35] A loanword of Indo-European origin (E. Sapir "Hebrew 'helmet,' a Loanword, and its bearing on Indo-European Phonology," *JAOS* 57 [1937], pp. 73-7) that may be related to the Greek κύμβαχος (Brown, *Israel and Hellas*, pp. 165-7).

[36] Late: 2 Chron. xxvi 14; Prophetic: Ezek. xxvii 10; xxxviii 5; xxiii 24; Is. lix 17; Jer. xl 4. The list is exhaustive.

and commentators. The most plausible explanation, however, was offered almost a century ago by S. R. Driver: הבנים "איש] i.e. the man of the μεταίχμιον who came forward . . . to bring the warfare to a close."[37] The Greek μεταίχμιον refers to the space between two armies as they encamp facing one another, and so the warrior who steps into this space is the man of the in-between space, איש הביניים. The presence of a calque is significant as it indicates linguistic or literary contact between Hebrew and Greek, a point that will be addressed more fully below.[38]

The Greek elements—the single combat, the armor, the terminology—lead to a conceptual impasse. On the other hand, the Philistines are an Aegean people,[39] so the Greek elements seem to support the view that 1 Samuel xvii is on some level a historically accurate report of an encounter between the David and the Philistine giant. On the other hand, the arguments surveyed in the previous section—the late redaction date, the borrowings from earlier strata of DtrH, the different versions of the story, and the absence of archaeological support—undermine any claim to historical fidelity. How, then, can these elements be explained? In order to break this impasse, it is necessary to examine the historical situation at the time the narrative took on its final form, the 6th or 5th century BCE, and in particular the place of Greek culture in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The cultural setting

At the middle of the sixth century the Greeks stood at the end of a century and a half of intensive colonization. By 550 BCE Greek colonies dotted the eastern Mediterranean coast, including a large commercial colony at Naukratis (Egypt), and a strong presence along the

[37] S. R. Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel* (Oxford, 1960), p. 139. So too Rofé ("The Battle of David and Goliath," p. 132) who cites a still earlier authority, O. Thenius, *Die Bücher Samuels Erklärt* (Leipzig, 1842), p. 66.

[38] Linguistic contact can be mediated by one or more additional languages, but there is no compelling reason to think this is the case. Lowell Edmunds has called my attention to the fact that μεταίχμιον does not occur in our text of Homer.

[39] T. Dothan, *The Philistines and Their Material Culture* (New Haven and London, 1982); L. E. Stager, "The Impact of the Sea Peoples in Canaan (1185-1050 BCE)," in T. E. Levy (ed.), *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land* (London, 1995), pp. 332-48.

Phoenician coast and in parts of Palestine.[40] Their cultural impact was strong. E. Stern has argued that:

> An examination of the material culture of Palestine in the Persian period reveals that already at the start of the period the country was divided into two regions; the mountain region . . . and the Galilee and coastal plain . . . A study of [these] two areas indicates that the culture of the mountains was basically eastern . . . The culture of the coast, in contrast, contained the essentially western East-Greek, Cypriot and Attic elements. It is thus evident that the material culture of Greece appeared in Palestine much earlier than the Macedonian conquest.[41]

Subsequent digs have confirmed Stern's view. Drawing on the archaeological evidence of Tel 'Akko, Jaffa, Tell Jemmeh and Tel Dor, nearly two decades after his original (Hebrew) study, Stern outlines the general characteristics common to these urban settlements: "The general impression received from the Greek settlement of the seventh-fourth centuries BC in Phoenicia and apparently also in Israel is of a Phoenician city that contains a strong Greek element."[42] More recently, J. Elayi has provided a comprehensive survey of the available archaeological data and found evidence for Greek wares and artifacts (including "pseudo-Athenian" coins) along the coastal area, beginning in the 6th century and continuing through to the Hellenistic period; It should be noted that the Greek presence is most pronounced in the area of biblical Philistia—Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gaza and environs.[43] Even according to the earlier datings, then, the (post-586) redaction of DtrH occurs when biblical Philistia "contained the essentially western East-Greek, Cypriot and Attic elements."[44]

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[40] See J. Boardman, *The Greeks Overseas* (Harmondsworth, 1973).

[41] E. Stern, *Material Culture of the Land of the Bible in the Persian Period 538-332 B.C.* (Wiltshire, England, 1982), p. 236. This is the English version of Stern's dissertation, which was published in Hebrew in 1973 (א' שטרן, *החרבות החמרית של ארץ ישראל בתקופה הפרסית* [ירושלים, תשל"ג]). Stern goes on to claim that "There is no doubt that this was a purely external 'conquest,' i.e., the products of the Greek culture were adapted to local traditions and customs and no longer possessed the same significance as in their country of origin" (p. 236), but see the discussion of Naveh, below.

[42] E. Stern, "The Beginning of the Greek Settlement in Palestine," in S. Gitin and W. G. Dever (eds.), *Recent Excavations in Israel: Studies in Iron Age Archaeology* (AASOR 49; Winona Lake, In, 1989), pp. 107-24, here p. 120.

[43] J. Elayi, *Pénétration grecque en Phénicie sous l'empire perse* (Travaux et mémoires: études anciennes 2; Nancy, 1988). On the coins, located in Gaza, see p. 45.

[44] The evidence for Greek cultural presence in the 6th century is significant for situating my argument within the context of contemporary biblical scholarship. A number of scholars argue for a Hellenistic redaction date for the Hebrew Bible (or parts

But it is not enough to speak of a "Greek cultural presence" as though Greek culture were a fixed datum. A closer investigation reveals that the period under consideration saw a significant change in Greek self-understanding, a change that is of consequence for understanding 1 Samuel xvii. The origins of this change can be found in the so-called Greek renaissance of the 8th century, a time characterized by, *inter alia*, the flowering and circulation of Homeric epic throughout the Greek speaking world and a concomitant interest in the archaic past.[45] Tomb and hero cults spread, linking the present dead to a heroic past;[46] heroic ideals were revived, as when the warring sides of the Lelantine War agreed to adopt knightly battle norms and eschew missiles.[47] In time, these trends spread beyond the Greek mainland to the eastern Mediterranean, as when, e.g., a 7th century tomb at Salamis was constructed according to the Homeric model.[48]

The interpretation of these changes is a matter of some controversy among classicists. One venerable view, exemplified in J. N. Coldstream's *Geometric Greece*, links these different developments to the emergence of

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of it), based in part on thematic or literary parallels to Greek literature. While the interpretation offered here does not contradict this view, my argument is not dependent upon it nor, indeed, does it have any direct bearing on it. Response to Greek culture can be accommodated within the accepted paradigm of—in the case of DtrH—early or middle Persian redaction. For a recent discussion of the Hellenistic hypothesis, see L. Grabbe (ed.), *Did Moses Speak Attic? Jewish Historiography and Scripture in the Hellenistic Period* (JSOTSup 317, European Seminar in Historical Methodology 3; Sheffield, 2001).

[45] See the articles collected in R. Hagg (ed.), *The Greek Renaissance of the Eighth Century B.C.: Tradition and Innovation (Proceedings of the Second International Symposium at the Swedish Institute in Athens, 1-5 June, 1981)* (Stockholm, 1983), and especially S. Hiller, "Possible Historical Reasons for the Rediscovery of the Mycenaean Past in the Age of Homer," pp. 9-14. On the circulation of Greek epic, see J. N. Coldstream, *Geometric Greece* (London, 1977), pp. 343-57.

[46] See C. Morgan, "The Origins of pan-Hellenism," in N. Marinatos and R. Hagg (eds.), *Greek Sanctuaries: New Approaches* (London and New York, 1993), pp. 18-44; J. Whitley, "Tomb Cult and Hero Cult: The Uses of the Past in Archaic Greece," in N. Spencer (ed.), *Time, Tradition and Society in Greek Archaeology: Bridging the 'Great Divide'* (London and New York, 1995), pp. 43-63.

[47] The Lelantine War, in which Chalcis fought against Eretria, Aegina, Miletus, and Megara, most likely spanned the first half of the seventh century BCE, though the dating (and historicity) of the battle is a matter of controversy. See Coldstream, *Geometric Greece*, p. 200; Hiller, "The Rediscovery," p. 13, n. 46.

[48] First published in V. Karageorghis, "A 'Homeric' Burial Discovered in a Royal Tomb of the 7th Century B.C.," *Illustrated London News* 240 (1962), pp. 894-6, and see the more recent discussion in V. Karageorghis, "J. N. Coldstream and the Archaeology of Cyprus," in C. Morris (ed.), *Klados: Essays in Honour of J. N. Coldstream* (Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies 63; London, 1995), pp. 9-12.

a pan-Hellenic identity. This view has recently been challenged by J. M. Hall, who argues that there was no 7th century pan-Hellenic ethnic identity, rather various identity-building mechanisms working in the service of regional ethnic identities,[49] while pan-Hellenic identity did not crystallize until the 5th century BCE.[50] Whatever the ultimate result of this debate—a matter for the classicists to decide—on either reading it is clear that in the 7th and 6th century Greek culture underwent an intensive period of self-definition (whether as discrete ethnic groups or pan-Hellenic Greeks) and that the heroic past depicted in Homeric epic was engaged in the formulations of this collective identity.

As noted above, the turn toward the heroic past spread beyond the Greek mainland, and the Homeric tomb at Salamis locates similar sentiments in the eastern Mediterranean. Recent findings suggest a similar dynamic was at work in 7th century Philistia. A dedicatory inscription unearthed at Tel-Miqne (biblical Ekron) in 1996 reads: "The temple which *'akyš* son of Padi . . . ruler of Ekron, built"—the *'akyš* in question being Ikausu son of Padi, a 7th century king of Ekron known from Assyrian annals.[51] Gitin, Dothan, and Naveh, the authors of the report, argue that the name should be vocalized "*Ikayus*, which eventually leads us to *Akhayus*, i.e. 'Αχαιός or 'Achaean', meaning 'Greek'."[52] Additional archaeological evidence was uncovered in Tell Jemmeh (biblical Gerar, just east of Gaza) in the form of ostraca and a seal.[53] The ostraca contain lists of names, most of which end in *shin* and many represent a semitic transcription of the masculine singular Greek "*-os*" ending. As for the seal, it belonged to "*ddymš* the son of *'lyqm*,"[54] a name that reflects a generational shift from a Semitic name, *'lyqm* (cf. Eliakim), to a Greek one, *ddymš*. In a recent article, Naveh has drawn these data together:[55] the ostraca furnish evidence for the widespread occurrence of Greek names in 7th century Philistia; the seal indicating

[49] See J. M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1997) and, *in nuce, idem*, "Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Iron Age of Greece," in Spencer, *Time, Tradition and Society*, pp. 6-15.

[50] J. M. Hall, *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture* (Chicago, 2002).

[51] S. Gitin, T. Dothan, and J. Naveh, "A Royal Dedicatory Inscription from Ekron," *IEJ* 47 (1997), pp. 1-16.

[52] Gitin, Dothan and Naveh, "A Royal Dedicatory Inscription," p. 11.

[53] J. Naveh, "Writing and Scripts in Seventh-Century B.C.E. Philistia: The New Evidence from Tell Jemmeh," *IEJ* 35 (1985), pp. 8-21.

[54] Naveh, "Writing and Scripts," pp. 18-19.

[55] J. Naveh, "Achish-Ikausu in the Light of the Ekron Dedication," *BASOR* 310 (1998), pp. 35-7. My thanks to Eva von Dassow for bringing this article to my attention.

the adoption of Greek names could involve a generational break from Semitic names, a pattern repeated in the dedicatory inscription that identifies the ruler of Ekron as "the Achaean" (though his forefathers all have Semitic names). In light of this evidence, Naveh concludes that "in the seventh century BC there was in Philistia a national awakening, some search for the non-Semitic roots."[56] Though Naveh does not make this point explicitly, his proposal of a Philistine national awakening (whether chauvinistic or part of a pan-Hellenic movement) fits well with the broader dynamic underway in the Greek world. Since "[i]t is likely that the people of Philistia knew of their kinship with the Greeks on Cyprus,"[57] the national awakening in Philistia may have included a renewed interest in heroic tales, spurred by, *inter alia*, the spread of Homeric epic.[58]

Naveh further connects *'akyš*/'Αχαιός with the biblical Achish, king of Gath, who appears in 1 Sam. xxi 11 ("That day David continued on his flight from Saul and he came to King Achish of Gath"): "the name of the king of Ekron in seventh century BC reflected on the name of the Philistine king(s) of Gath in the narratives of the time of Saul and Solomon."[59] If Naveh's argument is correct, the name Achish is a clear example of the DtrH couching a tradition concerning an ancient (11th century) event in terms drawn from more recent historical reality (the 7th century king of Ekron).

A similar literary retrojection explains the Greek elements in the David and Goliath narrative. 1 Samuel xvii is not a historically accurate portrayal of 11th century Philistine culture, rather represents a putatively ancient event in light of the "Philistine" culture contemporary to the 6th century (or later) redactor. Like renaissance artists portraying biblical figures in 15th century garb, the hellenized culture of the 6th century southern coastal region—biblical Philistia—is retrojected onto the earlier narrative of David and Goliath. It should be

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[56] Naveh, "Achish-Ikausu," p. 36.

[57] Naveh, "Achish-Ikausu," p. 36.

[58] Why the Philistines would thus "awaken" can only be speculated: perhaps the cause was the renewed contact with the Greek merchants and soldiers, their Landsmänner; perhaps a backlash against Assyrian domination; perhaps Homer's poetic force, and perhaps some combination of these. On the preservation of a unique Philistine identity, see B. J. Stone, "The Philistines and Acculturation: Culture Change and Ethnic Continuity in the Iron Age," *BASOR* 298 (1995), pp. 7-32.

[59] Naveh, "Achish-Ikausu," p. 36. See also Finkelstein, "The Philistines in the Bible," pp. 133-36.

noted that the cultural association of the 11th century Philistines with the contemporary (6th century) Greeks fits the biblical tradition that has the Philistines originating in Caphtor, Crete (see Am. ix 7 and Jer. xlvii 4). That modern archaeology has shown that the Philistines do, in fact, originate in the Aegean is not relevant; 1 Samuel xvii's identification of David's Philistines with the residents of 6th century Philistia is a *cultural* fact whose validity would not be diminished if the archaeological evidence had identified the Philistines as a non-Aegean people. The representation of David's victory over Goliath—a past event—is mediated by the author's (redactor's) present, and envisioned as a Homeric battle. On this reading, the battle of David and Goliath is neither historical fact nor literary fantasy; it is what M. Halbwachs calls collective memory.[60]

Collective memory refers to the way in which a society or a group represents past events—irrespective of the historical fidelity of this representation, or even the existence of the event. Thus it is possible for M. Hogan to write about the collective memory of an unquestionably historic event like Hiroshima, while S. Barczewski examines the forces within English society that shape different representations of King Arthur and Robin Hood, figures whose historical status is unclear.[61] The analysis is the same in both cases. The historicity of David is an important topic and much-discussed, but it is not relevant to the present analysis.[62] As Halbwachs demonstrates, collective memory is a dialogue between the past and the present, and the representation of the battle of David and Goliath is an attempt to reconstruct the past so as to better withstand the pressure of emerging Greek cultural hegemony. The parallels to Homeric epic are not—*pace* other scholars[63]—

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[60] M. Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, F. J. Ditter, Jr. and V. Yazdi Ditter (trans.) (New York, 1980); M. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, L. A. Coser (ed. and trans.) (The Heritage of Sociology; Chicago, 1992).

[61] M. J. Hogan, *Hiroshima in History and Memory* (Cambridge and New York, 1996); S. L. Barczewski, *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Legends of King Arthur and Robin Hood*, (Oxford and New York, 2000). My introduction to the concept came through Yael Zerubavel's work, particularly Y. Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago, 1995).

[62] For a discussion of the *status quaestionis*, including an extensive bibliography (and an unambiguous affirmation of David's historicity) see K. A. Kitchen, "A Possible Mention of David in the Late Tenth Century BCE, and Deity *Dod as Dead as the Dodo?," *JSOT* 76 (1997), pp. 29-44.

[63] I count myself among the scholars who have erred in taking literary parallels for evidence of the historic antiquity of "Philistine" customs. In an earlier article ("Samson's *Ḥîdâ*," *VT* 52 [2002], pp. 407-26) I argued that Samson's "riddle" to the Philistines is

evidence of the antiquity of these elements, but of the familiarity of the redactor with Greek culture and, more specifically, with its "national" literature. Indeed, the battle of David and Goliath is best read with the *Iliad* as its intertext.[64]

Auerbach inscribed in 1 Samuel: intertextuality and subversion

One of the keys to the intertextual relationship that holds between 1 Samuel xvii and the *Iliad* is the contest of champions, the μονομαχία, fought between David and Goliath. That this mode of combat is more common to Homeric epic and rare—singular—to the Bible has been discussed in some detail above.[65] Yet to be explored are the literary motifs common to 1 Samuel xvii and the *Iliad*, and how they contribute to the literary fashioning of the battle. The parallel begins with the military configuration of the two armies, facing off against one another with an open area between them. This arrangement appears unannounced at the beginning of chapter xvii; no description of the

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in fact a Greek skolion and, more generally, that Samson's wedding to a Philistine woman paralleled Athenian marriage customs. In that article I took these parallels as evidence for ancient Philistine customs either carried over from their Aegeaen homeland or developed through contact with the Greek mainland. I am now convinced that the striking parallels are best understood as a retrojection of later Greek reality onto "Samson's" Philistines. Prof. Jack Sasson pointed out to me the problematic nature of my historical reading, but at the time I was not able to formulate the relationship between the literary and historical data in a more satisfactory fashion.

[64] Rofé identifies the Homeric elements in 1 Samuel xvii as literary, but emphasizes that the author "need not have to read the *Iliad* to [incorporate these elements]; he need only have heard the foreigners tell of their forefathers' valor" ("The Battle of David and Goliath," p. 134). It is debated among classicists whether the text of the *Iliad* was fixed before Hellenistic times.

[65] Other parallels to Homer may be proposed. For example, Saul offers great wealth, his daughter's hand in marriage and "free" (most likely: exempt from taxes and conscription) to anyone who will fight Goliath (v. 25) and Agamemnon offers Achilles great wealth, concubines, his daughter's hand in marriage, and the ability to "live out his laws in . . . peace" if he fights Hector (*Iliad* 9.145-186). Note, however, that v. 25 is part of the LXX pluses and may not belong to the original story. Outside chapter xvii, one finds Homeric elements in 1 Samuel xxxi: the Philistines strip the dead Saul of his armor and display his body, but the people of Yabesh Gil'ad recapture Saul's corpse and, in an apparently positive gesture, burn it. These practices accord with Homeric battle descriptions, not biblical customs. For other parallels between Greek and Roman foundation narratives, see M. Weinfeld, "The Promise to the Patriarchs and its Realization: An Analysis of Foundation Stories," in M. Heltzer and E. Lipinski (eds.), *Society and Economy in the Eastern Mediterranean, c. 1500-1000 B.C.* (Leuven, 1988), pp. 353-69.

military maneuvering that led to this situation, indeed no context for the battle save the vague statement in xiv 52 that "There was bitter war against the Philistines all the days of Saul."[66] But the military alignment is necessary, a *sine qua non* for the contest of champions, for into the space between the armies steps the Philistine champion and issues a challenge: "Choose one of your men and let him come down against me. If he bests me in combat and kills me, we will become your slaves; but if I best him and kill him, you shall be our slaves" (vv. 8-9). The contractual nature of the battle, the penalties each side must pay if its champion loses, echoes, among others, Hector's challenge to the Achaeans:

> . . . let one whose nerve impels him to fight with me come striding from your lines, a lone champion pitted against Prince Hector. Here are the terms that I set forth—let Zeus look down, my witness! If that man take my life with his sharp bronze blad, he will strip my gear and haul it back to his ships . . . But if I kill *him* and Apollo grants me glory, I'll strip his great armor and haul it back to sacred Troy and hang it high on the deadly Archer's temple walls" (*Iliad* 7.85-95).[67]

The similar challenges elicit similar responses: "When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and terror-stricken" (v. 11) and after Hector's challenge a "hushed silence went through all the Achaean ranks, ashamed to refuse, afraid to take up his challenge . . ." (*Iliad* 7.107). When David does step forward Goliath curses him, saying: "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field" (v. 44), employing a common motif in the *Iliad*, that of warriors whose bodies litter

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[66] The frontal battle is rarely practiced, and almost never described in Judges and Samuel, books that emphasize outwitting the enemy: Bethel is conquered with the aid of military intelligence (Jud. i 22-26); Ehud hides his dagger and kills the unsuspecting Eglon (Jud. iii 15-30); Deborah and Barak use the meteorological conditions to the advantage of their forces (Jud. v); Gideon utilizes surprise attacks and guerilla warfare (Jud. vi-viii). In the Saul narratives—most of which lack detail—there is a great victory brought on by Jonathan's surprise attack against the Philistine outpost (1 Sam. xiv 8-12), and a general strategy that seems to consist of three-pronged attacks on enemy encampments (1 Sam. xi 11).

[67] Here the stakes are personal. For a battle of champions with national consequences, see *Iliad* 3.285-295: "If Paris brings Menelaus down in blood, he keeps Helen himself and all her wealth and we sail home in our racing deep-sea ships. But if red-haired Menelaus brings down Paris, the Trojans surrender Helen and all her treasures." Translations of Homer are from *The Iliad*, Robert Fagles translator (New York, 1990).

the battlefield, unburied, "feasts for the dogs and the birds" (*Iliad* 1.5). Indeed, this motif appears explicitly as part of the dialogue of Hector and Achilles, locked in single combat. When Hector realizes that Achilles has bested him and that death is near he pleads: "I beg you, beg you by your life, your parents—don't let the dogs devour me by the Argive ships" (22.398-9), but Achilles shows no mercy: "The dogs and birds will rend you—blood and bone" (22.416). From the alignment of the armies to the challenge hurled at the opponents, from the fear of the opposing soldiers to the stylized insults hurled at the enemy in combat, the literary representation of Goliath and the contest of champions is thoroughly Homeric.

Coming to meet the Philistine-Homeric challenge is David, who is cast as a stark contrast to Goliath—a Homeric anti-hero. Clearly, in a work in which heroes and battle play such a central role it is easier to recognize the *Iliad*'s ideal of a hero than of an anti-hero, but there are nonetheless a number of passages that provide insight into the nature of a Homeric anti-hero. In the opening scene of Book 3, Paris steps forward from the ranks and challenges the Argives to single combat, only to shrink back in fear when Menelaus comes to meet his challenge. Upon seeing this, Hector berates his younger brother: "Why, the long-haired Achaeans must be roaring with laughter! They thought *you're* the bravest champion we could field, and just because of your beautiful look (καλὸν εἶδος) . . ." (*Iliad* 3.49-51).[68] Paris' soft beauty, his "beautiful look" is clearly not the mark of a warrior. Another negative attribute is youth (understood as youthful inexperience), and many of the warriors explicitly distance themselves from this trait, as when Hector shouts: "Ajax . . . don't toy with me like a puny, weak-kneed boy or a woman never trained in the works of war! War—I know it well . . ." (7.271-80). Similarly, Aeneas, facing Achilles, says: "Don't think for a moment, Achilles, son of Peleus, that you can frighten me with words like a child, a fool—I'm an old hand at trading taunts . . ." (*Iliad* 20.235). Bearing in mind that beauty and youth are anti-heroic markers, we turn to the description of David as he appears to Goliath: "When the Philistine caught sight of David, he scorned him, for he was *but a boy*, ruddy and of *with a beautiful look* (יפה מראה)" (v. 42).[69] How could Goliath but scorn David, who exhibits two traits despised by Homeric heroes: youth/inexperience and beauty.

[68] Fragles' translation slightly altered.
[69] NJPSV translation slightly altered.

David is not a Hector but a Paris,[70] right down to his characterization as יפה מראה (= καλὸν εἶδος), a Hebrew phrase that occurs elsewhere in the Bible in the feminine form יפת מראה (Gen. xxix 17, xli 2 and elsewhere), and may connote a particularly feminine beauty.[71]

The contrast between Homeric hero and anti-hero is manifest in the different attitudes David and Goliath exhibit toward armor. Before going into battle, David meets with Saul—the king, the man who should by all accounts face Goliath—in his tent. There Saul offers his young weapons carrier the royal armor: "Saul clothed David in his own garment; he placed a bronze helmet on his head and fastened a breastplate on him" (v. 38).[72] Is Saul's the only armor available that he must give "his own garment" (מדיו) to David, or is there an unspoken expectation that the appearance of a man wearing the royal armor will lead the Israelites to believe that Saul is taking up the Philistine challenge (as indeed he should be)? There is no way to decide this question, since David rejects the armor: "I cannot walk in these, for I am not used to them" (v. 39)—again, he is an inexperienced youth. Instead, he takes a stick, a few smooth stones, and a slingshot and goes off to battle unprotected and—by Homeric standards—quite doomed. This scene, which portrays David as unarmored by choice, not for want of armor, alludes to and ultimately undermines a similar scene in the *Iliad* that involves a similar exchange between Patroclus and Achilles. Achilles is in his tent, boycotting the battle. Patroclus, Achilles' charioteer, enters the tent and curses Achilles' stubbornness for refusing to enter the battle. Knowing Achilles will not budge, Patroclus requests his commander's armor, "so the Trojans might take me for you, Achilles, yes, hold off from attack, and Achaea's fighting sons get second wind . . ." (*Iliad* 16.45-7). Achilles assents and urges Patroclus: "Quick, strap on my gear—I'll rouse the troops" (*Iliad* 16.155). Patroclus dons the armor and rushes into battle, but after some initial success he is slain. Both the similarities and ultimate difference

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[70] David is even berated by his older brother, Eliav (v. 28), just as Paris is berated by Hector. This is a problematic parallel, however, since it is regularly assigned to the B version of the story in which David is a shepherd rather than Saul's weapons' bearer.

[71] Joseph is described as יפה תאר in Gen. xxxix 6. On Davidic parallels to the Joseph story, see Grønbaek, *Aufstieg Davids*, pp. 96-7. Women described as יפת תאר include Rachel (Gen. xxix 17), Abigail (1 Sam. xxv 3), Esther (Esth. ii 7), and the anonymous woman whom the conquering Israelite may desire in Deut. xxi 11.

[72] This is the first and only time we hear Saul associated with these instruments of battle. The discussion of Israelite armor is, like so many parts of the narrative, unusual.

between the scenes are striking. The man who should be out facing the enemy—Saul and Achilles—is instead off in his tent, far from the battle. A lower ranking associate who serves the leader in a military capacity—a weapons bearer, a charioteer—enters the tent and there is a negotiation involving the leader's armor. Here the narratives diverge: Patroclus dons his commander's armor hoping to trick the combatants into thinking Achilles has arrived, while David rejects Saul's armor in favor of the non-Homeric slingshot. The reversal is evident and it undermines the Homeric view: though David is vulnerable by Homeric standards he lives and triumphs, while Patroclus' armor is powerless to prevent the death of its wearer.

The Homeric commitment to armor is evidently shared by Goliath, and articulated most fully in the description of his armor:

> 4. [Goliath's] height was six cubits and a span. 5. He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. 6. And he had greaves of bronze upon his legs, and a sword[73] of bronze slung between his shoulders. 7. And the shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron; and his shield-bearer went before him. (vv. 4-7)

The arming of the hero is a well-known type scene in Homeric epic, and while the narrative voice of 1 Samuel is located on the Israelite side of the divide and cannot "see" Goliath donning his armor, the description is Homeric. The armor itself is Homeric, as the following passage demonstrates:[74]

> First [Patroclus] wrapped his legs with the well-made greaves,
> Fastened behind the heels with silver ankle-clasps,
> Next he strapped the breastplate round his chest . . .
> Then over his shoulder Patroclus slung the sword,
> The fine bronze blade with its silver-studded hilt,
> And then the shield-strap and the sturdy, massive shield
> And over his powerful head he set the well-forged helmet . . .
> And he took two rugged spears . . . (*Iliad* 16.156-167).

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[73] Some translators render כידון 'javelin' but see G. Molin, "What is a *kidon*?," *JSS* 1 (1956), pp. 334-7, who identifies it as a curved sword, a scimitar.

[74] See the discussion of Galling, "Goliath und seine Rüstung," pp. 150-69. For a comparison of the different elements of Goliath's armor to the Homeric, see Brown, *Israel and Hellas*, pp. 163-4.

The greaves, the helmet, the breastplate, the massive shield (Goliath's requiring a shield bearer), the sword slung between the warrior's shoulders—the Homeric panoply is plainly evident.

No less important than the makeup of Goliath's armor, and no less Homeric, is the style of the passage. The detailed discussion of the armor, the material of the helmet and the greaves, the weight of the coat and of the spear's head, all these are foreign to the narrative style of the Bible. As R. Alter has noted, the "'Homeric' enumeration of armor and weapons is quite untypical of the Hebrew Bible."[75] Indeed, the Homeric representation of Goliath thematizes the key distinction made half a century ago by E. Auerbach, whose brilliant essay "Odysseus' Scar" characterizes the Bible and Homeric epic as fundamentally different modes of literary representation. Homer, argues Auerbach, gives the object under discussion his full attention, while the Bible relegates many key details to the background. "Homer knows . . . no background . . . only foreground, only a uniformly illuminated, uniformly objective present,"[76] while the Hebrew Bible is "fraught with background."[77] This contrast is nowhere more evident than in the field of battle—the vivid and detailed battle scenes of the Iliad, on the one hand, and the "thin" reports of battle in the Bible—including David's wars with the Philistines. 1 Sam. xix 8 is typical: "And there was war again, and David went out and fought with the Philistines, and made a great slaughter among them, so that they fled before him." The same narrative parsimony is found in the near parallel combat between Elhanan and Goliath: "And there was again war with the Philistines at Gob; and Elhanan the son of Ja'ir or'egim, the Bethlehemite, slew Goliath the Gittite; the shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam" (2 Sam. xxi 19). There is, then, nothing about David's fighting Philistines or the slaying of a Philistine named Goliath as such that necessitates a break with the biblical narrative style, yet the break occurs; the minute details of Goliath's armor are exceptional. In Auerbach's terms, the passage is an anomalous foreground narrative within the biblical mode of representation that is usually "fraught with background." Why this shift to "Homeric" style?

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[75] R. Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York and London, 1999), p. 101.

[76] E. Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Garden City, New York, 1953), p. 5.

[77] Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 10.

To answer this question it is necessary to consider the national—and even nationalist—function of this passage, and of the Deuteronomistic History as a whole. Several political theorists have pointed to distinctly modern aspects of nationalism, so the term must be used with care.[78] Still, other theorists emphasize the utility of the term for understanding certain pre-modern societies and argue that modern nationalism has its roots in ethnic identity.[79] And it is clear that on some level ancient Israel can rightly be called a nation and that, like modern nations, its national identity is forged (at least in part) by its national literature, the Bible.[80] The Deuteronomistic History, which narrates Israel's transformation from a loose confederation of tribes to a single nation under David, is the national "epic" of ancient Israel, and the context of its redaction is significant. Broadly, DtrH is redacted as the eastern Mediterranean experiences a movement—precipitated in part by the spread of Homeric epic—that eventually leads to a (pan-Hellenic) Greek national identity. Closer to home, there is a local Philistine "national awakening" that involves an influx of Greek material culture and a return (or, more likely, a shift understood as a return) to Greek names and Greek identity.[81]

Against this backdrop, the battle of David and Goliath can be seen

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[78] See E. J. Hobsbawn, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge and New York, 1990); E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford and New York, 1983).

[79] See A. Smith, *The Ethnic Origin of Nations* (Oxford and New York, 1987); A. Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge and New York, 1997).

[80] The role of national literature in the formation of modern national consciousness is discussed in B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991). On the Bible as a national text, see I. Pardes, *The Biography of Ancient Israel: National Narratives in the Bible* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2000); S. D. E. Weeks, "Biblical Literature and the Emergence of Ancient Jewish Nationalism," *BI* 10 (2002), pp. 144-57. A number of studies deal with similar issues, while employing the language of ethnic identity: E. T. Mullen, Jr., *Narrative History and Ethnic Boundaries: The Deuteronomistic Historian and the Creation of Israelite National Identity* (SBLSS; Atlanta, 1993); *idem, Ethnic Myths and Pentateuchal Foundations: A New Approach to the Formation of the Pentateuch* (SBLSS; Atlanta, 1997); R. C. Heard, *Dynamics of Diselection: Ambiguity in Genesis 12-36 and Ethnic Boundaries in Post-Exilic Judah* (SBLSS; Atlanta: SBL, 2001); and the essays collected in M. G. Brett (ed.), *Ethnicity and the Bible* (Biblical Interpretation Series 19; Leiden and New York, 1996).

[81] The status of the Philistines as national other is emphasized by the reference to their champion as "the Philistine" or "the uncircumcised Philistine." Goliath is "an archtypical 'Philistine'," Alter, *The David Story*, p. 102, and see the LXX's consistent rendering of פלשתי 'Philistine,' as ἀλλόφυλος, 'of another tribe' or 'foreign'.

as a national narrative, the tale of the rise of Israel's greatest king, that engages the national literature of another collective. I Samuel xvii undermines the claims of Greek epic and so affirms the superiority of Israel over Hellas—a national epic forged in polemic dialogue with a competing national narrative.[82] The polemic takes place on two fronts. Explicitly, the narrative content of 1 Samuel xvii subverts the heroic conventions of Greek epic: the great warrior, armed to the teeth, is felled by a beautiful lad with no military experience, no armor and no weapons to speak of. But there is also a subtle polemic against Greek epic style, a polemic that comes to the fore in the stylized, Homeric description of Goliath's armor. By introducing Goliath in proper epic style, the biblical author frames the battle of David and Goliath as a clash between competing national epics and the poetic sensibilities codified in them. For a moment, the Bible adopts Homeric sensibilities and becomes what Auerbach would call a "foreground" narrative. Goliath's ornate and detailed armor becomes a metonymy for the ornate and detailed style of Greek epic, and armor maintains this metonymic capacity throughout the chapter. David's rejection of Saul's armor is a rejection of the military ideals that guide Patroclus, but it is also a rejection of the "heavily armored" Homeric literary ideals. Instead of the armor, David selects smooth rocks and a sling-shot, arming himself with the simpler literary sensibility of Israelite national literature. 1 Samuel xvii arms each champion with different weapons and uses a different literary style to describe these weapons, thus forging a link between the battle of the Israelite and Philistine heroes, on one level, and the national epic style each champions. Auerbach's distinction is thus recognized and thematized by the biblical text itself. And just as David agrees to fight the Philistine champion on the latter's terms, taking part in a μονομαχία that is foreign to the Israelite military tradition, 1 Samuel xvii operates largely in the Homeric literary mode that is foreign to its literary sensibilities. The description of Goliath's armor, the μονομαχία—with its formulaic challenge and fearful response from the opposing camp, the stylized execrations about the fate of the opponents corpse, even the exchange between David and Saul—all these are Homeric. But to no avail. David's victory—the triumph of the light and nimble over the heavy and lumbering—is also the triumph of the lighter prose style over the

[82] This phenomenon is not unknown in modern times.

heavier and more ornate. As the narrative draws to an end, the Homeric trappings fall away and the battle is decided in typical biblical style: David "took out a stone, and slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face on the ground" (v. 49). Goliath's elaborate defenses give way before a smooth stone, and he dies in a simple, pellucid verse of biblical prose.

Abstract

Two interpretive paradigms have been applied to the battle of David and Goliath. One school interprets the battle as historically accurate, and mines it for information on 11th century reality; another views it as a work of fiction or royal propaganda. This article argues for a third view: the battle narrative retrojects the historical reality of 6th century Palestine (when DtrH is redacted), at which time the residents of biblical Philistia are culturally Greek, onto the early tradition of the battle. The characterization of the battle, including Goliath's armor, undermines the Greek epic tradition and, indeed, may be seen as a polemic intertextual engagement of the *Iliad*.