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HE DARED TO FACE A GIANT

Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you. Deuteronomy 32:7, NIV

Long ago, the poetic bard, William Shakespeare wrote, “There’s a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will!” The overview of history confirms what he wrote. The problem, however, is that we often forget our lessons from history, or the mistakes of others and make the same mistakes that our forebears made.

That was true in a Judean village known as Bethlehem. Yes, we know Bethlehem as the place where Jesus was born, but about a 1,000 years before Mary and Joseph left Nazareth and came to Bethlehem, a man whose name was Jesse lived in the hills of Bethlehem. Go to Bethlehem today and you will see dozens of shops all replete with souvenirs targeting the tourist who wants to take home something as a reminder of their visit, but in the days of Jesse, things were much different.

The Philistines, a marauding tribe descended on Israel, and because they had weapons of iron took over the cities on the coast such as Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath. Furthermore, they practiced psychological warfare. A giant of a man who went by the name of Goliath, said to be about nine feet tall, met the army of Israel in the valley of Elah. And, by the way, the valley is still there, very much as it was in the days of David and Goliath. Jesse, who lived in Bethlehem, sent several of his sons to serve with the army of the Hebrews who were constantly insulted and cursed by the giant who seemed to be impervious to any assaults of the Jews.

Here’s the biblical account: “And Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army. And David left the things in charge of the keeper of the baggage and ran to the ranks and went and greeted his brothers. As he talked with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, came up out of the ranks of the Philistines and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him. All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were much afraid. And the men of Israel said, ‘Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel. And the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father’s house free in Israel.’
“And David said to the men who stood by him, ‘What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?’ And the people answered him in the same way, ‘So shall it be done to the man who kills him.’ Now Eliab, his eldest brother, heard when he spoke to the men. And Eliab’s anger was kindled against David, and he said, ‘Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle’” (1 Samuel 17:21-28).

What follows is one of the best-known stories in the Bible--that of David’s confrontation with an implacable giant of a man who by all rights and purposes should have taken out David with one blow. Instead God gave David a great victory!

A final thought. The God of David is yet alive and in the business of delivering His children. The Divinity that shapes our ends can also deliver you today! David trusted God implicitly and so must we if we see deliverances from the giants that taunt us and would destroy us. Trust Him and await His deliverance.

Resource reading: 1 Samuel 17:32-54