**Judaism: Theology and Practices through Primary Sources**

**1 Samuel 17-18**

17 1-3The Philistines drew up their troops for battle. They deployed them at Socoh in Judah, and set up camp between Socoh and Azekah at Ephes Dammim. Saul and the Israelites came together, camped at Oak Valley, and spread out their troops in battle readiness for the Philistines. The Philistines were on one hill, the Israelites on the opposing hill, with the valley between them.

4-7A giant nearly ten feet tall stepped out from the Philistine line into the open, Goliath from Gath. He had a bronze helmet on his head and was dressed in armor—126 pounds of it! He wore bronze shin guards and carried a bronze sword. His spear was like a fence rail—the spear tip alone weighed over fifteen pounds. His shield bearer walked ahead of him.

8-10Goliath stood there and called out to the Israelite troops, “Why bother using your whole army? Am I not Philistine enough for you? And you’re all committed to Saul, aren’t you? So pick your best fighter and pit him against me. If he gets the upper hand and kills me, the Philistines will all become your slaves. But if I get the upper hand and kill him, you’ll all become our slaves and serve us. I challenge the troops of Israel this day. Give me a man. Let us fight it out together!”

11When Saul and his troops heard the Philistine’s challenge, they were terrified and lost all hope.

12-15Enter David. He was the son of Jesse the Ephrathite from Bethlehem in Judah. Jesse, the father of eight sons, was himself too old to join Saul’s army. Jesse’s three oldest sons had followed Saul to war. The names of the three sons who had joined up with Saul were Eliab, the firstborn; next, Abinadab; and third, Shammah. David was the youngest son. While his three oldest brothers went to war with Saul, David went back and forth from attending to Saul to tending his father’s sheep in Bethlehem.

16Each morning and evening for forty days, Goliath took his stand and made his speech.

17-19One day, Jesse told David his son, “Take this sack of cracked wheat and these ten loaves of bread and run them down to your brothers in the camp. And take these ten wedges of cheese to the captain of their division. Check in on your brothers to see whether they are getting along all right, and let me know how they’re doing—Saul and your brothers, and all the Israelites in their war with the Philistines in the Oak Valley.”

20-23David was up at the crack of dawn and, having arranged for someone to tend his flock, took the food and was on his way just as Jesse had directed him. He arrived at the camp just as the army was moving into battle formation, shouting the war cry. Israel and the Philistines moved into position, facing each other, battle-ready. David left his bundles of food in the care of a sentry, ran to the troops who were deployed, and greeted his brothers. While they were talking together, the Philistine champion, Goliath of Gath, stepped out from the front lines of the Philistines, and gave his usual challenge. David heard him.

24-25The Israelites, to a man, fell back the moment they saw the giant—totally frightened. The talk among the troops was, “Have you ever seen anything like this, this man openly and defiantly challenging Israel? The man who kills the giant will have it made. The king will give him a huge reward, offer his daughter as a bride, and give his entire family a free ride.”

26David, who was talking to the men standing around him, asked, “What’s in it for the man who kills that Philistine and gets rid of this ugly blot on Israel’s honor? Who does he think he is, anyway, this uncircumcised Philistine, taunting the armies of God-Alive?”

27They told him what everyone was saying about what the king would do for the man who killed the Philistine.

28Eliab, his older brother, heard David fraternizing with the men and lost his temper: “What are you doing here! Why aren’t you minding your own business, tending that scrawny flock of sheep? I know what you’re up to. You’ve come down here to see the sights, hoping for a ringside seat at a bloody battle!”

29-30“What is it with you?” replied David. “All I did was ask a question.” Ignoring his brother, he turned to someone else, asked the same question, and got the same answer as before.

31The things David was saying were picked up and reported to Saul. Saul sent for him.

32“Master,” said David, “don’t give up hope. I’m ready to go and fight this Philistine.”

33Saul answered David, “You can’t go and fight this Philistine. You’re too young and inexperienced—and he’s been at this fighting business since before you were born.”

34-37David said, “I’ve been a shepherd, tending sheep for my father. Whenever a lion or bear came and took a lamb from the flock, I’d go after it, knock it down, and rescue the lamb. If it turned on me, I’d grab it by the throat, wring its neck, and kill it. Lion or bear, it made no difference—I killed it. And I’ll do the same to this Philistine pig who is taunting the troops of God-Alive. God, who delivered me from the teeth of the lion and the claws of the bear, will deliver me from this Philistine.”

Saul said, “Go. And God help you!”

38-39Then Saul outfitted David as a soldier in armor. He put his bronze helmet on his head and belted his sword on him over the armor. David tried to walk but he could hardly budge.

David told Saul, “I can’t even move with all this stuff on me. I’m not used to this.” And he took it all off.

40Then David took his shepherd’s staff, selected five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in the pocket of his shepherd’s pack, and with his sling in his hand approached Goliath.

41-42As the Philistine paced back and forth, his shield bearer in front of him, he noticed David. He took one look down on him and sneered—a mere youngster, apple-cheeked and peach-fuzzed.

43The Philistine ridiculed David. “Am I a dog that you come after me with a stick?” And he cursed him by his gods.

44“Come on,” said the Philistine. “I’ll make roadkill of you for the buzzards. I’ll turn you into a tasty morsel for the field mice.”

45-47David answered, “You come at me with sword and spear and battle-ax. I come at you in the name of God-of-the-Angel-Armies, the God of Israel’s troops, whom you curse and mock. This very day God is handing you over to me. I’m about to kill you, cut off your head, and serve up your body and the bodies of your Philistine buddies to the crows and coyotes. The whole earth will know that there’s an extraordinary God in Israel. And everyone gathered here will learn that God doesn’t save by means of sword or spear. The battle belongs to God—he’s handing you to us on a platter!”

48-49That roused the Philistine, and he started toward David. David took off from the front line, running toward the Philistine. David reached into his pocket for a stone, slung it, and hit the Philistine hard in the forehead, embedding the stone deeply. The Philistine crashed, facedown in the dirt.

50That’s how David beat the Philistine—with a sling and a stone. He hit him and killed him. No sword for David!

51Then David ran up to the Philistine and stood over him, pulled the giant’s sword from its sheath, and finished the job by cutting off his head. When the Philistines saw that their great champion was dead, they scattered, running for their lives.

52-54The men of Israel and Judah were up on their feet, shouting! They chased the Philistines all the way to the outskirts of Gath and the gates of Ekron. Wounded Philistines were strewn along the Shaaraim road all the way to Gath and Ekron. After chasing the Philistines, the Israelites came back and looted their camp. David took the Philistine’s head and brought it to Jerusalem. But the giant’s weapons he placed in his own tent.

55When Saul saw David go out to meet the Philistine, he said to Abner, commander of the army, “Tell me about this young man’s family.”

Abner said, “For the life of me, O King, I don’t know.”

56The king said, “Well, find out the lineage of this raw youth.”

57As soon as David came back from killing the Philistine, Abner brought him, the Philistine’s head still in his hand, straight to Saul.

58Saul asked him, “Young man, whose son are you?”

“I’m the son of your servant Jesse,” said David, “the one who lives in Bethlehem.”

18 By the time David had finished reporting to Saul, Jonathan was deeply impressed with David—an immediate bond was forged between them. He became totally committed to David. From that point on he would be David’s number-one advocate and friend.

2Saul received David into his own household that day, no more to return to the home of his father.

3-4Jonathan, out of his deep love for David, made a covenant with him. He formalized it with solemn gifts: his own royal robe and weapons—armor, sword, bow, and belt.

5Whatever Saul gave David to do, he did it—and did it well. So well that Saul put him in charge of his military operations. Everybody, both the people in general and Saul’s servants, approved of and admired David’s leadership.

6-9As they returned home, after David had killed the Philistine, the women poured out of all the villages of Israel singing and dancing, welcoming King Saul with tambourines, festive songs, and lutes. In playful frolic the women sang,

Saul kills by the thousand,  
David by the ten thousand!

This made Saul angry—very angry. He took it as a personal insult. He said, “They credit David with ‘ten thousands’ and me with only ‘thousands.’ Before you know it they’ll be giving him the kingdom!” From that moment on, Saul kept his eye on David.

10-11The next day an ugly mood was sent by God to afflict Saul, who became quite beside himself, raving. David played his harp, as he usually did at such times. Saul had a spear in his hand. Suddenly Saul threw the spear, thinking, “I’ll nail David to the wall.” David ducked, and the spear missed. This happened twice.

12-16Now Saul feared David. It was clear that God was with David and had left Saul. So, Saul got David out of his sight by making him an officer in the army. David was in combat frequently. Everything David did turned out well. Yes, God was with him. As Saul saw David becoming more successful, he himself grew more fearful. He could see the handwriting on the wall. But everyone else in Israel and Judah loved David. They loved watching him in action.

17One day Saul said to David, “Here is Merab, my eldest daughter. I want to give her to you as your wife. Be brave and bold for my sake. Fight God’s battles!” But all the time Saul was thinking, “The Philistines will kill him for me. I won’t have to lift a hand against him.”

18David, embarrassed, answered, “Do you really mean that? I’m from a family of nobodies! I can’t be son-in-law to the king.”

19The wedding day was set, but as the time neared for Merab and David to be married, Saul reneged and married his daughter off to Adriel the Meholathite.

20-21Meanwhile, Saul’s daughter Michal was in love with David. When Saul was told of this, he rubbed his hands in anticipation. “Ah, a second chance. I’ll use Michal as bait to get David out where the Philistines will make short work of him.” So again he said to David, “You’re going to be my son-in-law.”

22Saul ordered his servants, “Get David off by himself and tell him, ‘The king is very taken with you, and everyone at court loves you. Go ahead, become the king’s son-in-law!’”

23The king’s servants told all this to David, but David held back. “What are you thinking of? I can’t do that. I’m a nobody; I have nothing to offer.”

24-25When the servants reported David’s response to Saul, he told them to tell David this: “The king isn’t expecting any money from you; only this: Go kill a hundred Philistines and bring evidence of your vengeance on the king’s behalf. Avenge the king on his enemies.” (Saul expected David to be killed in action.)

26-27On receiving this message, David was pleased. There was something he could do for the king that would qualify him to be his son-in-law! He lost no time but went right out, he and his men, killed the hundred Philistines, brought their evidence back in a sack, and counted it out before the king—mission completed! Saul gave Michal his daughter to David in marriage.

28-29As Saul more and more realized that God was with David, and how much his own daughter, Michal, loved him, his fear of David increased and settled into hate. Saul hated David.

30Whenever the Philistine warlords came out to battle, David was there to meet them—and beat them, upstaging Saul’s men. David’s name was on everyone’s lips.