

How Many Times Did King David Kill Goliath?

Comparing Translations ~ Ronald J. Gordon

www.cob-net.org/compare_bibles.htm

There are difficult passages in translations of the Bible. Some offer enlightenment while others seem to perpetuate confusion. One example may be found in 1 Samuel 17:50-51a, where the reader might be led to believe that king David **killed** the Philistine warrior Goliath **twice**. For example, the New American Standard Bible reads:

50 Thus David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and he struck the Philistine and **killed him**; but there was no sword in David's hand.

51 Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and **killed him**, and cut off his head with it.

So, how many times did David kill Goliath? Is it possible for a person to die more than one time? Does the word kill mean something other than fully terminate or extinguish life?

Old Testament seminary professor Robert Chisholm offers a very convincing explanation in his book: *Do Historical Matters Matter to Faith? A Critical Appraisal of Modern and Postmodern Approaches to Scripture*.

“The alleged ‘double killing’ of the Philistine in 17:50-51 can be explained reasonably when one takes a closer look at the Hebrew text. In verse 50 a *hiphil* form of מוּת, ‘die,’ is collocated with ‘he struck down,’ while in verse 51 a *poel* form of מוּת is used to describe how David killed the Philistine with the sword. The collocation of verbs in verse 50 has the nuance ‘dealt a mortal blow.’ The *poel* of מוּת (v. 51) is used in eight other passages in the Old Testament. In three poetic texts, it appears to mean, simply, ‘kill, put to death’ (Ps. 34:21; 109:16; Jer. 20:17). But in a distinct narrative (all in Judges-Samuel) it appears to have a specialized shade of meaning, referring to finishing off someone who is already mortally wounded (Judg. 9:54; 1 Sam. 14:13; 2 Sam. 1:9-10, 16).

Abimelech's statement (Judg. 9:54) is particularly instructive. He asked the armor bearer to kill him (*poel*) because otherwise people would say that a woman killed him (the verb is גָּרַר, ‘kill’). So, who killed Abimelech? Two answers are possible and both are correct. The woman because she delivered a mortal blow that made death inevitable, and the armor bearer, in the technical sense, he delivered the death blow (*poel*). How did David kill the Philistine? Once again, two answers are possible and both are correct. With the sling and stone, David delivered a mortal blow to the head which made death imminent, and with the Philistine's sword, he then delivered the actual deathblow – in a technical sense (*poel*).”

In other words, David hit Goliath with the stone which gravely wounded him and from which he would eventually have died, yet, he was still breathing. Goliath was still alive! David did not possess a weapon to finish the job, so he took the Philistine's own sword and finished the task by cutting off his head. Thus, Goliath officially died only once – by his own sword.

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Observe how the following translations present entirely different accounts: 1) *wounded by a stone – but killed with a sword*, 2) *killed by the stone only – without a sword*, 3) *killed twice, first by a stone and second by a sword*.

WOUNDED BY A STONE - KILLED WITH A SWORD

Living Bible (TLB)

50 So David *conquered* the Philistine giant with a sling and a stone.

51 Since he had no sword, he ran over and pulled Goliath's sword from its sheath and **killed** him with it, and then cut off his head.

New Living Translation (NLT)

50 So David *triumphed* over the Philistine with only a sling and a stone, for he had no sword.

51 Then David ran over and pulled Goliath's sword from its sheath. David used it to **kill** him and cut off his head.

KILLED BY THE STONE ONLY - WITHOUT A SWORD

Contemporary English Version (CEV)

50 David defeated Goliath with a sling and a rock. He **killed** him without even using a sword.

51 David ran over and pulled out Goliath's sword. Then he used it to cut off Goliath's head.

Easy-To-Read Version (ERV)

50 So David defeated the Philistine with only a sling and one stone! He hit the Philistine and **killed** him. David didn't have a sword,

51 so he ran and stood beside the Philistine. Then David took Goliath's own sword out of its sheath and used it to cut off his head.

New International Reader's Version (NIRV)

50 So David won the fight against Goliath with a sling and a stone. He struck down the Philistine and **killed** him. He did it without even using a sword.

51 David ran and stood over him. He picked up Goliath's sword and cut off his head with it.

The Message (MSG)

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

51 Then 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.

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The Voice (VOICE)

50 That was how David defeated the Philistine with only a sling and a single stone, striking him down, **ending his life** without a sword in his hand.

51 Then David ran to the Philistine and stood over his lifeless body. He pulled the man's sword from its scabbard and finished him by cutting off his head.

KILLED TWICE, BY A STONE AND ALSO BY A SWORD

Amplified Bible (AMP)

50 So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and he struck down the Philistine and **killed** him; but there was no sword in David's hand.

51 So he ran and stood over the Philistine, grasped his sword and drew it out of its sheath and **killed** him, and cut off his head with it.

Christian Standard Bible (CSB)

50 David defeated the Philistine with a sling and a stone. David overpowered the Philistine and **killed** him without having a sword.

51 David ran and stood over him. He grabbed the Philistine's sword, pulled it from its sheath, and used it to **kill** him. Then he cut off his head.

Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)

50 Thus David defeated the P'lishti with a sling and a stone, striking the P'lishti and **killing** him; but David had no sword in his hand.

51 Then David ran and stood over the P'lishti, took his sword, drew it out of its sheath, and finished **killing** him, cutting off his head with it.

English Standard Version (ESV)

50 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and **killed** him. There was no sword in the hand of David.

51 Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and **killed** him and cut off his head with it.

King James Version (KJV)

50 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and **slew** him; but there was no sword in the hand of David.

51 Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and **slew** him, and cut off his head therewith.

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New American Standard Bible (NASB)

50 Thus David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and he struck the Philistine and **killed** him; but there was no sword in David's hand.

51 Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and **killed** him, and cut off his head with it.

New Century Version (NCV)

50 So David defeated the Philistine with only a sling and a stone. He hit him and **killed** him. He did not even have a sword in his hand.

51 Then David ran and stood beside him. He took Goliath's sword out of its holder and **killed** him by cutting off his head.

New English Translation (NET BIBLE)

50 David prevailed over the Philistine with just the sling and the stone. He struck down the Philistine and **killed** him. David did not even have a sword in his hand.

51 David ran and stood over the Philistine. He grabbed Goliath's sword, drew it from its sheath, **killed** him, and cut off his head with it.

New International Version (NIV)

50 So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and **killed** him.

51 David ran and stood over him. He took hold of the Philistine's sword and drew it from the sheath. After he **killed** him, he cut off his head with the sword.

New King James Version (NKJV)

50 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and struck the Philistine and **killed** him. But there was no sword in the hand of David.

51 Therefore David ran and stood over the Philistine, took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and **killed** him, and cut off his head with it.

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

50 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, striking down the Philistine and **killing** him; there was no sword in David's hand.

51 Then David ran and stood over the Philistine; he grasped his sword, drew it out of its sheath, and **killed** him; then he cut off his head with it.