

EPIC NARRATIVES

Exodus 14: 15-18, 21-23, 26-29 Parting of the Red Sea

5 When it was reported to the king of Egypt that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his servants had a change of heart about the people. "What in the world have we done!" they said. "We have released Israel from our service!" 6 So Pharaoh harnessed his chariots and took his army with him. 7 He took six hundred select chariots and all the chariots of Egypt, with officers* on all of them. 8 The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, so that he pursued the Israelites while they were going out in triumph. 9 The Egyptians pursued them—all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, his horsemen,* and his army—and caught up with them as they lay encamped by the sea, at Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.

Crossing the Red Sea. 10 Now Pharaoh was near when the Israelites looked up and saw that the Egyptians had set out after them. Greatly frightened, the Israelites cried out to the LORD. 11 To Moses they said, "Were there no burial places in Egypt that you brought us to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? 12 Did we not tell you this in Egypt, when we said, 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? Far better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness." 13 But Moses answered the people, "Do not fear! Stand your ground and see the victory the LORD will win for you today. For these Egyptians whom you see today you will never see again. 14 The LORD will fight for you; you have only to keep still." 15 Then the LORD said to Moses: Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to set out. 16 And you, lift up your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea, and split it in two, that the Israelites may pass through the sea on dry land. 17 But I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them, and I will receive glory through Pharaoh and all his army, his chariots and his horsemen. 18 The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD, when I receive glory through Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen. Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD drove back the sea with a strong east wind all night long and turned the sea into dry ground. The waters were split, 22 so that the Israelites entered into the midst of the sea on dry land, with the water as a wall to their right and to their left. 23 The Egyptians followed in pursuit after them—all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and horsemen—into the midst of the sea. 26 Then the LORD spoke to Moses: Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may flow back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and their horsemen. 27 So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea returned to its normal flow. The Egyptians were fleeing head on toward it when the LORD cast the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. 28 As the water flowed back, it covered the chariots and the horsemen. Of all Pharaoh's army which had followed the Israelites into the sea, not even one escaped. 29 But the Israelites had walked on dry land through the midst of the sea, with the water as a wall to their right and to their left.

Exodus 16:1-15 Bread from Heaven

The Wilderness of Sin.

1 Having set out from Elim, the whole Israelite community came into the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month* after their departure from the land of Egypt. 2 Here in the wilderness the whole Israelite community grumbled against

Moses and Aaron.³ The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died at the LORD's hand in the land of Egypt, as we sat by our kettles of meat and ate our fill of bread! But you have led us into this wilderness to make this whole assembly die of famine!"

4 Then the LORD said to Moses: I am going to rain down bread from heaven* for you. Each day the people are to go out and gather their daily portion; thus will I test them, to see whether they follow my instructions or not. 5 On the sixth day, however, when they prepare what they bring in, let it be twice as much as they gather on the other days.

Acts 9:1-18

Saul's Conversion.

1* Now Saul, still breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord,^a went to the high priest² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, that, if he should find any men or women who belonged to the Way,^{*} he might bring them back to Jerusalem in chains.³ On his journey, as he was nearing Damascus, a light from the sky suddenly flashed around him.⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"⁵ He said, "Who are you, sir?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."⁶ Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do."⁷ The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, for they heard the voice but could see no one.⁸ Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing;^{*} so they led him by the hand and brought him to Damascus.⁹ For three days he was unable to see, and he neither ate nor drank.

Saul's Baptism. ¹⁰ There was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord."¹¹ The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight and ask at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is there praying ¹² and [in a vision] he has seen a man named Ananias come in and lay [his] hands on him, that he may regain his sight."¹³ But Ananias replied, "Lord, I have heard from many sources about this man, what evil things he has done to your holy ones* in Jerusalem.¹⁴ And here he has authority from the chief priests to imprison all who call upon your name."¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, "Go, for this man is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and Israelites, ¹⁶ and I will show him what he will have to suffer for my name."¹⁷

So Ananias went and entered the house; laying his hands on him, he said, "Saul, my brother, the Lord has sent me, Jesus who appeared to you on the way by which you came, that you may regain your sight and be filled with the holy Spirit."¹⁸ Immediately things like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. He got up and was baptized,

1 Samuel 17

David and Goliath

The Challenge of Goliath. 1 The Philistines rallied their forces for battle at Socoh in Judah and camped between Socoh and Azekah at Ephes-dammim. 2 Saul and the Israelites rallied and camped in the valley of the Elah, drawing up their battle line to meet the Philistines. 3 The Philistines were stationed on one hill and the Israelites on an opposite hill, with a valley between them. 4 A champion named Goliath of Gath came out from the Philistine camp; he was six cubits and a span* tall. 5 He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a bronze breastplate of scale armor weighing five thousand shekels, 6 bronze greaves, and had a bronze scimitar slung from his shoulders. 7 The shaft of his javelin was like a weaver's beam, and its iron head weighed six hundred shekels.* His shield-bearer went ahead of him. 8 He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel: "Why come out in battle formation? I am a Philistine, and you are Saul's servants. Choose one of your men, and have him come down to me. 9 If he beats me in combat and kills me, we will be your vassals; but if I beat him and kill him, you shall be our vassals and serve us." 10 The Philistine continued: "I defy the ranks of Israel today. Give me a man and let us fight together." 11 When Saul and all Israel heard this challenge of the Philistine, they were stunned and terrified. David Comes to the Camp.* 12 David was the son of an Ephrathite named Jesse from Bethlehem in Judah who had eight sons. In the days of Saul Jesse was old and well on in years. 13 The three oldest sons of Jesse had followed Saul to war; the names of these three sons who had gone off to war were Eliab the firstborn; Abinadab the second; and Shammah the third. 14 David was the youngest. While the three oldest had joined Saul, 15 David would come and go from Saul's presence to tend his father's sheep at Bethlehem.c 16 Meanwhile the Philistine came forward and took his stand morning and evening for forty days. 17 Now Jesse said to his son David: "Take this ephah of roasted grain and these ten loaves for your brothers, and bring them quickly to your brothers in the camp. 18 Also take these ten cheeses for the field officer. Greet your brothers and bring home some token from them. 19 Saul and your brothers, together with all Israel, are at war with the Philistines in the valley of the Elah." 20 Early the next morning, having left the flock with a shepherd, David packed up and set out, as Jesse had commanded him. He reached the barricade of the camp just as the army, on their way to the battleground, were shouting their battle cry. 21 The Israelites and the Philistines drew up opposite each other in battle array. 22 David entrusted what he had brought to the keeper of the baggage and hastened to the battle line, where he greeted his brothers. 23 While he was talking with them, the Philistine champion, by name Goliath of Gath, came up from the ranks of the Philistines and spoke as before, and David listened. 24 When the Israelites saw the man, they all retreated before him, terrified. 25 The Israelites had been saying: "Do you see this man coming up? He comes up to insult Israel. The king will make whoever kills him a very wealthy man. He will give his daughter to him and declare his father's family exempt from taxes in Israel." 26 David now said to the men standing near him: "How will the man who kills this Philistine and frees Israel from disgrace be rewarded? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should insult the armies of the living God?" 27 They repeated the same words to him and said, "That is how the man who kills him will be rewarded." 28 When Eliab, his oldest brother, heard him speaking with the men, he grew angry with David and said: "Why did you come down? With whom have you left those sheep in the wilderness? I know your arrogance and dishonest heart. You came down to enjoy the

battle!" 29 David protested, "What have I done now? I was only talking." 30 He turned from him to another and asked the same question; and everyone gave him the same answer as before. 31 The words that David had spoken were overheard and reported to Saul, who sent for him. David Challenges Goliath.32 Then David spoke to Saul: "My lord should not lose heart. Let your servant go and fight this Philistine." 33 But Saul answered David, "You cannot go up against this Philistine and fight with him, for you are only a youth, while he has been a warrior from his youth." 34 Then David told Saul: "Your servant used to tend his father's sheep, and whenever a lion or bear came to carry off a sheep from the flock, 35 I would chase after it, attack it, and snatch the prey from its mouth. If it attacked me, I would seize it by the throat, strike it, and kill it. 36 Your servant has killed both a lion and a bear. This uncircumcised Philistine will be as one of them, because he has insulted the armies of the living God." 37 David continued: "The same LORD who delivered me from the claws of the lion and the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." Saul answered David, "Go! the LORD will be with you." Preparation for the Encounter. 38 Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic, putting a bronze helmet on his head and arming him with a coat of mail. 39 David also fastened Saul's sword over the tunic. He walked with difficulty, however, since he had never worn armor before. He said to Saul, "I cannot go in these, because I am not used to them." So he took them off. 40 Then, staff in hand, David selected five smooth stones from the wadi and put them in the pocket of his shepherd's bag. With his sling in hand, he approached the Philistine. David's Victory. 41 With his shield-bearer marching before him, the Philistine advanced closer and closer to David. 42 When he sized David up and saw that he was youthful, ruddy, and handsome in appearance, he began to deride him. 43 He said to David, "Am I a dog that you come against me with a staff?" Then the Philistine cursed David by his gods 44 and said to him, "Come here to me, and I will feed your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field." 45 David answered him: "You come against me with sword and spear and scimitar, but I come against you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel whom you have insulted. 46 Today the LORD shall deliver you into my hand; I will strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will feed your dead body and the dead bodies of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field; thus the whole land shall learn that Israel has a God. 47 All this multitude, too, shall learn that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves. For the battle belongs to the LORD, who shall deliver you into our hands." 48 The Philistine then moved to meet David at close quarters, while David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. 49 David put his hand into the bag and took out a stone, hurled it with the sling, and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone embedded itself in his brow, and he fell on his face to the ground. 50 Thus David triumphed over the Philistine with sling and stone; he struck the Philistine dead, and did it without a sword in his hand. 51 Then David ran and stood over him; with the Philistine's own sword which he drew from its sheath he killed him, and cut off his head. Flight of the Philistines. When the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they fled. 52 Then the men of Israel and Judah sprang up with a battle cry and pursued them to the approaches of Gath and to the gates of Ekron, and Philistines fell wounded along the road from Shaaraim as far as Gath and Ekron.53 When they returned from their pursuit of the Philistines, the Israelites looted their camp.54 David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem; but he kept Goliath's armor in his own tent.