Question:
In 1 Samuel 17:49, we read that David killed Goliath, but in 2 Samuel 21:19, the Bible mentions another man named Elhanan who killed Goliath. So, who actually killed Goliath—David or Elhanan?

Answer:

Let’s first look closely at the two passages:

> *1 Samuel 17:49-50 (ESV):*
> “And David put his hand in his bag and 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 to the ground. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone and struck the Philistine and killed him, but David had no sword in his hand.”

Here, it is clear that David, as a young shepherd boy, defeated and killed Goliath, the giant Philistine warrior, with just a sling

and a stone. This event marks a pivotal moment in Israel's history, highlighting God's power working through a seemingly insignificant person to defeat a formidable enemy (1 Sam 17:45-47).

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> *2 Samuel 21:19 (ESV):*
> "There was again war with the Philistines at Gob, and Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim, the Bethlehemite, struck down Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam."

This verse tells us that Elhanan, not David, killed a man named Goliath from Gath, described as a giant whose spear shaft was very large. At first glance, this appears to contradict the earlier account.

How do we reconcile this?

1. Goliath was a title, not a unique name:
   The name "Goliath" likely referred to a class or title of Philistine

giants or warriors rather than a single individual. This is similar to how “Pharaoh” referred to successive Egyptian kings. So, David’s Goliath and Elhanan’s Goliath were different people.

2. Different battles, different contexts:
   The event of David killing Goliath occurred earlier in Israel’s history (before David became king), while Elhanan’s feat took place later, during ongoing wars with the Philistines. These were distinct confrontations involving different enemies.

3. Theological significance:
   David’s victory over Goliath is a key theological moment demonstrating God’s sovereignty and the triumph of faith over brute strength. It prefigures Christ’s ultimate victory over evil by the power of God working through humility and obedience (1 Corinthians 1:27-29).

Meanwhile, Elhanan’s victory highlights that God raised many warriors to defend Israel, not only David. The Bible also speaks of other giants and warriors who opposed Israel (e.g., 2 Samuel

21:20-22), emphasizing the ongoing spiritual and physical battles God’s people faced.

Summary:

- David killed the famous Goliath of 1 Samuel 17 — the giant who taunted Israel and was defeated by faith in God.
- Elhanan killed a different Goliath from Gath as recorded in 2 Samuel 21:19.
- The Bible records multiple giants (descendants of the Rephaim) who fought Israel; the name “Goliath” was likely a common name or title among them.
- Both stories affirm God’s power working through His chosen warriors to deliver His people.

Further Reflection:

This teaches us that God raises many “Davids”—heroes of faith who overcome the “giants” in their lives by trusting in God’s strength rather than their own. It’s also a reminder that Scripture can contain multiple layers and accounts that require careful study and understanding of historical and cultural context.

If you’re interested, I can also share about the 37 warriors of David who defeated giants and how their stories reveal God’s faithfulness and power in Israel’s history.

May the Lord bless you richly.

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