Stories from the Qur'an
Series 21

The Small Company

The Story of Saul, Goliath and Prophet David According to the Qur'an and Authentic Hadith



Hj Che Alim Hj Che Haron
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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

STORIES FROM THE QUR'AN

SERIES 21

THE SMALL COMPANY

The Story of Saul, Goliath and Prophet David According to the Qur'an and Authentic Hadith

وَلَمَّا بَرَزُوا۟ لِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِۦ قَالُوا۟ رَبَّنَآ أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَٱنصُرْنَا عَلَى ٱلْقَوْمِ ٱلْكَٰفِرِينَ

“And when they went forth to [face] Goliath and his soldiers, they said, "Our Lord, pour upon us patience and plant firmly our feet and give us victory over the disbelieving people."”

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:250

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, who gives the small company victory over the large company by His permission, who chooses leaders for their knowledge and strength rather than their wealth, and who is always with the patient. Blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, whose Companions at Badr were as many as the companions of Saul, and upon his family and his Companions.

This eBook is specially dedicated to my beloved wife,

ZAHARAH MOHD LATIF;

my dear children,

MUHAMMAD HAFIZ, NOOR HAZWANI, ABDUL HAKIM, NOOR HIDAYAH, NOR AQILA and **NOR ATIQAH**;

and my sons- and daughters-in-law,

FAZILAH, MALEK, HANIN, FAIRIZAL and **FIRWAN**.

May Allah pour patience upon us, plant our feet firmly, and make us among the small company that passes His tests. May this knowledge be ‘ilmun yuntafa‘u bih, knowledge that brings benefit.

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ABOUT THE COVER OF THIS EBOOK

The cover of this eBook does not depict any human being. It shows the **scenery** of **a clear river** flowing through a broad valley at dawn, with **a plain stretching out on the far bank** and hills in the distance.

The river is a picture of the test mentioned in the Qur'an: ***"Indeed, Allah will be testing you with a river"*** (2:249). The plain beyond it recalls that only ***"a [very] few of them"*** crossed with Saul to face Goliath.

The cover does not depict Saul, David or Goliath, nor the chest. The **dark blue band** at the bottom, framed by **fine gold lines**, is where the author's name appears.

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Colour guide: green box = verses of the Qur'an; gold box = Hadith; brown box = archaeological note; blue table = comparison. Underlined blue narrator names can be clicked to open the narrator's page on sunnah.com.

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THE SMALL COMPANY

In Part 7 of the story of Prophet Moses عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ (Series 20), the Children of Israel refused to enter the Holy Land and wandered for forty years. This series takes us several generations later, ***"after [the time of] Moses"***. The Children of Israel had now been defeated and driven from their homes — and they themselves asked to fight.

This story contains ***four tests*** that sift a large army until only ***a small company*** remains. And from that small company emerges a young man who would later become king and prophet: ***David*** عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ (Dawud).

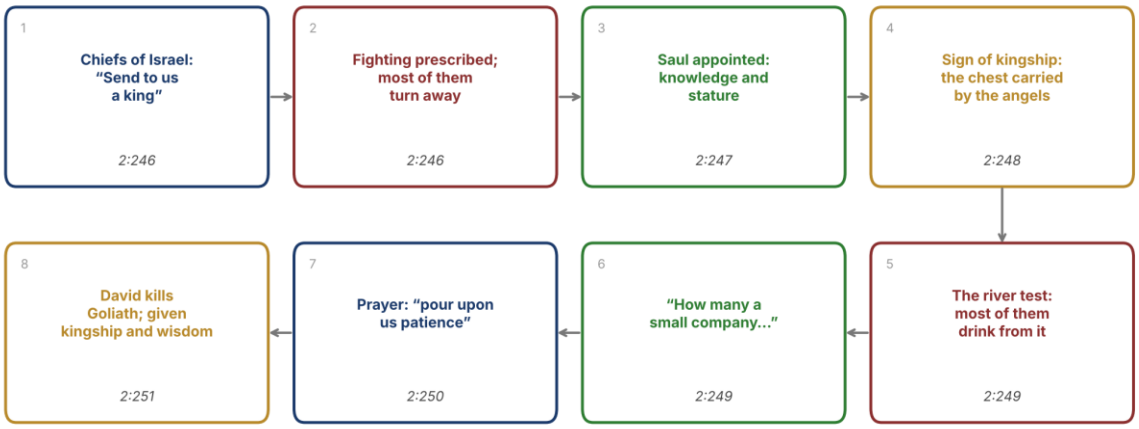


Figure 1: The flow of the story of Saul and Goliath — from the request for a king to David killing Goliath.

Figure 1 shows eight main events. The whole story is contained in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:246–252). The Qur'an names the king ***Talut*** and his enemy ***Jalut***; Sahih International renders them as Saul and Goliath.

Note: The translation of the Qur'anic verses in this eBook is Sahih International. The translations of the Hadith are our own, from the Arabic text. The grade of each Hadith is stated in its Hadith box, with a link to sunnah.com.

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"SEND TO US A KING"

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:246

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى ٱلْمَلَإِ مِنۢ بَنِىٓ إِسْرَٰٓءِيلَ مِنۢ بَعْدِ مُوسَىٰٓ إِذْ قَالُوا۟ لِنَبِىٍّ لَّهُمُ ٱبْعَثْ لَنَا
مَلِكًا نُّقَٰتِلْ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ ۖ قَالَ هَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِن كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ ٱلْقِتَالُ أَلَّا
تُقَٰتِلُوا۟ ۖ قَالُوا۟ وَمَا لَنَآ أَلَّا نُقَٰتِلَ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ وَقَدْ أُخْرِجْنَا مِن دِيَٰرِنَا وَأَبْنَآئِنَا ۖ
فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ ٱلْقِتَالُ تَوَلَّوْا۟ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْهُمْ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ عَلِيمٌۢ بِٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ ﴿٢٤٦﴾

Have you not considered the assembly of the Children of Israel after [the time of] Moses when they said to a prophet of theirs, "Send to us a king, and we will fight in the way of Allah"? He said, "Would you perhaps refrain from fighting if fighting was prescribed for you?" They said, "And why should we not fight in the cause of Allah when we have been driven out from our homes and from our children?" But when fighting was prescribed for them, they turned away, except for a few of them. And Allah is Knowing of the wrongdoers.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:246

EXPLANATION OF VERSE 2:246 — ENTHUSIASM NOT YET TESTED

First: An eager request. The chiefs of the Children of Israel said to their prophet: ***"Send to us a king, and we will fight in the way of Allah"***. The Qur'an does not name that prophet.

Second: A prophet who knew his people. ***"Would you perhaps refrain from fighting if fighting was prescribed for you?"*** They answered confidently: ***"we have been driven out from our homes and from our children"***.

Third: The first test is failed. ***"But when fighting was prescribed for them, they turned away, except for a few of them"***. Enthusiasm before a test is easy; what is hard is steadfastness after the command comes. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 2:246

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SAUL IS APPOINTED

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:247

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوتَ مَلِكًا ۚ قَالُوٓا۟ أَنَّىٰ يَكُونُ لَهُ
ٱلْمُلْكُ عَلَيْنَا وَنَحْنُ أَحَقُّ بِٱلْمُلْكِ مِنْهُ وَلَمْ يُؤْتَ سَعَةً مِّنَ ٱلْمَالِ ۚ قَالَ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ
ٱصْطَفَىٰهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَزَادَهُۥ بَسْطَةً فِى ٱلْعِلْمِ وَٱلْجِسْمِ ۖ وَٱللَّهُ يُؤْتِى مُلْكَهُۥ مَن
يَشَآءُ ۚ وَٱللَّهُ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٤٧﴾

And their prophet said to them, "Indeed, Allah has sent to you Saul as a king." They said, "How can he have kingship over us while we are more worthy of kingship than him and he has not been given any measure of wealth?" He said, "Indeed, Allah has chosen him over you and has increased him abundantly in knowledge and stature. And Allah gives His sovereignty to whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing [in favor] and Knowing."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:247

EXPLANATION OF VERSE 2:247 — THE MEASURE OF A LEADER

First: Allah's choice. ***"Indeed, Allah has sent to you Saul as a king"***.

Second: An objection based on wealth and lineage. ***"How can he have kingship over us while we are more worthy of kingship than him and he has not been given any measure of wealth?"*** The second test: accepting the leader Allah has chosen, even if he is not from the nobility or the wealthy.

Third: Two true qualifications. ***"has increased him abundantly in knowledge and stature"***. ***Knowledge*** to plan and decide, ***strength*** to lead on the field. Wealth is not mentioned as a condition.

Fourth: Sovereignty belongs to Allah. ***"Allah gives His sovereignty to whom He wills"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 2:247

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THE SIGN OF KINGSHIP: THE CHEST

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:248

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ ءَايَةَ مُلْكِهِۦٓ أَن يَأْتِيَكُمُ ٱلتَّابُوتُ فِيهِ سَكِينَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَبَقِيَّةٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ ءَالُ مُوسَىٰ وَءَالُ هَٰرُونَ تَحْمِلُهُ ٱلْمَلَٰٓئِكَةُ ۚ إِنَّ فِى ذَٰلِكَ لَءَايَةً لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٤٨﴾

And their prophet said to them, "Indeed, a sign of his kingship is that the chest will come to you in which is assurance from your Lord and a remnant of what the family of Moses and the family of Aaron had left, carried by the angels. Indeed in that is a sign for you, if you are believers."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:248

EXPLANATION OF VERSE 2:248 — A CHEST THAT BRINGS TRANQUILLITY

To reassure them, Allah gave a sign: ***"the chest will come to you in which is assurance from your Lord"***.

The Qur'an mentions three things about the chest (al-Tabut): it brings ***sakīnah*** (assurance and tranquillity), it holds ***"a remnant of what the family of Moses and the family of Aaron had left"***, and it is ***"carried by the angels"***. What exactly the chest contained is not detailed in any authentic text. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 2:248

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THE TEST OF A RIVER

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:249

فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوتُ بِٱلْجُنُودِ قَالَ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ مُبْتَلِيكُم بِنَهَرٍ فَمَن شَرِبَ مِنْهُ
فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي وَمَن لَّمْ يَطْعَمْهُ فَإِنَّهُۥ مِنِّيٓ إِلَّا مَنِ ٱغْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةًۢ بِيَدِهِۦ فَشَرِبُوا۟
مِنْهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْهُمْ فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَهُۥ هُوَ وَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ مَعَهُۥ قَالُوا۟ لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا
ٱلْيَوْمَ بِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِۦ قَالَ ٱلَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُم مُّلَٰقُوا۟ ٱللَّهِ كَم مِّن فِئَةٍ
قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةًۢ بِإِذْنِ ٱللَّهِ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ مَعَ ٱلصَّٰبِرِينَ ﴿٢٤٩﴾

And when Saul went forth with the soldiers, he said, "Indeed, Allah will be testing you with a river. So whoever drinks from it is not of me, and whoever does not taste it is indeed of me, excepting one who takes [from it] in the hollow of his hand." But they drank from it, except a [very] few of them. Then when he had crossed it along with those who believed with him, they said, "There is no power for us today against Goliath and his soldiers." But those who were certain that they would meet Allah said, "How many a small company has overcome a large company by permission of Allah. And Allah is with the patient."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:249

EXPLANATION OF VERSE 2:249 — A TEST OF DISCIPLINE AND PATIENCE

First: A test that seems small. ***"Indeed, Allah will be testing you with a river"***. An army thirsty after a long march was commanded not to drink from it, ***"excepting one who takes [from it] in the hollow of his hand"***.

Second: Most of them fail. ***"But they drank from it, except a [very] few of them"***. If a man cannot hold himself back from a mouthful of water, how will he be patient on the battlefield?

Third: The wisdom of the test. The commentators explain that this test sifted out who was truly obedient. Better a small but steadfast army than a large but fragile one. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 2:249

	Those Who Failed	Those Who Passed
Test of obedience (2:246)	Asked for war, then turned away when it was prescribed	"A few of them" remained obedient
Test of leadership (2:247)	*"We are more worthy... he has not been given wealth"*	*Accepted Allah's choice: knowledge and stature*
Test of the river (2:249)	Drank from it freely	Did not drink, or took only the hollow of a hand
Test of numbers (2:249)	"There is no power for us today against Goliath"	"How many a small company has overcome a large..."

Figure 2: Four tests in the story of Saul — those who failed and those who passed.

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"HOW MANY A SMALL COMPANY…"

First: The fourth test — numbers. After crossing the river, some said: ***"There is no power for us today against Goliath and his soldiers"***.

Second: The voice of the certain. ***"But those who were certain that they would meet Allah said"***: ***"How many a small company has overcome a large company by permission of Allah. And Allah is with the patient"***.

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 3957

حَدَّثَنَا عَمْرُو بْنُ خَالِدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا زُهَيْرٌ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو إِسْحَاقَ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ الْبَرَاءَ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ يَقُولُ حَدَّثَنِي أَصْحَابُ، مُحَمَّدٍ صلى الله عليه وسلم مِمَّنْ شَهِدَ بَدْرًا أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا عِدَّةَ أَصْحَابِ طَالُوتَ الَّذِينَ جَازُوا مَعَهُ النَّهَرَ، بِضْعَةَ عَشَرَ وَثَلاَثَمِائَةٍ. قَالَ الْبَرَاءُ لاَ وَاللَّهِ مَا جَاوَزَ مَعَهُ النَّهَرَ إِلاَّ مُؤْمِنٌ.

TRANSLATION:

Al-Bara' رضى الله عنه said: The Companions of Muhammad ﷺ who took part in the Battle of Badr told me that

their number was the same as the number of the companions of Saul (Talut) who crossed the river with him: three hundred and ten-odd. Al-Bara' said: **"No, by Allah, none crossed the river with him except a believer."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Amr ibn Khalid al-Harrani, from Zuhayr ibn Mu'awiyah, from Abu Ishaq al-Sabi'i, from al-Bara' ibn 'Azib رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Military Expeditions (Kitab al-Maghazi), chapter on the number of the people of Badr, Hadith No. 3957. Also narrated as No. 3958 and 3959.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:3957

This Hadith links the story of Saul directly to Islamic history: ***the number of the people of Badr was the same as the number of Saul's companions who crossed the river***, three hundred and ten-odd.

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THE PRAYER BEFORE BATTLE

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:250

وَلَمَّا بَرَزُوا۟ لِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِۦ قَالُوا۟ رَبَّنَآ أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا
وَٱنصُرْنَا عَلَى ٱلْقَوْمِ ٱلْكَٰفِرِينَ ﴿٢٥٠﴾

And when they went forth to [face] Goliath and his soldiers, they said, "Our Lord, pour upon us patience and plant firmly our feet and give us victory over the disbelieving people."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:250

EXPLANATION OF VERSE 2:250 — THREE REQUESTS

Facing Goliath and his soldiers, they did not rely on their own strength. They prayed with three requests in a careful order:

First: Patience in the heart. ***"Our Lord, pour upon us patience"*** — the word ***afrigh*** means "pour out", like water poured until a vessel is full.

Second: Steadfastness on the field. ***"plant firmly our feet"***.

Third: Victory. ***"give us victory over the disbelieving people"***. Patience in the heart leads to firm feet, and firm feet lead to victory.

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 2966

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا مُعَاوِيَةُ بْنُ عَمْرٍو، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو إِسْحَاقَ، عَنْ مُوسَى بْنِ عُقْبَةَ، عَنْ سَالِمٍ أَبِي النَّضْرِ، مَوْلَى عُمَرَ بْنِ عُبَيْدِ اللَّهِ وَكَانَ كَاتِبًا لَهُ قَالَ كَتَبَ إِلَيْهِ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ أَبِي أَوْفَى ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ فَقَرَأْتُهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم فِي بَعْضِ أَيَّامِهِ الَّتِي لَقِيَ فِيهَا انْتَظَرَ حَتَّى مَالَتِ الشَّمْسُ. ثُمَّ قَامَ فِي النَّاسِ قَالَ « أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، لاَ تَتَمَنَّوْا لِقَاءَ الْعَدُوِّ، وَسَلُوا اللَّهَ الْعَافِيَةَ، فَإِذَا لَقِيتُمُوهُمْ فَاصْبِرُوا، وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ الْجَنَّةَ تَحْتَ ظِلاَلِ السُّيُوفِ، ثُمَّ قَالَ اللَّهُمَّ مُنْزِلَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُجْرِيَ السَّحَابِ وَهَازِمَ الأَحْزَابِ، اهْزِمْهُمْ وَانْصُرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ ».

TRANSLATION:

Salim Abu al-Nadr said: ‘Abdullah ibn Abi Awfa رضى الله عنهما wrote to him (‘Umar ibn ‘Ubaydillah), and I read it: that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, on one of the days on which he met the enemy, waited until the sun had passed its zenith. Then he stood among the people and said: **“O people, do not wish to meet the enemy, and ask Allah for well-being. But when you meet them, be patient, and know that Paradise is beneath the shade of the swords.”** Then he said: **“O Allah, Revealer of the Book, Mover of the clouds, Defeater of the Confederates, defeat them and give us victory over them.”**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from ‘Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Ju‘fi, from Mu‘awiyah ibn ‘Amr, from Abu Ishaq al-Fazari, from Musa ibn ‘Uqbah, from Salim Abu al-Nadr, from ‘Abdullah ibn Abi Awfa رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Jihad (Kitab al-Jihad wa al-Siyar), Hadith No. 2965–2966. Also narrated as No. 3025, and by Muslim (No. 1742).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:2965

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ taught the same manners: ***do not wish to meet the enemy, ask for well-being***; but when you meet them, ***be patient*** — and pray to Allah.

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DAVID KILLS GOLIATH

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:251

فَهَزَمُوهُم بِإِذۡنِ ٱللَّهِ وَقَتَلَ دَاوُۥدُ جَالُوتَ وَءَاتَىٰهُ ٱللَّهُ ٱلۡمُلۡكَ وَٱلۡحِكۡمَةَ
وَعَلَّمَهُۥ مِمَّا يَشَآءُۗ وَلَوۡلَا دَفۡعُ ٱللَّهِ ٱلنَّاسَ بَعۡضَهُم بِبَعۡضٖ لَّفَسَدَتِ ٱلۡأَرۡضُ
وَلَٰكِنَّ ٱللَّهَ ذُو فَضۡلٍ عَلَى ٱلۡعَٰلَمِينَ ٢٥١

So they defeated them by permission of Allah, and David killed Goliath, and Allah gave him the kingship and prophethood and taught him from that which He willed. And if it were not for Allah checking [some] people by means of others, the earth would have been corrupted, but Allah is full of bounty to the worlds.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:251

EXPLANATION OF VERSE 2:251 — VICTORY BY ALLAH'S PERMISSION

First: By permission of Allah. ***"So they defeated them by permission of Allah"***. The phrase ***bi-idhnillāh*** is repeated — just as in the words of the certain (2:249). Victory does not belong to numbers.

Second: A young man. ***"David killed Goliath"***. The Qur'an names David عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ for the first time in this story — a fighter in the ranks, before he became king and prophet.

Third: The reward. ***"Allah gave him the kingship and prophethood and taught him from that which He willed"***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 2:251

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DAVID: KING, PROPHET AND HARD-WORKING SERVANT

The Qur'an praises David عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ in many places: ***"remember Our servant, David, the possessor of strength; indeed, he was one who repeatedly turned back [to Allah]"*** (38:17), and ***"We strengthened his kingdom and gave him wisdom and discernment in speech"*** (38:20).

Allah made iron pliable for him: ***"Make full coats of mail and calculate [precisely] the links"*** (34:11). A king, yet he still worked with his own hands:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 2072

حَدَّثَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بْنُ مُوسَى، أَخْبَرَنَا عِيسَى، عَنْ ثَوْرٍ، عَنْ خَالِدِ بْنِ مَعْدَانَ، عَنِ الْمِقْدَامِ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « مَا أَكَلَ أَحَدٌ طَعَامًا قَطُّ خَيْرًا مِنْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ مِنْ عَمَلِ يَدِهِ، وَإِنَّ نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ دَاوُدَ ـ عَلَيْهِ السَّلاَمُ ـ كَانَ يَأْكُلُ مِنْ عَمَلِ يَدِهِ ».

TRANSLATION:

Al-Miqdam رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **"No one has ever eaten food better than what he eats from the work of his own hands. And the Prophet of Allah David, peace be upon him, used to eat from the work of his own hands."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Ibrahim ibn Musa, from 'Isa ibn Yunus, from Thawr ibn Yazid, from Khalid ibn Ma'dan, from al-Miqdam ibn Ma'dikarib رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Sales (Kitab al-Buyu'), chapter on a man's earning and the work of his hands, Hadith No. 2072.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:2072

And in worship, David عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ is the example most beloved to Allah:

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 1131

حَدَّثَنَا عَلِيُّ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا عَمْرُو بْنُ دِينَارٍ، أَنَّ عَمْرَو بْنَ أَوْسٍ، أَخْبَرَهُ أَنَّ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ بْنَ عَمْرِو بْنِ الْعَاصِ ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ أَخْبَرَهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ لَهُ « أَحَبُّ الصَّلاَةِ إِلَى اللَّهِ صَلاَةُ دَاوُدَ ـ عَلَيْهِ السَّلاَمُ ـ وَأَحَبُّ

الصِّيَامِ إِلَى اللَّهِ صِيَامُ دَاوُدَ، وَكَانَ يَنَامُ نِصْفَ اللَّيْلِ وَيَقُومُ ثُلُثَهُ وَيَنَامُ سُدُسَهُ، وَيَصُومُ يَوْمًا وَيُفْطِرُ يَوْمًا ».

TRANSLATION:

'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As رضى الله عنهما narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to him: **"The prayer most beloved to Allah is the prayer of David, peace be upon him, and the fasting most beloved to Allah is the fasting of David. He used to sleep half the night, stand (in prayer) for a third of it, and sleep a sixth of it; and he used to fast one day and break his fast the next."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Ali ibn 'Abdillah al-Madini, from Sufyan ibn 'Uyaynah, from 'Amr ibn Dinar, from 'Amr ibn Aws, from 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Night Prayer (Kitab al-Tahajjud), chapter on whoever sleeps at the time of sahar, Hadith No. 1131. Also narrated by Muslim (No. 1159).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:1131

These two Hadith portray a balance: ***working with the hands, worshipping with the heart***, enough sleep, and steady fasting without excess.

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ALLAH CHECKS CORRUPTION ON EARTH

EXPLANATION OF VERSES 2:251–252 — ALLAH'S WAY IN HISTORY

The story closes with a great principle: ***"if it were not for Allah checking [some] people by means of others, the earth would have been corrupted"***. Allah does not leave tyranny in power forever; He raises up believers to push it back.

"but Allah is full of bounty to the worlds".

And the next verse is addressed to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: ***"These are the verses of Allah which We recite to you, [O Muhammad], in truth. And indeed, you are from among the messengers"***. This story is told to strengthen his heart and the hearts of his community.

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WHAT THE QUR'AN DOES NOT TELL

This story also appears in the Book of Samuel in the Bible (with the names ***Saul*** and ***Goliath***), and was expanded by Israiliyyat reports. Following Sahih al-Bukhari 4485 (Series 1), we do not add outside details to the story.

THE POPULAR STORY AND WHAT REVELATION SAYS

THE POPULAR STORY	WHAT THE QUR'AN AND AUTHENTIC HADITH SAY
The prophet who appointed Saul was Samuel (Shamwil).	The Qur'an only says "a prophet of theirs" (2:246). The name Samuel is from the Bible.
Saul was a poor water-carrier or tanner.	The Qur'an only mentions the objection that he had "not been given any measure of wealth" (2:247).
The chest held fragments of the Tablets, Moses' staff and sandals, Aaron's turban and a jar of manna.	The Qur'an only says "a remnant of what the family of Moses and the family of Aaron had left" (2:248).
David killed Goliath with a stone from a sling, and Saul gave him his daughter in marriage.	The Qur'an only says "David killed Goliath" (2:251), without saying how.
Saul grew jealous and tried to kill David.	Not mentioned in the Qur'an or authentic Hadith. These reports are not relied upon.
The chest still exists and is hidden in a particular place today.	Not established by any text or solid evidence.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTE: TELL ES-SAFI (GATH) AND THE "GOLIATH" INSCRIPTION

The site of **Tell es-Safi** in the south of Palestine is identified as **Gath**, one of the ancient Philistine cities. In the Bible, Goliath is said to come from Gath. In **2005**, archaeologists found a potsherd inscribed with two words, **'LWT** and **WLT**, beneath a destruction layer dated to the early Iron Age IIA (about 1000–925 BCE).

Claim not included. Some media called it "proof of Goliath", but it does not give the name exactly, and scholars do not conclude that it refers to him. Therefore, **the claim that this inscription proves the existence of Goliath is not included**. Claims about the discovery of the chest are also **not included**.

REFERENCES:

Wikipedia. Tell es-Safi inscription. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tell_es-Safi_inscription

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PATIENCE, OBEDIENCE AND CERTAINTY

The story of Saul and Goliath is a story of sifting. A large army is tested with obedience, leadership, a mouthful of water and the size of the enemy — until only a small company remains. And it is that small company that wins. The story teaches that ***victory does not belong to the many, but to the patient, the obedient and those certain of meeting Allah***.

A BRIEF COMPARISON

PARTY	ATTITUDE AND LESSON
The prophet of the Children of Israel	Knew his people's weakness, yet still conveyed Allah's choice (2:246–248)
Saul	Chosen for knowledge and stature, not wealth; tested his army with a river (2:247–249)
Those who drank freely	Could not restrain themselves, and then feared the size of the enemy (2:249)
The small company	Obedient, patient, certain and praying — victorious by Allah's permission (2:249–251)
David	A fighter in the ranks who became king and prophet; worked with his hands and was devoted in worship (2:251; Sahih al-Bukhari 2072, 1131)

LESSONS FROM THIS STORY

First: Enthusiasm before a test is not the same as steadfastness after the command. (2:246).

Second: Leaders are chosen for knowledge and strength, not wealth and lineage. (2:247).

Third: A small test sifts out great hearts. (2:249).

Fourth: A small company can overcome by Allah's permission. (2:249; Sahih al-Bukhari 3957).

Fifth: Allah is with the patient. (2:249).

Sixth: Ask for patience, firm feet and victory. (2:250).

Seventh: Do not wish to meet the enemy; but when you meet them, be patient. (Sahih al-Bukhari 2966).

Eighth: The best food is what one earns with one's own hands. (Sahih al-Bukhari 2072).

Ninth: The worship most beloved to Allah is balanced and consistent. (Sahih al-Bukhari 1131).

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CONCLUSION

In life, we will meet a "river" — a small test that sifts our sincerity; and a "Goliath" — a great challenge that seems impossible to overcome. This story invites us to be among the small company: those who hold back when tested, and who say, "how many a small company has overcome by permission of Allah".

Rabbanā afrigh 'alainā ṣabran wa thabbit aqdāmanā wanṣurnā 'alal-qaumil-kāfirīn. Amin.

In sha Allah, the series **Stories from the Qur'an** will continue with the story of Prophet David عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ and Prophet Solomon عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ — with the same method: the Qur'an, authentic Hadith, and solid archaeological findings only.

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Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, Fath al-Bari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari (Book of Military Expeditions; Book of Jihad; Book of Sales; Book of Night Prayer).

ADDITIONAL HADITH CITED IN THE TEXT

Sahih al-Bukhari 3958 and 3959 (the number of the people of Badr equal to the companions of Saul). https://sunnah.com/bukhari:3958

Sahih al-Bukhari 4485 (neither believe nor disbelieve the People of the Book). https://sunnah.com/bukhari:4485

ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY

Wikipedia. Tell es-Safi inscription. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tell_es-Safi_inscription

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SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:261

مَّثَلُ ٱلَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمۡوَٰلَهُمۡ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنۢبَتَتۡ سَبۡعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنۢبُلَةٖ مِّاْئَةُ حَبَّةٖۗ وَٱللَّهُ يُضَٰعِفُ لِمَن يَشَآءُۚ وَٱللَّهُ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ٢٦١

The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:261

SURAH SABA' 34:39

قُلۡ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبۡسُطُ ٱلرِّزۡقَ لِمَن يَشَآءُ مِنۡ عِبَادِهِۦ وَيَقۡدِرُ لَهُۥۚ وَمَآ أَنفَقۡتُم مِّن شَيۡءٖ فَهُوَ يُخۡلِفُهُۥۖ وَهُوَ خَيۡرُ ٱلرَّٰزِقِينَ ٣٩

Say, "Indeed, my Lord extends provision for whom He wills of His servants and restricts [it] for him. But whatever thing you spend [in His cause] - He will compensate it; and He is the best of providers."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/34:39

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2588

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ، وَابْنُ، حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - وَهُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « مَا نَقَصَتْ صَدَقَةٌ مِنْ مَالٍ وَمَا زَادَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا بِعَفْوٍ إِلاَّ عِزًّا وَمَا تَوَاضَعَ أَحَدٌ لِلَّهِ إِلاَّ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Charity does not decrease wealth.

Allah does not increase a servant who forgives except in honour. And no one humbles himself for the sake of Allah except that Allah raises him in rank."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه .

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Virtue, Good Manners and Joining the Ties of Kinship (Kitab al-Birr wa al-Silah wa al-Adab), chapter on the encouragement of forgiveness and humility, Hadith No. 2588.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2588

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 1631

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ - يَعْنِي ابْنَ سَعِيدٍ - وَابْنُ حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - هُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « إِذَا مَاتَ الإِنْسَانُ انْقَطَعَ عَنْهُ عَمَلُهُ إِلاَّ مِنْ ثَلاَثَةٍ إِلاَّ مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ جَارِيَةٍ أَوْ عِلْمٍ يُنْتَفَعُ بِهِ أَوْ وَلَدٍ صَالِحٍ يَدْعُو لَهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "When a person dies, his deeds come to an end except for three: an ongoing charity, knowledge that is benefited from, or a righteous child who prays for him."

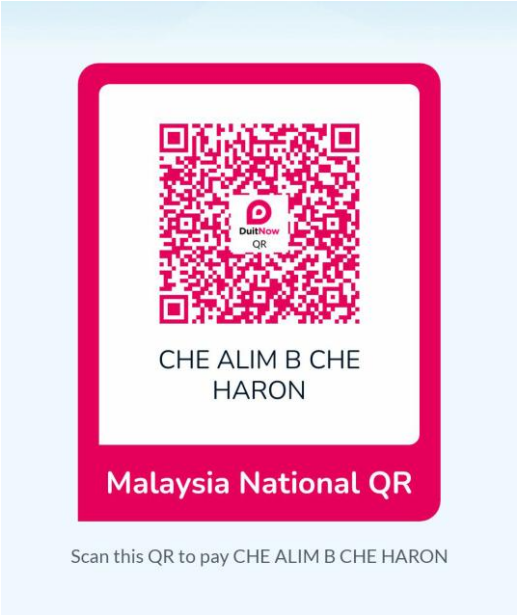
CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه .

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GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:1631

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