ACROMEGALY: THE HIDDEN DEFECT OF GOLIATH’S GIGANTISM

By Able Huten

INTRODUCTION

We use the term “David and Goliath” as a metaphor for our impossible or improbable victories like some weak fighter over stronger ones. Little did we know the real stature of Goliath? All we know about him is that he was 9 feet tall and was the mightiest warrior in the ancient Philistine during his days. Endocrinology researchers and scholars have opened up a new understanding of who and what the giant Goliath really was. And this understanding has shed a new light on the fundamental error of interpreting the battle between David and Goliath.

In order to understand the fresh light that has been shed on the story of David and Goliath, we have to know some of the terms and processes used in endocrinology. By the way, endocrinology is the study concerned with study of the biosynthesis, storage, chemistry, biochemical and physiological function of hormones and with the cells of the endocrine glands and tissues that secrete them.

ACROMEGALY

Acromagaly is a rare disease. It is a syndrome that results when the anterior pituitary gland (Figure 1) in the brain produces excess growth hormone (GH) during adulthood. When this happens, bones increase in size, including hands, feet and face. Acromegaly is usually associated with gigantism. It usually affects middle-aged adults.

In children who are still growing, too much growth hormone leads to gigantism. These children have exaggerated bone growth and an abnormal increase in height.

Figure 1: A picture showing pituitary gland.
Pituitary adenoma

A number of disorders may increase the pituitary's GH output; commonly it involves a tumor called Pituitary adenoma or Pituitary tumor (Figure 2). In over 90 percent of acromegaly patients, the overproduction of growth hormones is caused by a benign tumor of the pituitary gland, called an adenoma. These tumors produce excess growth hormones and, as they expand, compress surrounding brain tissues, such as the optic nerves. This expansion causes the headaches and visual disturbances that often accompany acromegaly. The patient would often have nearsightedness, double vision and would not be able to see things clearly.

![Figure 2: A diagram showing pituitary adenoma.](image)

World's Tallest People

Researchers have found out that most of the recorded tallest people on earth suffer a common disease called acromegaly. Some of the examples are:

1. **Robert Pershing Wadlow (1918-1940), USA**

   He was also known as the Alton Giant and the Giant of Illinois, United States of America, is the tallest person in history. Wadlow was 8 feet and 11.1 inches (2.72m) in height at his death at age 22. He suffered from acromegaly.

2. **John F. Carroll (1932-1969), USA**

   He is one of the tallest persons in the history of mankind. He was 8 feet or more. Carroll suffered from severed, 2-dimentional spinal curvature and acromegalic gigantism.

Vikas was from the Haryana state, Rotak district. On 12 January 04, *The Tribune* reported him to be 8 ft 3 in (2.51 m) tall and still growing, being in his late teens. It is said that Vikas also suffered from Acromegaly. He died in June 30, 2007 during a failed brain tumor operation in Delhi, India.

In the same way, there are so many examples of very tall people who suffered from acromegaly. The common thing recorded among these tallest people from across the globe is that they suffer from acromegaly.

**DAVID AND GOLIATH**

The story of David and Goliath is a very common Biblical story. Almost every Christian school going child knows about this story, even the kids from non-Christian background. This story is taken from one of the books of the Bible, I Samuel Chapter 17.

In this story, 3000 years ago, there was a war between the Israelites and the ancient Philistines. These two nations camped at very strategic locations for battle on the opposite side of a steep valley. Their positions were such that both the nations were hesitant to launch their first attack. Being fed up of this situation, the Philistine decided to send their mightiest warrior named Goliath, who was 9 foot tall, for a single hand-to-hand combat to settle down the war once and for all. In the ancient tradition, one-on-one fight was fought to decide the battle and save bloodshed.

![Figure 3: A picture showing David and Goliath having a single combat.](image)

For forty days, Goliath would come out from their camp every morning and evening and challenged the Israelites to send someone who could fight him; and he would throw insults on the God of the
Israelites. After few days, none among the Israelites but a small shepherd boy named David, who came to deliver food for his brothers in the army camp, volunteered to fight Goliath. Thus, a single combat was fought at the steep valley, where David defeated the giant Goliath with just one single sling shot on his forehead (Figure 3).

When the researchers profoundly study this single combat, they found out that there are anomalies in Goliath’s stature and his speech delivery before he fought the single combat. Here the words of Goliath:

So the Philistine said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.

I Samuel 17:43 (NKJV)

And the Philistine said to David, “Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!”

I Samuel 17:44 (NKJV)

Now, David was a shepherd boy. Usually in the ancient Israel, a shepherd would carry one staff or stick. In the same way, David had one staff in his one hand and sling in his other hand (I Samuel 17:40). When David approached Goliath, Goliath said something that does not correspond to what David was holding in his hands.

Goliath said, “Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?” David never carried with him “sticks”; he carried with him only one “stick” This means Goliath was not able to see what David was holding clearly. In other words, he had a vision problem or double eye-sight problem.

Therefore, the researchers strongly believe that Goliath was suffering from the disease called acromegaly. Acromegaly patients, as stated above usually are huge in size, very tall (normally above 7 feet), and have double sight problem. They see one thing as if it is two things.

And another interesting thing is that if Goliath were a strong warrior why would he say, ‘Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!’ Since time immemorial, especially in the ancient single combat, a strong and brave warrior would not ask his weak opponent to charge him. Rather, he would be the first one to attack his opponent.

Drawing from this logic, why would Goliath the giant ask David, the small shepherd boy, to come near him to attack him first? It would be an insulting thing for a brave soldier. Thus, the second statement of Goliath also gives us a clue that he had a weak eye sight.
CONCLUSION

So far there has been a fundamental blunder in interpreting the stature of Goliath. Goliath must have been 9 feet tall and huge, but he had bigger flaws in his stature. What the Israelites saw from high up on a hill was what appeared to be a mighty warrior, but the fact is that, the very thing that made the giant looked fierce and intimidating was the cause of his greatest weakness.

Giants in life are not what they seem they are. The kinds of giants or obstacles we face are not nearly as surmountable and depressing and overwhelming as they appear to be at the first place. Look closely and you will see a different truth! Giants are meant to be conquered and histories are meant to be rewritten.

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