

# David and Goliath

*Retold by J. Berg Esenwein and Marietta Stockard*



Long ago, in the land of Bethlehem, there lived a man named Jesse, who had eight stalwart sons. The youngest of these sons was David.

Even as a little lad, David was ruddy, beautiful of countenance, and strong of body. When his older brothers drove the flocks to the fields, he ran with them. Each day as he leaped over the hillsides, listened to the gurgling water in the brooks, and the songs of birds in the trees, he grew stronger of limb, and more filled with joy and courage. Sometimes he made songs of the beautiful things he saw and heard. His eye was keen, his hands strong, and his aim sure. When he fitted a stone into his sling, he never missed the mark at which he threw it.

As he grew older, he was given the care of a part of the flocks. One day as he lay on the hillside keeping watch over his sheep, a lion rushed out of the woods and seized a lamb. David leaped to his feet and ran forward. He had no fear in his heart, no thought but to save the lamb. He sprang upon the lion, seized him by his hairy head, and with no weapon but the staff in his strong young hands, he slew him. Another day, a bear came down upon them. Him also, David slew.

Now, soon after this, the Philistines marshaled their armies and came across the hills to drive the children of Israel away from their homes. King Saul gathered his armies and went out to meet them. David's three oldest brothers went with the king, but David was left at home to tend the sheep. "Thou art too young; stay in the fields and keep the flocks safe," they said to David.

Forty days went by, and no news of the battle came; so Jesse called David to him and said: "Take this food for thy brethren, and go up to the camp to see how they fare."

David set out early in the morning, and journeyed up to the

hill on which the army was encamped. There was great shouting and the armies were drawn up in battle array when David arrived. He made his way through the ranks and found his brethren. As he stood talking with them, silence fell upon King Saul's army; and there on the hillside opposite stood a great giant. He strode up and down, his armor glittering in the sun. His shield was so heavy that the strongest man in King Saul's army could not have lifted it, and the sword at his side was so great that the strongest arm could not have wielded it.

"It is the great giant, Goliath," David's brethren told him. "Each day he strides over the hill and calls out his challenge to the men of Israel, but no man amongst us dares to stand before him."

"What! Are the men of Israel afraid?" asked David. "Will they let this Philistine defy the armies of the living God? Will no one go forth to meet him?" He turned from one to another, questioning them.

Eliab, David's oldest brother, heard him and was angry. "Thou art naughty and proud of heart," he said. "Thou hast stolen away from home thinking to see a great battle. With whom hast thou left the sheep?"

"The keeper hath charge of them; and our father, Jesse, sent me hither; and my heart is glad that I am come," answered David. "I myself will go forth to meet this giant. The God of Israel will go with me, for I have no fear of Goliath nor of all his hosts!"

The men standing near hastened to the tent of King Saul and told him of David's words.

"Let him stand before me," commanded the king.

When David was brought into his presence, and Saul saw that he was but a youth, he attempted to dissuade him. But David told him how he had slain the lion and the bear with his naked hands. "The Lord who delivered me from them will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine," he said.

Then King Saul said: "Go, and the Lord go with thee!"

He had his own armor fetched for David, his helmet of brass, his coat of mail, and his own sword. But David said: "I cannot fight with these. I am not skilled in their use." He put them down, for he knew that each man must win his battles with his own weapons.

Then he took his staff in his hand, his shepherd's bag and sling he hung at his side, and he set out from the camp of Israel. He ran

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lightly down the hillside, and when he came to the brook which ran at the foot of the hill, he stooped, and choosing five smooth stones from the brook, dropped them into his bag.

The army of King Saul upon one hill, and the host of the Philistines upon the other, looked on in silent wonder. The great giant strode toward David, and when Goliath saw that he was but a youth, ruddy and fair of countenance, his anger knew no bounds.

“Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with sticks?” he shouted. “Do the men of Israel make mock of me to send a child against me? Turn back, or I will give thy flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field!” Then Goliath cursed David in the name of all his gods.

But no fear came to David’s heart. He called out bravely: “Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hands; and I will smite thee, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel!”

Then Goliath rushed forward to meet David, and David ran still more swiftly to meet the giant. He put his hand into his bag, and took one of the stones from it. He fitted it into his sling, and his keen eye found the place in the giant’s forehead where the helmet joined. He drew his sling, and with all the force of his strong right arm, he hurled the stone.

It whizzed through the air, and struck deep into Goliath’s forehead. His huge body tottered—then fell crashing to the ground. As he lay with his face upon the earth, David ran swiftly to his side, drew forth the giant’s own sword, and severed his huge head from his body.

When the army of Israel saw this, they rose up with a great shout, and rushed down the hillside to throw themselves upon the frightened Philistines who were fleeing in terror. When they saw their greatest warrior slain by this lad, they fled toward their own land, leaving their tents and all their riches to be spoiled by the men of Israel.

When the battle was ended, King Saul caused David to be brought before him, and he said: “Thou shalt go no more to the house of thy father but thou shalt be as mine own son.”

So David stayed in the tents of the king, and at length he was given command over the king’s armies. All Israel honored him, and long years after, he was made the king in King Saul’s stead.