

A Shepherd Boy Becomes a King

David was the greatest king the Hebrews ever had. When David was a little boy he never thought that someday he would become a king. He was the youngest of eight brothers. He worked with his father, helping him to look after the sheep and goats in the fields. David was a handsome boy, happy and good-natured. Everyone liked him. He could play good music, too, on an instrument called a harp. David was brave and strong. If a wild animal came to attack his sheep, he would chase it away all by himself. He would even follow the wild beast and fight it to save a lamb or a kid.

Then one day something very strange happened to David. A very old and holy man called Samuel, to whom all the Hebrews listened with great respect, came to David's village to visit his home. He said he wanted to pray with the family. Samuel looked at all of David's brothers. They were all fine good-looking young men, but Samuel said that there must be another boy in the family. The father sent for David who was away looking after the sheep. When Samuel saw him, he gave him his blessing and put some oil on his forehead. Samuel told him that one day he would become king.

Now it happened at this time that the Philistines attacked the country in which David lived. The army of the enemy was camped on one side of the valley, while the Hebrew army was camped on the other side. Every day a giant soldier would come from the enemy army into the valley. He would tease and laugh at the Hebrews and say: "Is there no man on your side who can come out and fight me? If he gets the better of me, we shall go away; and if I win, you shall all be our servants." However, all the Hebrews were afraid of the giant and did not want to fight him.

Three of David's brothers were in the Hebrew army. One day David came to their camp to bring food to his brothers. While David was talking to them, the giant came down and began shouting again. When David heard the giant laughing at the Hebrews and their God, he became angry and said: "Will no one fight this giant?" Because they were afraid, none of the soldiers answered. So David said he would like to fight the giant himself. David's brothers were not pleased at this; they told him to go back home and mind his sheep.

But the king heard about David and sent for him. When he saw that David was just a boy, he said: "You cannot fight this giant! You are too young!" But David answered: "God helped me fight the wild animals that attacked my father's sheep. God will help me kill the giant." So the king gave David his own sword, his own brass helmet, and a heavy coat made of steel rings.

David thought that all these things were too heavy for him, so he did not use them. He took his own shepherd's stick and slingshot. He went to the river to find several smooth stones. These stones he put in the bag which he wore over his shoulder. He then went forward to meet the giant soldier who wore a large sword and carried a huge shield and some spears. David was not afraid because he knew that he was fighting for God and that God would help him.

When the giant saw David, he laughed out loud. "Am I a dog," he said, "that you come to fight me with a stick?" But David said: "You come against me with a sword and a spear, but I COME IN THE NAME OF GOD. I shall kill you and everyone will know that God can save His people without a sword."

The giant advanced and David ran forward. He put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, and flung it with his slingshot. The stone struck the giant right on his forehead. This made him fall down on his face. Then David quickly took the giant's sword and killed him.

When all the enemies of David's people saw the giant killed by the young boy, they became very much afraid. They left their camp and ran away. David's people chased them, but very soon came back to camp. It was a big victory for David and for David's people. Everyone was glad, and the people shouted and sang. The king took David into his palace where David served the old king until he died. Then Samuel's promise came true. David became the king of the Hebrews.