

APPROVAL OF HONORS PROGRAM SENIOR PROJECT

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Contemporary Rewrites of the Bible: Rewriting David and Saul

This Senior Project is approved as acceptable

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Contemporary Rewrites of the Bible: Rewriting David and Saul

Introduction

What is rewriting?

Rewriting is the art of depicting stories through a different set of eyes. This is similar to the saying, “there are more sides to the story than what was told.” When writers choose to rewrite, they do not simply wish to rewrite word for word, but instead they add their own perspective and add their opinions through it. I believe that rewriting is a more subjective concept, as many people can have different interpretations of what it means to rewrite.

In *Rewriting: Postmodern Narrative and Cultural Critique in the Age of Cloning*, author Christian Moraru discusses different types of rewritings, such as repetition and retelling. According to Moraru, rewrites are not simply copycats (13). One way to look at rewrites is to literally write again a story that was written a long time ago to republish it and reintroduce it to the now future audience (Moraru 13). However, postmodern writers have a different view of rewriting. For postmodern writers, their repetitions do not have a past model to fall back on (Moraru 13). They are writing repetitions without origin (Moraru 13). What this means is that these stories have been constructed over many years through history and cultures. They base their work on oral stories and incorporate their own perspective and twists, thus creating a new version of the story. With this being said, repetitions are just like hearing a story by ear and rewriting what you remember and how you remember it. Since there is no physical model to look back on when rewriting, these postmodern writers are writing based on what they remember is contained in the story. This will mean that no two rewritten works will be the same. Since the writers are writing from their memory, their perspective and take on the story will be different from each other.

Moraru also discusses retelling in comparison to rewriting. He states that if all telling is retelling from a folkloric, anthropological standpoint, then not all writing is rewriting (Moraru 17). He argues that rewriting is flagrant retelling of identifiable text. Rather than only modifying very slightly and making little-to-no change, retelling should add the writer's ideology and should show a significant difference from the text that is being rewritten. An overall similarity across all rewritings is that the writers add their own ideas and perspectives into the text that they are rewriting. Rather than rewriting the same concept and idea from the original text, writers strive to add their own ideologies to the literature they decide to rewrite. By doing so, they show how different perspectives can drastically change the way certain characters or concepts are viewed from the original text. They challenge the way the characters were originally viewed by showing a different point of view that the reader may not have thought of when reading the original text.

In the article "About Two Concepts: Postmodernism and Rewriting", Ioana-Gianina Hanes dives into the meaning of postmodernism and what it means to rewrite text. Hanes states that postmodernism re-evaluates past writings and changes the perspective completely (53). These past writings become "pillars of creating texts" (Hanes 53). Rather than simply copying the same text, postmodern writers choose to rewrite past writings to give them new conventions and revive old and dull literature (Hanes 54). One example of this would be the Disney movies. Some of Disney's movies are based on old fairy tales that have been around for many years, but Disney gives them a more modern twist to them and reintroduce these fairy tales to the public in a more family friendly way. Giving a modern outlook on past writings will help modern audiences become attracted to texts that they would otherwise not have thought of ever reading. Writers give new meanings based on their intention and what they are trying to relate. When

getting started on rewriting a piece, the writer will think about what message they want to convey by rewriting an existing work. This will help the writer determine the structure of both the plot and characters included. If taking a more feminist approach, the writer will probably focus more on highlighting the female characters and giving them strong personalities.

However, if the writer wants to challenge the perception of a specific character, then they would write in a way that would make the reader question the original character. Hanes states that rewriting is not a variant of the same text; instead, it becomes a separate writing with a new theme (56). Since rewriting incorporates the writer's own ideology and perspective, it becomes its own style with intentions that are different or opposed to the text that is being rewritten (Hanes 560).

This is one of the main reasons for choosing this topic to write about. The Bible has been around for centuries and thus, the writing style is very old and antiquated. After asking myself "why do young people in this modern day decide to no longer read the Bible?", I came to the conclusion that it must be due to the old writing style. Modern audiences may find it difficult to understand and read, so it gives them a hard time keeping their attention on the reading and they decide to not read it at all. If there were more modern version of the Bible, perhaps a web comic or modern novel series based on the biblical texts, then many people will definitely become interested and turn to the original text with a better understanding of what they are reading.

Hanes also brings in the feminist movement under postmodernism. She states that "the unjust, biased past dominated by patriarchal societies must be revised, reconstructed and eventually rewritten" (54). Since postmodernism challenges the social norm, Hanes states that this falls in line with the feminist principles (54). In *Rewriting the Word: American Women Writers and the Bible* by Amy Benson Brown, she states that rather than focusing on the actual

contents of the Bible, “it is the problems and possibilities of women’s authority in a culture shaped by the masculine hegemony that the Bible has come to represent (163).” This means that rather than changing the entirety of the contents of the Bible, postmodern writers feel that the Bible has too little representation of women, as it is written in a predominantly patriarchal setting. These postmodern writers want to show more representation of women and achieve this through rewriting.

The *Secret Book of Kings* by Yochi Brandes and *After Abel and Other Stories* by Michal Lemberger both explore the biblical story of David and Saul. With different perspectives and points of view, they show different sides of the story through different characters. The authors show their thoughts and opinions through their writings. They each depict “behind the scenes” situations that the authors fill in with their own take on the story. Although both authors are rewriting the same story, they each take a different approach. Brandes writes to challenge the patriarchal society that is depicted in the Bible. She recognizes the efforts and struggles of the women involved and praises them for their hard and unseen work. She also makes readers question whether David was a hero or a villain. On the other hand, Lemberger depicts the emotions and suffering of the “background characters” who were involved. She proceeds to write about the internal struggles of the characters and writes more to seek empathy towards them.

The story of David and Saul

The story of David and Saul starts off in 1 Samuel with David, a young shepherd who was chosen by God. David is then taken to the palace to play music for the king of Israel, Saul.

After spending some time in the palace, king Saul started to become fond of David and decided to appoint him as his armor bearer. When the battle with the Philistines started, the Israelites were introduced to Goliath, a giant Philistine warrior. Fearful of the giant, the Israelites were hesitant to face him until David stepped up. Picking up a few stones from the ground, David used his sling shot and hit Goliath in the head with a stone. Knocking him to his death, David proceeded to take Goliath's sword and cut his head off. The Philistines became startled, as the giant sword was near impossible for a regular person to pick up without much struggle. This caused the Philistines to flee and be defeated by the Israelite army. As a reward for killing Goliath, king Saul permits David to marry his daughter, Michal. Over time, David started to become more involved with the people of Israel and they begin to love him. King Saul starts to notice the affection that the people have for David and begins to feel threatened by his presence. In response to this, King Saul plots to get rid of David. Johnathan, who is the son of King Saul and a close friend of David, warns him about his father's plans and helps him escape. Angered by his escape, King Saul arranged his army and decided to pursue David and remarry Michal to Palti, a soldier from the Israelite army. During his search, King Saul and his army decide to rest in a cave. David and his men snuck into the cave while Saul and his army were sleeping and left a sign that he was there. When Saul woke up, he realized that David could have killed him but instead showed him mercy. David knew that Saul was chosen by God, and decided he would wait until God decided when he would be king. Not long after, Israel is attacked by the Philistines again and this time, Saul and his sons go into the battlefield where they tragically lose their lives. David then returns to Israel and becomes king.

There are many literary works about David, as there is more about David's life in the Bible than any other person. According to the biography of David by Steven McKenzie, the

Bible describes David as a “powerful and decisive man... pious and faithful at times but also capable of heinous crimes” (McKenzie 2). While this may be the way that most people would see David while reading about him in the Bible, writers have their own view of the person that David was. While poets and prose writers deem David as a champion and hero, many modern writers have described him as cold, manipulative and ruthless (McKenzie 4). Conventionally, Christians have been taught that David was a hero. From slaying Goliath to battling against the “evil” Saul who sought to kill him, we deem him a hero for being victorious in his goals and endeavors. However, when looked at through another set of eyes, was David truly the hero to everyone? How does reading about David from another perspective change the way we look at him?

The Secret Book of Kings

The Secret Book of King is a novel that was originally published in 2008 in Hebrew by Yochi Brandes that tells the story of David and Saul through the perspective of the daughter of Saul, Michal. In the novel, Brandes breaks apart the story into three sections: the first part, an introduction told by Shelomoam, Michal’s grandson; the second part is the story of David and Saul told by Michal; and the third part is also told by Shelomoam.

In this novel, Brandes seems to be questioning whether David was a hero or a villain. In the interview “King David’s no hero in “Jewish Da Vinci Code”” by Rebecca Harrison, Brandes states that “David had been seen as the conquering hero who stands for a greater Israel but the Bible hints at an alternative model that has been ignored” (Harrison). Brandes also challenges

the patriarchy that the Bible sets up. She portrays women as strong and capable of doing the same as men. Throughout the book, Brandes makes references to how the women from the Bible should also be recognized. Brandes also states in the interview that “the role of women is very limited in the Bible, I brought them to the foreground to show they have a role behind the scenes, but also in the making of politics...” (Harrison).

In the first part of the novel, Brandes emphasizes the characters of Shelomoam’s parents. Shelomoam’s father is constantly fearful and always on edge. The slightest mention of soldiers is enough to get him shivering in terror. However, Shelomoam’s mother is described as the complete opposite.

“The commander lowered his eyes to examine Mother. ‘Where is your husband?’ he finally spat mockingly. ‘Why does he hide behind your back rather than talk to me himself? Is this the famous heroism of Ephraim?’

Father shuffled meekly out of the crowd and stood before the commander. I could tell that he was trying to hide his nervousness, but his sweat dripped for all to see. I was ashamed of him....

‘Because of the drought,’ Mother answered for him. ‘Last year it hardly rained at all, and our crops were meager.’

The commander furrowed his brow with scorn. ‘Is your man a mute?’ (10)”

As we can see in the novel, Shelomoam’s mother does not fear the soldiers; instead, she is the one who speaks to the soldiers. While his father is cowering in fear, his mother does not show fear and instead speaks to them. Although his father was the one being questioned, he did not answer due to fear. Instead, Shelomoam’s mother answers the soldier’s questions firmly and

confidently. Throughout this first part of the novel, Shelomoam seems to be ashamed of his father's cowardice, but greatly admires his mother's courage. During this section, Brandes is tackling the feminism part of postmodern writing. Brandes strives to show a courageous woman that would most likely be a small and overlooked character in the ancient texts.

At the beginning of chapter two, Brandes mentions the story of Miriam. Miriam was the older sister of Moses, whom she floated down the river to save his life:

“Miriam was Mother's role model, even more than Joseph, the father of our line. In her opinion, Miriam should have been the one to redeem the Israelites from the Egyptians and to bring the Torah down from the heavens, and the role had been taken away from her and given to her younger brother only because she was a woman.” (13)

In the second part of the novel, Brandes writes from Michal's point of view. This is where she starts to write about David and Saul. During this section, Brandes writes about David in such a way that makes the readers question whether David was the hero we all thought of or if he was actually the villain of the story. One of the main points that Brandes explores in *The Secret Book of Kings* is the death of Goliath. In the version that most of us know, David defeats Goliath with a sling shot and stone, but Brandes makes reference to another version of Goliath's death that is mentioned in 2 Samuel, but not many know about:

“...Elhanan gave an enigmatic grin and stood serenely in his place. Then, ever so slowly, he bent down, reached into a niche in the cave wall, and pulled out [Goliath's] head.

That entire night Elhanan dreamed sweet dreams of his princess, but when he awoke in the morning, he realized that the man who had been like a brother to him had stolen her away. The severed head was gone and so were the two horses... The king had publicly introduced his new son-in-law, and all of Israel was singing the praises of the young musician from Judah who had taken down the Philistine giant and given them victory. (148-149)”

In Brandes’ story, she uses the second version of Goliath’s death to further enhance her point of David actually being a villain. While the original biblical text paints David as a hero for slaying Goliath by himself in battle, Brandes uses Elhanan to complicate David’s character. As I stated earlier, postmodern writers view him as manipulative and ruthless. Thinking that they would split the rewards, Elhanan was deceived by David, who took the glory for himself. While Elhanan slayed Goliath on his own, David used this opportunity to his advantage to run away with the head and claim that he was the one who killed Goliath. How does this change our perspective of David? We go from a hero who courageously killed a giant in order to defend his people and God, to a villain who stole the glory of someone else in order to reap the benefits for himself.

Another instance is when Michal tries to expose David for taking away her freedom, as well as the freedom of her child, the children of Merab and her father’s second wife, Rizpah.

“Help me persuade the king to free my son and me!”

David walked over to the herald and whispered something in his ear...

The herald gave a signal to the heralds positioned father away and yelled out, ‘Queen Michal mocks the King of Israel for his dancing... [she] says that a

king who skips and dances with slaves reveals himself to the nation as an undignified and vulgar fellow!’ (232)”

Michal bravely goes out to the celebration and declares to the people that she is locked up and pleads for their help to get released from the imprisonment. Due to the large number of people, not many people can hear her, and David tells the scribes to tell the people that she is mocking and ridiculing him. David proceeds to manipulate the crowd with false accusations against Michal. As a result of this, the crowd start to shun Michal and they start to call her crazy. On the other hand, David gets praise from the crowd and people like him more for humbling himself to dance with the people and for God. Brandes shows just how easily David was able to manipulate the crowd in his favor while simultaneously getting rid of Michal, who started to become a thorn in his side by trying to reveal his evil deeds.

After Abel and Other Stories

After Abel and Other Stories is a collection of short stories retelling different stories from the Bible written by Michal Lemberger in 2015. Through this collection, Lemberger sought to show the perspective of characters that are not mentioned much in the Bible and to exercise empathy for these characters through her writings. The short story based on the story of David and Saul is called “Saul’s Daughter.” In “Saul’s Daughter,” Lemberger seems to focus more on emphasizing the emotions and the affected parties involved in the feud between David and Saul. Lemberger writes from Palti’s and his village’s point of view, as they seem to be one of the more emotionally affected parties. Lemberger shows that the feud between David and Saul also affected other people who were not directly involved and also suffered from it.

In the short story “Saul’s Daughter,” Palti has been in love with Michal since he first met her. When Saul marries her off to him, he is overjoyed and brings her to his village. The village of Gallim is a small village that has strong familial bonds. While the village felt sorry for her at first, they eventually began to accept her as one of their own. Lemberger writes this story with very little dialogue and writes more on the internal conversation that Palti is having with himself, almost like a diary. Lemberger shows the emotions that occur between Palti and Gallim as Michal interacts with the village. At the beginning of the short story, Palti is joyful to be taking the person he loves to his village. However, the villagers seem to pity Michal for going from living in the palace to living in a small village. Near the middle of the story, Gallim began to accept Michal as one of their own and began to love her. After Michal learns of the deaths of her sister and her children, Michal began to feel depressed, and Palti and the village began to worry and feel sorry for her. When Abner arrives to take Michal away from Palti, Lemberger uses this opportunity to delve into the emotions of despair and sadness. As Abner takes Michal away, Palti begs and cries, as he says Michal is all he has. The village of Gallim also mourn her loss as she became one of them. They mourn her as if she has died since everyone knows that they will never see again. By doing this, Lemberger is showing that other people also suffered as consequences of the feud between David and Saul. The people of Gallim had to let go of one of their family members and Palti lost the love of this life and the only woman whom he thought would accept him despite his condition.

“I cried the whole way. I begged Abner to reconsider. I told him Michal and I would leave Gallim, leave Israel, that no one would hear from us again. I told him I just wanted my wife.

Michal walked silently beside me the whole time. Whatever will she had shown before was gone. Her hand clutched mine but otherwise she seemed slack, emptied out. The fight had left her.

Tears fell freely down my cheeks. ‘Why don’t you argue?’ I was desperate, angry even at her. ‘Do you want to go back there, to your *real* husband?’

She stayed quiet, mild no matter what I said. ‘You have taught me how to love and be loved. I will take that with me, because there will be no love where I am going.’ (253)”

Lemberger uses a lot of descriptive writing to evoke empathy from the readers as we read the heartbreaking moment in which Palti loses Michal. Lemberger wants to bring forth small characters that did not have much of an appearance in the Bible and show that these characters also have feelings and are not insignificant. This also adds to the cruel nature that postmodern writers paint David in. Although David’s character does not make an appearance in the short story, we can see how his actions affected Palti emotionally. From David’s perspective, it just seems like a normal husband who is reuniting with his wife after having gone through many challenges and obstacles that prevented him from being with her. However, it is the complete opposite from Palti’s point of view. Palti is losing his wife to the man who abandoned her to begin with. It is seen as a cruel act towards both Palti and Michal, as they love each other dearly and neither one of them wants to be separated.

Although these books are rewriting the same story, they are both quite different from each other. They show a variety of different emotions for the same scenario, or even have slight changes in scenarios across books. The authors express their views and opinions through their writing. By showing the viewpoint of different side characters, we get to see how the story can be shaped in different ways, from the slight changes in the relationships between the characters, to the different scenes that are different from each other. By changing the perspective of the stories, the reader is able to expand their own views of the characters. It allows the readers to see that the complexity of these stories is not just in white and black. There is more to it than just one side of the story and rewriting helps expand the readers overall perception of the story.

Taking the concept of rewriting into consideration, I decided to also try to rewrite the story of David and Saul myself. I wrote a small short-story based on the perspective of Jonathan, who was one of Saul's son and also best friends with David. Through his perspective, I wanted to show the admiration and respect that he has for both David and Saul, but also the dilemma that he will face by having a close relationship with both parties. By writing from the perspective of Jonathan and using both the Bible and *The Secret Book of Kings* as a backbone, this rewriting would fall under the postmodernism and retelling categories that I discussed earlier.

Tale of the Surrogate Prince

“Crown prince Jonathan, King Saul requests your presence in the throne room.” The young servant spoke as she bowed at the entrance of my chambers.

“I’ll be there momentarily.” I quickly finished writing the last words on the paper before stacking it with the others. Putting my pen aside, I stood up, changed my clothes into something proper for meeting with the king, and made my way to the throne room.

Upon arriving at the doors, I let out a small sigh before I spoke.

“Announce me.” Getting ready to meet with father took longer than I expected, but surely, he won’t be mad at me for being late a few minutes.

“Your majesty, crown prince Jonathan has arrived.” The two servants at the door each grabbed a handle and pulled the doors open. As I walked in, I looked to the ground in fear of meeting father’s eyes.

“Father, forgive my tardiness.”

“Do not fret, you’re just in time. Sit here.” He patted the empty spot next to him. Quickly making my way towards him, I sat down. With two claps of his hands, the side door opened and in walked a young man, handsome with reddish tinted hair.

“Your royal majesty, I am David, son of Jesse. I have been brought here to play music for the royal family of Israel.” He sat down near the wall opposite of us where the small stringed instrument laid, waiting to be played.

He grabbed the instrument and started playing a soft melody.

“Wow...” Michal, who was sitting on the other side of me exclaimed with wonder and curiosity in her eyes. She leaned forward, as to try to get a better look at the sone of Jesse.

“Amazing...” This sound... it's sounds almost heartbreaking. As he reached the end of the song, he slowly lowered the lyre, stood up, and bowed.

“Amazing! Son of Jesse, you have my acknowledgment as an excellent musician! A superb musician indeed!” Father stood up as he clapped.

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A few weeks later, walking through the hallways of the palace, I bumped into the son of Jesse.

“Crown prince, good evening.” David bowed his head towards me as a sign of respect.

“Please, call me Jonathan and skip the formalities when it's just us.”

“Where are you headed, son of Jesse?” After he played for us in the throne room, I found great interest in him. His playing was much different than any of the other palace musicians. His music has such a distinct sound. One that I've never heard before.

“I'm headed towards the garden. And please, call me David.”

“Oh, what a coincidence, I was just headed there myself. Care to walk there together, then?”

Continuing our stroll, I thought that this was a great opportunity to finally speak with him without having to worry about other people.

“Now that we finally have time to speak, I would like to praise your skills with the lyre. Father has brought in many musicians before, but none of them played beautifully like you. I guess you can say that they lacked a certain emotion.”

“My deepest gratitude, your highness- uh I mean, Jonathan.” Not missing my glare from using an honorific, he quickly switched to using my name.

“You know, growing up as the crown prince isn’t something that is all that great. I’ve never truly had a real friend. Everyone are only nice because of my father, or they try to be in good terms with me in order to reap benefits for when I become king.” Once we reached the garden, I sat on the edge of the water fountain. I looked at David and noticed that he kept standing in front of me, so I patted the space beside me and he sat down.

“David, we may not have known each other for a long time yet, but I would like for us to be friends.” I turned to him and held my hand out for him to shake, a sign of agreement and promise.

“As you wish Jonathan. I will do my best to a good and loyal friend.” Sealing the oath with a handshake.

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A couple of years passed, and David and I became good friends, sworn brothers. Promising to help each other in everything and look out for each other. About a year after our friendship, David confessed to me what the prophet Samuel said to him years back.

Prophet Samuel anointed David as the future king of Israel. A chosen one of God. At first, I was a little shocked, since my whole life I've been prepared to take the throne after father, but that is not the destiny that our God has set for me. Instead, I will devote myself to serving David when he becomes king.

I kept this information from father in fear that he may do something to David. Father has been preparing me to take the throne in the future and plans to hand it over to no one else but me. He has also been on edge lately due to the seemingly never-ending battle against the Philistines. I fear he may take David for a traitor that is trying to usurp the throne for his own benefit.

“Brother! Father has called for all the men of the palace for an emergency meeting in the throne room! Quickly!” Michal, my youngest sister, out of breath, barged into my room. Not wasting a second, she grabbed me by the arm and began to drag me towards the door.

“Wait, I need to dress properly.” Attempting to go back to change, Michal did not let her grip falter for a second.

“There's no time to waste. Father needs everyone there, now!” Making turns and going through multiple doors, we finally arrived at the main hallway where the throne room was located.

“What's so urgent that you have to personally drag me to the throne room?” Taking long strides to keep up with her rushed pace, we arrived at the entrance of the doors. She let go of my arm and looked at me with a worrying look on her face.

“Father will explain everything.” She flattened out the front part of her dress, stood up straight, and looked at the servants by the door. “Please, announce the crown prince and I.”

“Your majesty, crown prince Jonathan and princess Michal have arrived.” The two servants grabbed the handles of the doors and pulled them open. Michal walked ahead and I followed behind her. Inside the room were all the male servants and guards of the palace.

“Father, I have brought Jonathan.” Noticing that she didn’t leave, I questioned her about it and she said that father asked her to join the meeting as well. Father stood from his throne and began to speak.

“The meeting will begin now!” The meeting was about the battle with the Philistines that has been going on for a few years already. There hasn’t been any progress nor does there seem to be an end to the battle soon.

Father asked for half of the men in the room to join the battlefield, and the other half to remain and guard the palace. All people who come to work in the palace receive battle training every so often in case of an emergency, so they will be additional aid to our troops.

“Jonathan, I will send you out to lead the troops. I have faith that you will lead us to victory. Michal, I want you to work with Jonathan and discuss battle plans for the next few days before he departs.”

“Yes father, we shall do our best in our objectives.”

We spent the next few days discussing different strategies and plans in order to finally end this battle against the Philistines. Michal has always been interested in strategizing and has studied many different books regarding the topic, so she had great insight when it came to making battle plans.

The day finally arrived when I would depart to the battle location with the other men of the palace.

“Do you have everything?” Michal stood with me as I prepared to depart for the battle.

“Of course. The battle plans we’ve made are secure and loaded. We should be able to start turning the tide of the battle in our favor soon.” Finishing the last strap of the armor and grabbing my sword, I made my way to the stables, where we all agreed to meet before departing.

“Is everyone here? Today we will set out to aid the troops fighting the Philistines and end this battle once and for all. I have faith in each and every one of us that we will return victorious. Let us set off in good mind, heart and spirit.”

Upon arriving at the camp site, the battle commander and group leaders made their way to us.

“Crown prince, it’s an honor to have you here. Please, let’s speak in the main tent to discuss with you the current situation.”

After the commander finished giving me a quick rundown of the current situation, I grabbed the battle plans that Michal and I created to share with him and the leaders. However, a few minutes after we started the discussion, a soldier came in, breathing frantically and spoke.

“Crown prince Jonathan! The commander of the Philistines is making a proposal!”

As we all hurried outside, thoughts of what the proposal could be flooded my head.

Will we be able to refuse their proposal if it doesn’t seem to benefit us? Or will we be forced to give into it, given the current situation?

“Prince of Israel! I propose a battle between our strongest soldiers! Let your strongest soldier come forth to fight our strongest!” The Philistine commander gave a sinister smirk as he spoke, giving me a bad feeling of what was about to happen next.

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“Bring out the giant!”

“Bring Goliath! This battle ends today with the victory of the Philistines!” The Philistine soldiers made way as the ground started to rumble.

“Victory to the Philistine’s!”

The ground rumbled as the Philistines revealed their soldier for the one-on-one fight. A giant by the name of Goliath.

Soldier after soldier, they all fell powerless in the hands of the giant Goliath. At this rate, we won’t have an army to fight enemies anymore.

“Come on! Is this all you have!? Where are the real soldiers!? This is child’s play!” The mocking tone of the giant was heard through every soldier on the battlefield, spreading terror and panic amongst our men.

“Soldiers on the front lines! Retreat back to base!” We need a new strategy if we want to defeat the giant and the Philistines. As we proceeded to retreat, the thundering voice of the giant continued to ripple through the air.

“Huh? Are you running away!? Why are you fleeing!? Did your god perhaps abandon you already? Hahaha! Maybe he didn’t abandon you but instead he never existed in the first place! All talk but absolutely nothing to show for it!”

Turning around to glare at him, I clenched my fists so tight in anger that my nails dug into the flesh of my palms and caused them to bleed.

How dare he-

“How dare you mock our God, you insolent! You should be on your knees thanking him that you are breathing right now, for our God, the God of Israel, is the one true God!” The commander shouted from beside me, beating me to the verbal retaliation.

“Jonathan,” a hand landed on my shoulder, startling me. But what startled me more was the owner of the voice. “Let me fight him.”

“David? What are you doing here!? You should be at the palace with father! Have you gone insane to come out here and—” Though I started to reprimand him, I was cut off by David, who repeated his words again.

“Let me fight the giant.” There was a dark hint in his eyes, and his grip on my shoulder tightened a little.

“No, I can’t let you do that. You’re not a soldier, for crying out loud!” I tried to convince David that it was not a good idea and that he would most likely end up dead just like the rest of the soldiers that went up against Goliath. However, nothing seemed to persuade him to change his mind and back down.

“I say let the boy at the giant!” The commander commented.

“Commander! How can you say that?” In disbelief with the commander’s suggestion, I turned to David, who bent down to the ground and grabbed a handful of stones. Putting the stones in his pocket, David made his way to the giant.

“Hey, wait-!” The commander grabbed my arm and pulled me back, preventing me from stopping David from going on this suicide mission.

“Nothing you say is going to stop him, so just let him do whatever he plans on doing. I doubt the boy is foolish to engage a fight where he has no chance of winning.”

Hesitantly, I stood back and watched as David got closer to the giant.

“Oh, another pipsqueak? No matter, I’ll just finish you just like I did all the others!” The giant Goliath raised his sword and made a run towards David.

David grabbed one of the stones and put it on the sling shot. He shot the stone towards Goliath, but the giant just swung his sword through the air, swatting the stone away. He raised his sword again, but this time aiming for David.

David ran between the giant’s legs and started to prepare his next shot. Goliath turned around and dashed towards David. David didn’t have a lot of time to wind up his shot and missed.

Goliath’s sword came down and almost hit David, but David dodged by throwing himself to the side, causing the sword to lodge itself in the ground.

Quickly standing up, David grabbed a third stone from his pocket. While Goliath struggled to take the sword out of the ground, David started winding up his next shot.

“Hey, giant!” David yelled out towards Goliath. The giant turned around, momentarily stopping from pulling at his sword. “Our God, is eternal!” With those words, David shot the stone straight towards Goliath’s head.

A loud noise resonated through the area as the stone made contact with the giant’s forehead. The impact knocked him down and he made no further movements.

“Is it over?” The soldiers started whispering amongst themselves, questioning if the giant had been taken down indefinitely or if he would get up again.

David walked over towards the giant. He grabbed the hilt of the sword that Goliath had tried to pull from the ground. Making his way over to the head of the giant, David raised the sword and brought it down on Goliath’s neck, successfully decapitating him.

“He did it...” Astonished at his unexpected victory, there was not a single sound from either side of the battlefield. David let go of the sword and looked towards me. As my eyes locked with his, he raised his fist as a sign of victory. Coming back to my senses, I shouted out to our men.

“Everyone! Charge forward! This is our chance to turn the tide in our favor!” As we rushed towards the Philistines, the Philistine began to flee. Attempting to get away.

Heart racing, I ran towards David and embraced him. Having greatly feared for his life, I didn’t want to scold him, but I couldn’t help myself.

“Don’t ever do something like that again! None of the soldiers were able to stand a chance against him, but you recklessly jumped in the battle! Think about yourself for once!”

“I can make no promises. But it all turned out well in our favor.”

“Yes, and it’s all thanks to you.” Giving him a smile, I turned towards the battle and joined the men in the fight.

“Glory to Israel and our God!”

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Months had passed since the battle against the Philistines finally came to an end and the Israelites continued to take to the streets to celebrate our victory.

After we had returned from the battle, I told father about everything that went down. Amazed by David’s feat, father decided to reward him by giving him Michal’s hand in marriage and naming him second commander of the army. The wedding occurred about two weeks after the battle concluded.

David also started his training as second commander of the army, which I was in charge of. Since father wanted me to familiarize myself more with political affairs, he assigned me to lead the troops.

I was able to spend more time with David through the training. I had to teach how to lead and the tactics of being a good commander. Michal would often join us and offer her insight, which I was grateful for. I also had to teach David how to fight and use weapons, as he would need to know in case battle uprose.

“Hah, I think that was enough training for today. You should go get some rest.” David and I had been training near the fountain all afternoon and the fatigue was starting to catch up.

As David reached down to get his gear, I noticed the changes in his physique. His back was broader, the muscles in his arms and legs were more defined, and his posture had definitely gotten better.

“David, wait a moment before you go.” I walked towards him and started to take off my armor and placed it on David. I strapped the belt around him and let him hold my sword and bow.

“And last but not least.” I draped my robe over his shoulders. The robe that signified my status as royalty.

“Marvelous, a fitting look for our future king.” I gave him a slight bow. Looking at him, we both started laughing and continued to chatter about the future. Unbeknownst to us, were the eyes that watched us from afar.

A few weeks later, father called for a meeting to discuss the threats of a neighboring kingdom.

“David, I want you to take the lead in this operation. I think you should be well adept by now.” Father gave David a slight smirk as he spoke.

“Father, I don’t think—”

“Silence Jonathan! He needs to eventually be put to the test. He can’t stand behind you forever. And if he manages to survive, then good for him.”

“I’ll do it. Thank you for trusting this to me.” David went and prepared for the battle. Taking around 300 men, they departed and made their way.

The next week, I waited anxiously for any news until one of the servants ran through the hall yelling.

“David and the troops have returned from battle! A successful victory from the second commander!”

“Saul has killed a thousand, David his ten thousand!” The people of Israel sang as David and the rest of the troops made their way down the streets to the palace. Although it was a joyous moment for many of us, there was one person who was not content.

“Bring David here immediately!” Father’s voice resonated though the halls as he clutched the arm rest of his throne.

Upon arriving at the palace, David was taken away to the throne room to meet with father and I followed after them. Father had an angry look on his face as he laid his eyes on David.

“What is it that you are planning? An uprising? Are you planning to steal my position as king!”

David looked at the ground in contemplation, as father was not entirely wrong, but it was also not what he thought.

“Father it’s not what you think.” I muttered silently, but father definitely heard me due to the tense and silent atmosphere of the room.

“If not, then what!?” Father’s anger only increased the longer David remained silent. David finally heaved a sigh and looked up to where father sat on his throne.

“I will tell you the truth.” David proceeded to tell father about how prophet Samuel had anointed him as the next king of Israel as told by God.

“Nonsense! The next in line to the throne is Jonathan, my own flesh and blood!”

“Father, please understand that this is the path that our lord and savior has decided for us. I have already accepted David as the new king, and I plan to follow him as a loyal subject.” I tried to reason with father, but he only got angrier.

“See! He’s even brainwashed you into believing his fabrication!” Father stood up from his throne, his face turned red from pure rage.

“Please do not question the decision of our God. Unlike what you are thinking, I do not plan on taking the throne from you by force, I will take that position whenever God decides it.” The calmness in David’s voice only spurred father’s anger more.

“Enough of that!” Father took the spear from the guard that stood near him and threw it towards David. I yelled out his name, thinking that he was done for since he didn’t even try to dodge. However, the spear didn’t even touch a single hair on David, which only infuriated father even more, if that was even possible at this point.

“Out of my sight! The both of you!” David and I walked out of the throne room and headed towards the fountain in the yard. My heart was beating so hard I thought it would pop out of my chest. I looked towards David, and he had a distant look on his face. However, I noticed that his hands were slightly shaking. Putting a hand on his shoulder, he flinched slightly and looked towards me.

“Hey, don’t worry. We’ll figure something out. For now, just lay low and try not to cross paths with father.” I said trying to reassure him, but I felt like I was mostly trying to reassure myself.

The next day, I decide to try to speak to father, expecting him to have calmed down from the events that happened the previous day. However, as I arrived at the doors of the throne room, I

heard voices from inside. I signaled to the servants by the door to keep quiet of my presence as I leaned closer to the door, trying to hear what the conversation was about.

“I want him brought to me as soon as possible. That insolent son of Jesse! I might have failed with the spear last time, but this time will surely make no mistake.” Upon hearing the words that father said, I immediately started to look for David. I made my way to the library and found him there.

“David, you have to go.” I grabbed his arm and started pulling him to a different place.

“Why? What’s going on?” Although he was confused, he kept up with my pace.

“Father plans on killing you and you need to get out of the palace.” We soon heard multiple footsteps and we started running towards Michal’s chamber, which also became David’s when they wedded. Michal was sitting on the bed, reading a book, when we burst through the doors.

“Michal, there’s no time to explain, but I need you to help David escape while I hold off the guards for a while.” Not waiting for her response, I left the chambers and went to look for the guards in hopes of distracting them for a few moments while David could escape.

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Chaos arose in the palace.

Furious with David’s escape, father began planning ways to capture him and get rid of him. He sent out a group of men to search for David’s whereabouts in order to track him down.

After about two weeks had passes, a soldier finally arrived and informed up that there were sighting of a man that fit David’s description in the next major city over.

“Finally, I have reached you, son of Jesse. Prepare the troops for immediate departure!” As soon as the news reached father, he wasted no time in preparing to chase down David.

After about two days, we reached a large cave that was on the outskirts of the city where David was spotted.

“We shall rest here for a bit before continuing.” I sat down near the wall and took a sip of my water, as I started to feel a little sleepy and eventually fell asleep. However, I was not the only person who ended up falling asleep at that time.

The next morning, we awoke to the yelling of a certain individual that father had been desperately trying to find.

“King Saul! Look here! I have cut a piece of your robe as a sign that I mean no harm. While you were all asleep, I snuck into the cave and ripped a piece of your robe that and chose not to kill you!” Father tried to make a run towards him, but for some reason, neither of us nor our troops were able to move. When we were finally able to move, David was long gone and nowhere near in sight. Though it was for a brief moment, I was glad to have seen David in good health.

After returning to the palace, father was furious. Not only did David slip through his fingers, but the Philistines had once again started to stir up trouble with us.

The moment we got back to the palace, a messenger had informed us that the Philistines had started another battle. For now, father would have to forget about catching David and focus more on defending the kingdom from the sudden attack.

“Jonathan, I want your brother and you to also accompany me on this battle. We’ll finally put the Philistines in their place, and they’ll never dare to attack us again.”

Although we won the battle against the Philistines last time, the situation this time was much different. This time, the Philistine army was about three times the size as it was last time. This time, we were overpowered by the enemy.

“Everyone! Retreat! Return back to base!” Soldier after soldier fell and soon, a group of Philistines surrounded my brothers and me.

“Look, it’s the princes of Israel. All in one place and surrounded by the enemy. What are you going to do now? Your God can’t help you out of this one, hahaha!” The Philistines continued to mock us, as we were now helpless.

“Our God saves us.” Malchishua, the younger of us muttered as he glared at the Philistines.

“Let’s see if he can save you from this!” The Philistine soldier raised his sword and slashed it down on Malchishua’s body, instantly killing him.

“Brother!” Ishvi, the second oldest, caught Malchishua’s body before it hit the ground. I looked around in panic, trying to find someone who could come to our aid, but unfortunately, I could see no one. All there was were corpses and the smell of imminent death. Is this the end? Will I not be able to serve David as the next future king? Is father still alive? My thoughts were interrupted as Ishvi tried to attack the soldiers barehanded, only to fail as one of the soldiers impaled his torso with a sword.

I helplessly watched as the life faded from his eyes. Unable to do anything else, I simply accepted my fate as I prayed to God, for these soldiers were merely instruments of his to use.

“Only one left! Hahaha! Abandoned like a mutt on the streets.”

“I have not been abandoned. I am simply being liberated of my duties as my Lord’s servant.

Liberated by your hands as He is the one who wields you. I have simply accepted that outcome.”

Anger flashed in the Philistines’ eyes as he raised his sword to strike me down.

Though I didn’t get to see David become king, I was content that I was able to be a part of his life. As the Philistines left us there to die, I watched in the distance as father limped towards us.

The amount of blood lost was starting to make spots appear in my vision, but I could make out the look of agony on father’s face as he tried to get to us. Upon realizing that he would not be able to, I watched as the last thing my eyes saw was father throwing himself on his sword.

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