

# The Army in the Treetops

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*After King Saul died fighting the Philistines, the people of Judah made David their king. And although everybody knew that God intended David to rule over all of Israel, there were other men who declared war on him and tried to stop his rise to power. Many times they invaded towns and killed innocent people, which only made David angry. Unfortunately for those would-be kings, the Lord had no intention of letting anybody rule Israel but David! God helped David in ways that his enemies couldn't even understand. One by one, they were all beaten. The Philistines in particular hated David, and David wanted to punish them for killing Saul. So when their massive armies came after David, they found themselves fighting God as well. This story comes from 2 Samuel 5:1-25.*

After Saul was killed by the Philistines, David came out of hiding.

He was quickly crowned king of Judah...

and then the wars against him *really* got started.

He successfully fought his enemies for over seven years

and protected all those who lived in his kingdom.

In time the rest of the leaders of Israel came to him

at his capital in Hebron and said,

“Even while Saul was our king, we knew that

the Lord would someday give his throne to you.

That time has come. Be our king as well.”

So they made David their king that day

and he made the land safe from their enemies.

His first move was to take the fortress of Jerusalem from the Jebusites,

an old enemy of the Israelites.

The Jebusites had bragged that

even blind and lame warriors could keep David's men out!

But David's men invaded the city anyway,

using the water tunnels beneath it.

Then David made Jerusalem the new capital of the kingdom of Israel.

He built even stronger walls to protect it

and King Hiram of Tyre sent his greetings to the new king,

along with stonemasons and carpenters

to help David build a new palace there.

David became more and more powerful,

and that's when he realized how much God was blessing him.

But then the Philistines also realized what had happened,

that no one could drive their old enemy David

from the throne of Israel.

David had made fools of them,

living in Philistia and pretending to be their friend,

even while he was fighting against them.

And now he was the king of their longtime enemy?

*That made him too dangerous to ignore!*

So the Philistines decided to capture David.  
But he learned of their plan and hid in Jerusalem  
so when their army gathered to attack the city from the west,  
from the Valley of Rephaim,  
David was ready for them.  
He said to his priest, "You know the Lord's mind.  
Ask Him if I should go out and fight them.  
Will He allow me to win?"

The priest replied, "Yes, the Lord is with you, my king.  
He says He will give you victory!"

So David took his men to Baal-peraim,  
a mountain overlooking the Valley of Rephaim,  
and he defeated the Philistines easily—  
so easily, in fact, that as they ran away, they dropped  
the idols they thought would give them victory over David!  
Then David and his men took the idols as prizes of war,  
further humiliating the Philistines.

But the Philistines didn't learn from their defeat.  
They waited a while and then returned to the Valley,  
perhaps hoping their idols would give them better luck this time—  
if they could find them, that is .  
When David found out they had returned, he called his priest once again  
and asked if the Lord would give him victory again.

The priest told him the Lord would...  
"But this time, the Lord doesn't want you to attack them head on.  
Instead, circle around behind them and  
hide under the balsam trees there.  
When you hear the sound of marching feet in the leaves above you,  
**ATTACK!**  
That will be the Lord's signal that He has already begun to fight for you."

So David did as he was told.  
He and his army circled around behind the enemy and waited.  
Soon they heard fighting ahead of them...  
but they also heard the sound of a huge army marching  
in the balsam trees above them!  
They attacked and, as they did,  
they saw their enemy was in a panic  
and already fighting among themselves.  
And when they saw David and his men attacking,  
they began to run. David's army gave chase  
and the Philistines could not get away.  
Very few made it back to their homeland.

David had many flaws, both as a king and as a man.

But when he chose to follow God's commands  
and seek His wisdom before he acted,

David was successful enough to be remembered as  
the greatest king Israel ever had

and his enemies could never stand against him.

And David followed God most of the time,

enough that God called him a man after His own heart.