

# King Solomon and Goliath, Jr.

by Ahimaaz, Court Historian



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Illustrated by Steve Solomon



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# King Solomon and Goliath, Jr.

THE HERALD BLEW ON HIS TRUMPET; AND THE SPECTATORS in the hall ceased to chatter. “First case this morning—Goliath, Jr., versus the Crown,” he announced.

A short, balding man entered the throne room. Dangling from his belt were a stylus and wax tablet—the paraphernalia of a scribe. “Come, come,” he said, beckoning to someone in the lobby.

And a giant—a grotesquely tall man—followed him in. To avoid the top of the doorway, the giant ducked upon entering. But he miscalculated, and with a loud thud, struck his head. Reeling from the blow, he staggered into the hall.

“O indeed?” said the scribe. “We’ve knocked our head? On a *low entranceway to a public facility*?” With a gleeful look he began making notes on the tablet. “Let’s see, about nine in the morning. Lots of witnesses. No warning sign posted. Yes, yes!”

The giant was groaning and clutching his head. Taking him by the arm, the scribe led him up to the throne. The pair bowed to King Solomon.

“You may proceed,” said Solomon.

“Greetings and salutations, Your Highness,” said the scribe in a crisp, businesslike tone. “I am Shuba the Scribe. I represent Goliath, Jr., the gentleman standing—or I should say, towering—beside me. A citizen of Philistia, he wishes to file a wrongful-death suit. The suit is against the Crown. That is to say, against the House of David, the dynasty of which you are currently the incumbent—and therefore the defendant in this case.”

“You’re suing me?”

“That’s correct. And given the obvious conflict of interest, I respectfully ask that you recuse yourself—that you

reassign this case to some disinterested, and therefore impartial, magistrate. Failing that, I would ask that you bend over backwards to arrive at a just verdict.”

“I shall not recuse myself. And I always seek to be just. Present your case, sir.”

“As you wish, Your Highness—though may the record show that your decision to retain jurisdiction was made hastily, and without consultation with advisers. Now then. Our suit concerns an event of some sixty years ago. Why, you ask, the delay in filing? To begin with, my client was a child at the time, incapable of engaging the services of a scribe. Furthermore, as a resident of Philistia, he has been unaware of the opportunities for redress provided by our laws. Unaware until recently, when—as an advocate for the aggrieved—I sought him out and explained to Mr. Goliath the legal avenues open to him.

“My client comes before you today as a victim. As someone who has suffered—both materially and psychologically—from the effects of a wrongful death. The death in question was that of his father, Goliath, Sr. A tall, formidable warrior, the father was serving in the army of Philistia. While so serving, he was slain by your father, David son of Jesse—then but a humble shepherd. The facts of the episode are well-known. During the war with Philistia, the two met in single combat. In the course of that combat Goliath, Sr., was slain, in a brutal and humiliating fashion. I submit that the death was wrongful; that it deprived my client—during the formative years of his life—of his father’s support, both financial and emotional; and that it entitles him therefore to compensation from the heirs of David—that is to say, from the coffers of the Crown.”

Goliath, Jr., leaned over to the scribe. “What does ‘compensation’ mean?” he asked in a deep, gruff voice.

“Money, money,” whispered Shuba. “Now then, Your Highness—what constitutes a wrongful death? Based on our juridic traditions, we may formulate the following definition. It is the taking of a human life—whether deliberately or accidentally—under circumstances in which (a) the resultant harm was foreseeable; (b) the taker of the life acted maliciously, negligently, or capriciously; and (c) self-defense,

military service, or participation in a stoning—duly sanctioned by a magistrate—was not a factor. I contend that the slaying of Goliath, Sr., was just such a death, and therefore worthy of compensation.

“Let us examine the facts of the slaying. To begin with, was it justifiable as self-defense? Hardly.” Shuba pulled a scroll from his pocket and unrolled it. “I have here a chapter from the Chronicle of King Saul, which I was permitted to copy from the royal archives. In it we learn that David—responding to a *general* challenge issued by Goliath—*volunteered* to engage him in single combat. In a fight to the death! Allow me to quote from the Chronicle: ‘And David said, For the sake of Israel, I will go and fight with this Philistine. In defending my flock, I have slain lions and bears. And now will I gladly go against the Philistine, who so rudely defies us.’ So David fought Goliath *gladly*, with the intention of slaying him. Only secondarily—in pursuit of that goal—would he have sought to defend himself.

“So it wasn’t self-defense. All right, was the slaying justifiable on some other basis? Did David commit it, perhaps, as a member of the military? Again, let’s consult the Chronicle. And it tells us that young David was not a soldier at the time. He was simply visiting the front, in order to deliver provisions to his older brothers, who *were* soldiers. It’s right here: ‘Ten breads and ten cheeses did he bring to his brethren.’ While doing so, he heard about the challenge and decided to become Israel’s ‘champion.’ Champion he may have been. But he was not—I repeat, not—a soldier. So we cannot exonerate him on that account.”

“It would seem to me,” said Solomon, “that by volunteering to fight Goliath, he had in effect become a soldier.”

“Nonsense,” said Shuba. “A soldier is someone who dons armor, marches in ranks, takes orders from an officer—none of which did your father do. He was a mere delivery boy! A bringer of breads and cheeses. Moreover, a soldier fights in behalf of his country. What was David fighting for? I’ll tell you what for. *That reward King Saul was offering!* To quote from the Chronicle: ‘The man who killeth the Philistine the king will enrich with great riches and will give a daughter in marriage.’ Hey, not bad for a few minutes’

work. The point is that he was serving himself, not his country.

“And there’s a further problem. Yes, David was responding to Goliath’s challenge. Unfortunately, he did not *qualify* to respond to it. Listen to the exact wording of the challenge. ‘And Goliath said, Choose a man for yourself, and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants. Give me a man, that we may fight together.’ But don’t you see? David was not a man—he was a boy! Poor Goliath. Imagine his dismay when a *beardless youth* responds to his challenge. Now Goliath, Sr., was a warrior—a trained killer. Let’s not gloss over that. But he was also a parent and a human being. Imagine how he must have felt when a virtual child came out to fight with him. His heart could scarcely have been in such a fight—a factor that no doubt contributed to his defeat.”

Goliath, Jr., was nodding somberly.

“But we come now to the crux of the matter. And that concerns the weapon David used. Think back to Goliath’s challenge. He had called for an Israelite to come out and meet him in single combat—to *duel* with him. Did he specify a weapon? Of course not—he didn’t have to. Look, he’s standing there with his sword. And the Israelites are standing opposite him with their swords. So it’s obvious what the weapon is to be.

“But out comes David—and what’s he carrying? His shepherd’s staff. And *concealed* in his pouch, a sling. And Goliath cries out, ‘Am I a dog that you come to me with a stick?’ David has insulted him; and the big fellow starts to lose his cool—the last thing you want to do when fighting a duel.

“Goliath lets out a roar and charges David—intending, surely, to immobilize this irksome youth, not kill him. But what does David do? He keeps darting away, like a pesky fly. And when he’s got Goliath totally flustered, he makes his move. He pulls out that sling. Loads it with a stone. And with a shot to the forehead, brings his opponent crashing to the ground—slays Goliath!

“Has he done so fairly and squarely? No, he has done so *wrongly*. For he has violated—by using a weapon *never* employed in duels, and for which Goliath could not have been prepared—the implicit terms of the encounter.

“So David has emerged victorious. The tall warrior is lying at his feet, slain. But is he satisfied? O no. For now he picks up Goliath’s sword and—*gratuitously*—lops off the dead man’s head. With Goliath’s own sword, as a final indignity! A sword, by the way, that hangs today in this very hall—a macabre trophy of a shameful deed.

“To sum up then. Goliath, Sr., was slain in a malicious and deliberate fashion. The slayer was not serving as a soldier at the time. He was ineligible—on account of his age—to accept Goliath’s challenge. And he capriciously violated the terms of the encounter. The slaying of Goliath was therefore wrongful and subject to redress.

“Your Highness, the loss of his father was a terrible blow to this man. I ask that he be compensated with a generous monetary award. We’re also demanding the return of Goliath’s sword—a family heirloom to which his son is entitled. I should point out that my client is virtually impoverished. He has been working all his life in a menial capacity—in the orchards of Philistia, as a cherry-picker.”

“And a darned good one!” said Goliath, Jr.

“I rest my case,” said Shuba. “I assume we’ll be adjourning now, to allow you to ponder the complex issues that have been raised?”

“Not at all,” said Solomon. “May the record show that I arrived at an immediate decision—thus sparing your client any delay in our legal process. Though a Philistine, he has the same rights as anyone else to a speedy resolution of his case.”

“Thank you,” said Goliath, Jr.

Solomon rose from the throne and began to pace about. “I’ll begin by responding to your contention that David was not a soldier, and that the slaying was wrongful on that account. To be sure, the young shepherd who was visiting the front that day was just that—a shepherd. But in those days, ours was a citizens’ army. Its ranks were filled by ordinary men, who assembled in times of war. In offering to

fight Goliath, David had—by dint thereof—joined the army and become a soldier.

“As for that reward—what of it? True, David was not about to turn it down. After all, the hand of a princess! Yet the reward was not his prime motivation in accepting the challenge. What then was? Return to your scroll, sir. And read us the lines that describe his reaction upon learning of the reward.”

With a look of annoyance, Shuba located the passage and read it aloud. “And David said, Is that indeed what shall be given to the man who killeth this Philistine, and who thus taketh away the disgrace that his challenge, unanswered, has brought upon Israel? For who does this heathen think he is, to so defy the armies of the living GOD?”

“That doesn’t sound particularly self-serving to me,” said Solomon. “Now you also claim that he wasn’t qualified to respond to the challenge. That it called for a *man* to come forward, and that David was but a youth. I would answer you thus: David *began* the day as a youth. But upon accepting Goliath’s challenge, he became a man! There are transformative moments in our lives. Surely that was such a moment.

“So we come now to the crux of your argument—the question of weaponry. Did David’s use of a sling violate the ‘implicit terms’ of the encounter? Now I must say that I find this notion of ‘implicit terms’ to be highly questionable. Goliath called for single combat, pure and simple. He specified no particular weapon, and presumably was willing to deal with anything—this was, after all, a boastful, swaggering giant! But let’s accept your premise. Let’s agree that both men were supposed to use swords. And let’s look closely at what actually happened.

“As I recall, King Saul offered David the use of his own sword and armor. David tried them on, but found them too heavy and cumbersome. So he went out with only a staff and a sling. Yet in trying on the sword, he would seem to be acknowledging those ‘implicit terms.’

“So—picture the scene. David goes out to meet Goliath, who’s waving his sword and shouting insults. Goliath roars and charges. And David begins to dart about, with such



agility that the giant is unable to catch him. Suddenly David skids to a halt, pulls out his sling, loads it, and—what? What *exactly* happened at that point? Sir, I'd like you to read the relevant passage.”

Shuba frowned, located the passage, and read it aloud. “And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead. And the stone sunk into his forehead, and he fell upon his face to the earth. But there was no sword in the hand of David. Therefore David ran and stood upon the Philistine, and took the giant's sword and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled.”

“Aha!” said Solomon. “We see that David only *stunned* Goliath with the stone. He then *slew the giant with a sword*—thus complying with those ‘implicit terms’ of yours.”

“But it wasn't his own sword!”

“So what? That David was able to come up with a sword at all is a testimony to his resourcefulness and daring.”

“But he used a sling!”

“So he did. But the sling had merely an ancillary function. It was an *accessory* to the sword. Its use was quite legitimate, serving to offset the advantages—of size, armor, and experience—that Goliath enjoyed.

“To conclude then. David *was* a soldier. He *did* qualify—given his new-found maturity—to accept the challenge. And he *did* satisfy the terms of the encounter. I therefore find the slaying of Goliath, Sr., to have been a justifiable homicide. Your suit alleging a wrongful death is dismissed. You may go, gentlemen.”

Goliath, Jr., looked disbelievingly at Shuba. The scribe shrugged and said: “You can't win them all.”

“But you told me it was a sure thing!”

“One never knows,” said Shuba. Turning to Solomon, he said: “Your Highness, we would like to appeal the verdict.”

“On what grounds?” asked Solomon.

“At one point you referred to my client as a ‘Philistine.’ Now that term has come to have negative connotations. It denotes an unrefined or uncultured individual. Thus, your use of it served to belittle Mr. Goliath—who should be

referred to as a ‘citizen of Philistia’—and may have adversely affected your decision.”

“That’s ridiculous, sir. The verdict stands. You may go.”

“One moment, Your Highness. There’s an additional suit we wish to file. Upon entering this hall, my client struck his head on the doorway. A sign should have been posted, warning giants—or ‘the specially heightened,’ as such individuals are properly denominated—to stoop before entering. Moreover, they should not have to suffer the indignity of stooping. That doorway needs to be raised. My client should be compensated for both his physical anguish and the humiliation he suffered as he sought to enter this public facility.”

“That’s equally ridiculous,” said Solomon. “Begone, the both of you!”

“As for your use of the term ‘giant,’ which served to belittle my—”

“Out!”

Shuba led Goliath, Jr. out of the hall. The giant was glowering and grumbling.

Captain Benaiah came up to the throne with papers to be signed. “That was a pair,” he said. “But you gave them what they deserved.”

“I gave them justice,” said Solomon, shaking his head ruefully. “But in order to do so, I had to resort to sophistry. To the kind of cleverness of which that scribe is a master. My argument that David made use of a sword and thereby complied with the terms of the encounter? Technically, that was true. It was also meaningless. Do you know what David was *truly* armed with?”

“No, what?”

“With his faith—his trust in GOD. It served him in place of sword and armor, and gave him the courage to face Goliath. Had Mr. Shuba delved deeper into his scroll, he would have found some quotes to hurl back at me. For example, David said: ‘The Lord, who saved me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of the Philistine.’ And also: ‘You come to me with a sword; but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the GOD of the army of Israel, whom you have defied. The

Lord does not save by sword and spear.’ Mr. Shuba could have used those quotes to counter my argument about the sword. And I might have had to decide in his favor.”\*



Out in the lobby Goliath, Jr., was fuming.

“So I came all this way for nothing?”

“I’m afraid so,” said Shuba.

“I don’t get a cent?”

“Unfortunately, no. The King ruled against us.”

“I’ll tell you something. I don’t care about the money. Something dawned on me as I listened to that account of my father’s death. What I really crave is vengeance—for what *his* father did to *my* father. And I shall have it!”

Goliath, Jr., pushed Shuba aside. And he charged back into the hall—again knocking his head. Groaning, he staggered up to the throne.

“I have returned, King Solomon,” he said. “That trial was a travesty. I want satisfaction for what was done to my father. And I shall have it—from you personally!”

Having followed him in, Shuba sought to restrain his client. But the giant lunged toward the throne. Benaiah grabbed him and wrestled him away. The giant broke loose, tripped, and went crashing to the floor.

Guards piled onto him. But he climbed to his feet, tossing them aside and lumbering over to the trophy wall. There he took down his father’s sword and waved it wildly.

“Come, fight me, O King!” said Goliath, Jr. “Meet me in a duel, as our fathers met. Give me satisfaction, not empty words.”

“All right, sir, let us duel,” said Solomon. “But as the

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\* What *did* kill Goliath? The First Book of Samuel contains two versions of his demise. In verse 50 we are told that the stone to his forehead killed him. But in verse 51 his death is attributed to decapitation by sword. This contradiction is an example of a common occurrence in the Bible: the original editor, confronted with two surviving—and conflicting—traditions, solved the problem by including both.

challenged party, the choice of weapons goes to me, does it not? And I choose wits. Let us match them—in a riddle contest.”

“A riddle contest?” Goliath, Jr., broke into a grin. “I like riddles. And I’m smarter than you think. Okay, you’re on.” Lowering the sword, he let the guards take it from him.

“You may go first,” said Solomon. “Riddle me.”

The giant put his hands on his hips and delivered his riddle:

I conquer lions, tigers too,  
They can’t withstand me—nor shall you.  
I overcome the angry bull;  
The growling bear—he too I’ll rule!  
The mighty king, in fancy crown,  
Falls at my feet—comes tumbling down.  
Dauntless warriors, when I arrive,  
Drop their swords and downward dive.  
When day is done, no one’s left  
Who by my hand is not bereft.  
Who am I? What thing or man?  
Tell me, tell me, if you can.

Solomon thought for a moment. Then a gleam came into his eye. “*Sleep*,” he said.

“Drat!” said Goliath, Jr., stamping his foot.

“My turn now. Answer me this.” And Solomon delivered his riddle:

I move too slow, I move too fast.  
I never come, I’ve gone on past.  
All living things do I devour:  
The bird, the beast, the tree, the flower.  
The pyramids to dust I’ll grind,  
And other works of vain mankind.  
Mountains reaching to the sky,  
I’ll wear them down, by and by.  
Monarchs who, so proud and grand,  
From their lofty thrones command—  
The kings of Babylon, Tyre, Thrace:  
Their very memory I’ll erase!  
And the cities of their lands

I'll leave as ruins 'mid shifting sands.  
Who am I? My name disclose.  
Tell me or I'll pull your nose.

The giant wrinkled his brow and thought. Then he said:  
"The god Dagon?"

"No."

"Moloch?"

"No."

"Marduk?"

"No. The answer is *Time*."

"O gosh."

"Hold on a minute," said Shuba. "Surely my client's original response was equally valid. After all, Dagon—the chief god of Philistia—has tremendous power. And one of the instruments of that power is time. He *uses* time, to effect his will. Moreover, isn't it unfair that you—the poser of the riddle—should determine its answer? Talk about a conflict of interest! My client's answer satisfied your conditions, and should be deemed correct."

"I'm sorry," said Solomon, "the answer was *Time*. But I'll give you another chance, Mr. Goliath. Answer me this: How many scribes does it take to refill the oil in a lamp?"

"One?"

"No."

"Two?"

"No."

"I give up. How many?"

"*How many can you afford?*"

"I protest that riddle!" said Shuba. "It's a slur on my profession. We scribes provide a vital service to the public. Shouldn't we be paid for our efforts? And if occasionally we work in teams—to examine in depth some critical issue—what's wrong with that?"

"As a matter of fact," said Goliath, Jr., "Mr. Shuba isn't even charging me."

"I'm not?" said Shuba.

"You told me this would be on a 'contingency basis.' That there'd be a fee only if we were successful."

"That's correct. But the contingency was getting the case

heard. We were successful in getting it heard. So you owe me my fee.”

“How much is that?”

“How much have you got?”

“You scoundrel—I’ll wring your neck!”

Shuba let out a yelp and fled the hall, with the giant chasing after him.\*

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\* Who exactly was the senior Goliath—the fearsome warrior whom David fought?

He may have been simply a Philistine of exceptional height (“six cubits and a span,” or about ten feet, according to the Book of Samuel). Or he may have been a true giant—a descendant of the original inhabitants of Canaan. There had been several tribes of these giants: the Anakim, the Nephilim, the Rephilim. “In days of old, giants abounded,” reports the Apocalypse of Baruch. “They were of great stature and expert in war. But the Lord chose them not, nor gave He knowledge unto them; and they were destroyed, for they had no wisdom, and perished through their foolishness.”

That Goliath was a historical personage seems undeniable, given the detailed information about him found in the Bible. He is described as a Gittite—a resident of the town of Gath in Philistia. His spear was as long as a weaver’s beam. His mother was a giantess named Orpa; and his four sons were giants. The sons were noted as warriors—in particular Ishbibenab. The family was marked by polydactylism, a genetic defect producing six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot.

Another giant mentioned in the Bible is Og, king of Bashan. Og was slain when the Hebrews invaded his kingdom. He was 3000 years old at the time (having survived the Flood as a stow-away on the ark, according to a rabbinic commentary). His iron bedstead, fourteen feet in length, was on display for many years in Rabbah-Ammon. And one of his bones was used as a bridge over a stream.

No giants currently reside in the region. However, they may be returning—aboard UFOs. In his provocative book *Return of the Giants* (Blue Star, 2000), Barry Chamish reports that giants have been associated with recent landings of UFOs in Israel. He gives this account of one such landing:

“In the early morning of April 20, Tsiporet Carmel’s house glowed from within. She stepped outside and saw what she thought was

a new fruit silo built outside her back yard. But then she saw the silo add a second storey to itself. Ten yards to the side of this magical silo, Tsiporet saw a seven-foot tall being wearing metallic overalls. Its head was covered in a what looked like a beekeeper's hat. Tsiporet said, 'Why don't you take off your hat so I can see your face?' The being answered her telepathically, 'That's the way it is.'