BIBLE TRUTH
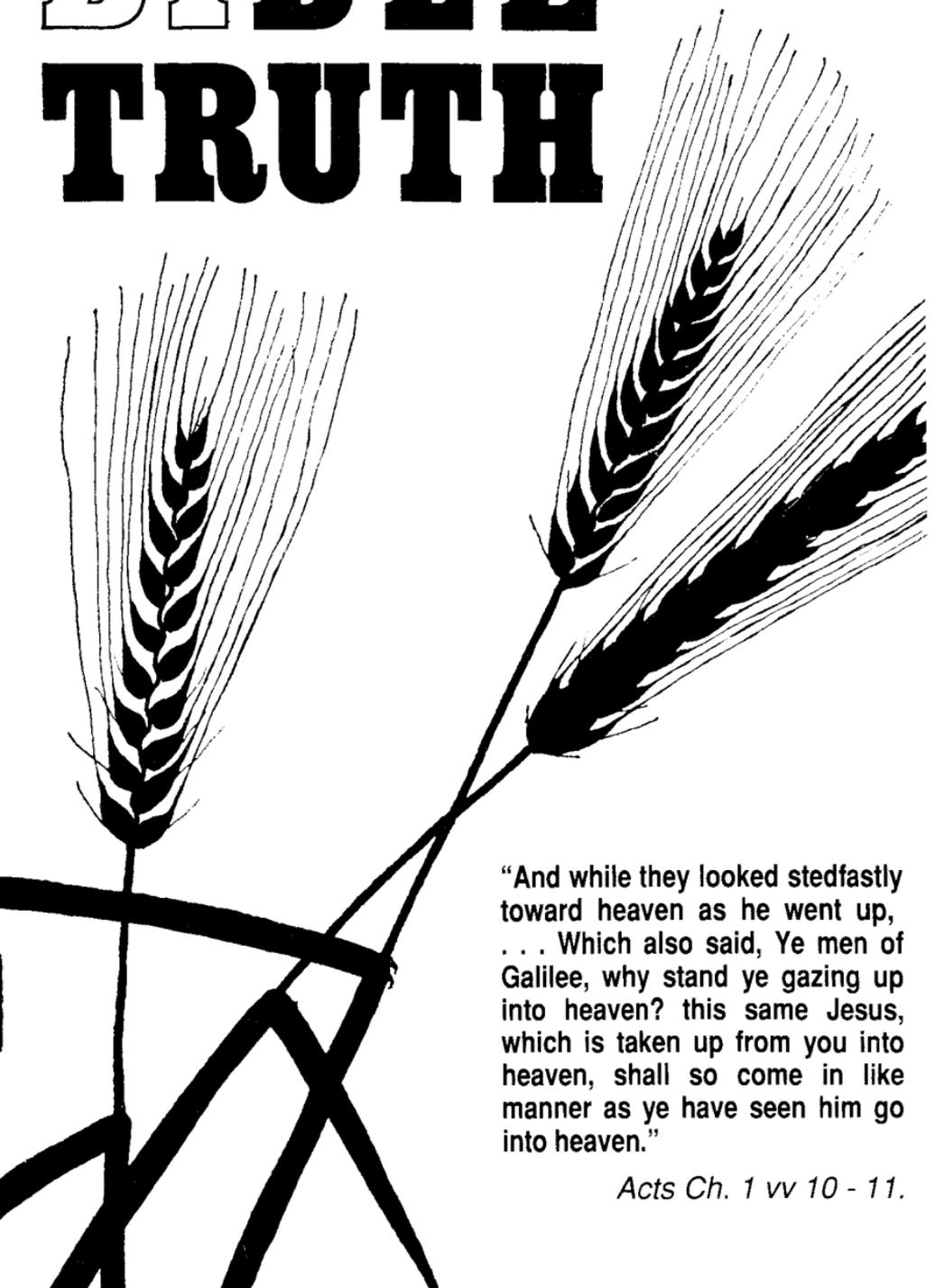
"And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, . . . Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

Acts Ch. 1 vv 10 - 11.

DAVID AND GOLIATH
- The true story
by Dr. Michael D. Bennett

Introduction

ONE Bible story which even today almost everybody knows about is 'David and Goliath.' The story of how a mere boy was able to slay the great giant has been recounted by day school and Sunday school teachers to generations of attentive children. Because it is such a well known and exciting tale of how good triumphed over evil, which captivates the imagination of people of all ages, it is often chosen as the subject of illustrations in Bibles and especially in books of Bible stories for children. In such pictures Goliath, the mighty giant, towers menacingly over the little lad David. The boy in the illustrations usually looks about 10 or at most 12. Often he might be taken for an 8 year old. (e.g. See 'Now you can read . . . David and Goliath Story retold by Elaine Ife, illustrated by Eric Rowe, Pickering & Inglis, London & Glasgow). The younger he looks the greater the miracle of his triumph!

Time and again the teachers recount how foolish king Saul tried to lend little David his armour, helmet and sword; and how little David discarded them because they were far too big for him. Year after year highly educated professional teachers and earnest Sunday school teachers repeat the story — just as it was told to them. The trouble is that their popular version of this story is untrue, and a product of the human imagination, greatly removed from the real story as recorded in the Bible. Comparing the popular version as it is usually told with the original, leads to the inescapable conclusion that the tellers obtain their 'information' from popular tradition rather than from the pure spring of Holy Writ.

The purpose of this article is twofold. **First,** it will question just how far, and in what respects, the popular modern

version of the David and Goliath story deviates from what the Bible says. **Second,** it will ask a more general but even more important question. Namely, if educated students and well-meaning believers are so wrong in their understanding of this simple story, then how many other simple Bible truths have they perverted or misunderstood? The first question will be answered at some length below, but it will be left to the individual reader to answer to the second question for themselves. But in so answering it will be wise to "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Romans Ch. 3 v. 4). David and Goliath is a part of true **history.** Make sure it is **His story,** and not somebody elses. Remember that David is a type of Our Lord Jesus Christ, so . . .

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

Colossians Ch. 2 v 8

DAVID'S FIRST MEETING WITH SAUL

The popular modern version of 'David and Goliath' usually ignores a significant part of the Bible story of David's first meeting and experiences with king Saul, well before their paths recrossed when David killed Goliath in the valley of Elah.

According to the Bible, Saul was afflicted by "an evil spirit from the LORD" (1 Samuel Ch. 16 v. 14). To heal the effects of this, Saul's servants suggested that he listened to "a cunning player on an harp" (v. 16).

Saul approved the notion as the Bible records:

"And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me. Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing . . . Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep. . . And David came to Saul, and stood before him: . . . And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and

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played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him."

1 Samuel Ch. 16 vv. 17 - 19, 21 and 23

The above account is taken from the Bible. If it contains no surprises then that is because it is extracted from the Bible; and while it is the truth, and the familiar truth, yet it is not the whole truth. If the modern popular version of David and Goliath does recall that David was summoned to court by Saul before the incident withGoliath, then its description of this earlier meeting will almost certainly be restricted to the limited extracts just quoted. The modern popular version invariably omits all reference to, or treatment of, the phrases underlined in the unabridged vrsion below. Here then is the full and unexpurged Bible description of the person for whom Saul sent:

> "And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me. Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him. Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep."

1 Samuel Ch. 16 vv 17 - 19

The underlined phrases are ignored or omitted simply because they do not fit, and indeed flatly contradict, the modern popular view of David as a little boy hero. "A mighty valiant man, and a man of war, . . . " If the police issued this as the description of a wanted man, would it fit the little shepherd boy beloved of our Sunday school teachers? Or would the child illustrated in the modern books of Bible stories be in any danger of being arrested? What is your mental picture of David when he played for Saul? Is it of "a mighty valiant man, and a man of war"? Don't forget, "Let God be true, but every man a liar."

Isn't it strange that most modern Christians give more credence to the heathen Goliath's disdainful view of David, than to his appearance in the eyes of the farsighted Israelite who recommended him to Saul?

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"And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was {(but) — This word is not in the original} a youth, . . ."

1 Samuel Ch. 17 v 42

Isn't it strange that many modern Sunday School teachers adopt Saul's limited view of David, rather than that of one who really knew him?

"And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou {(art but) — These words are not in the original} a youth, and he a man of war from his youth."

1 Samuel Ch. 17 v 33

Yet the man who undoubtedly knew David said of him: "I have seen a son of Jesse . . . that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, . . . and the LORD is with him." Now there is no doubt that this man spoke the truth as to David's ability with the harp (I Samuel Ch. 16 v 23). Also, he spoke the truth regarding God's blessing with David (1 Samuel Ch. 16 v 23). Thus, there is no reason to doubt this far-sighted eye witness when he said that David was "a mighty valiant man, and a man of war."

DAVID WAS ARMOUR BEARER TO SAUL BEFORE HE MET GOLIATH

Another Bible Truth which the modern popular version of David and Goliath often fails to emphasise, or ignores, is the fact that Saul made David his armour bearer long before he fought Goliath. It doesn't fit with the modern version which prefers to give the impression that the little boy David was completely unfamiliar with Saul's armour and weapons until Saul offered them on the day of Goliath's death. The truth is otherwise. Thus, according to the original version of this wonderful story, David was one of those responsible for Saul's armour while he was at the royal court:

"Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep. And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto

Saul. And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; **and he became his armour-bearer.**"

As armour bearer to Saul, David must have become very familiar with its various bits and pieces, including Saul's helmet and coat of mail. He must also have become very familiar with its size, which was very large.

When I go to buy clothes I must look for items marked XL (extra large). S (small), M (medium) and L (large) are of no use to me, and they would have been of no use to Saul had he lived today. Indeed, it is questionable whether Saul would have found many XL garments big enough for him either! This is because Saul himself was, by all normal measures, a giant in Israel.

"And they ran and fetched him (Saul) thence: and when he stood among the people, **he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward.** And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king."

It is worth noting that given his unique size, standing head and shoulders above all others in Israel, Saul was the natural choice to fight Goliath as Israel's champion. Each day Goliath called out his challenge. . .

". . .**choose you a man for you,** and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us."

"Choose you a man!" Israel had already chosen their man. They had chosen Saul to be their king and champion. No doubt many expected Saul to take on Goliath given that he was the biggest man that they had. Saul was big, but Goliath was bigger by far, and Saul did not dare to fight him.

As Saul was outsize, so was his armour. That means that Saul's armour was large and heavy. It also means that no child could have been armour bearer to Saul. It had to be someone big enough to do the job. Armour bearer to Saul was not a peace time job for a ceremonial mascot.

An armour bearer often held his master's life in his hands, so no warrior would put his life in jeopardy by choosing a less than able armour bearer. This was true in general. It was the more so for Saul because he was the king and hence picked out as a special target in any battle (e.g. 1 Kings Ch. 22 v 31). Moreover, battle was not some unusual thing in the days of Saul.

> "And there was sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul: . . ."

1 Samuel Ch. 14 v 52

Unlike many kings who followed him, Saul might need his armour for a real fight at any moment. So I repeat that armour bearer to Saul was not a job for a ceremonial mascot. It was a job for a strong young man.

It is common sense that Saul would not put his life at risk by employing an untrained and inadequate armour bearer. Rather, as king, he would employ the best to be had. This is not speculation, but just what the Bible says of him:

> "And there was sore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul: and when Saul saw **any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto him.**"

1 Samuel Ch. 14 v 52

Saul used the best, and Saul chose David to be his armour bearer. It follows that David was visibly the best, having the appearance of the young warrior, expected to fight alongside his master. The mental picture and expectation is completely in agreement with the description of David given in the Bible:

> " . . . Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and **a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, . . .**"

1 Samuel Ch. 16 v 18

It by no means fits with the child prodigy beloved of the perverted modern version of David and Goliath. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." The fact is that David was

Saul's armour bearer, and as such he was expected to be ready to fight. It was no job for a little child, but one for a strong, young man.

To summarise this point: there are several telling reasons why Saul would never have chosen an 8 to 10 year old boy to be his armour bearer. Firstly, such a child would have been unable to carry the weight of equipment of a man as outstandingly big as Saul was. Secondly, such a child would not be strong enough to stay with his master in a real battle. Thirdly, a child would not be expected to have the strength of mind and will required in those who must function on a battlefield in the days of hand-to-hand combat to the death. Fourthly, Saul would not have put his own life at risk by choosing as his armour bearer one who could not be expected or trusted to fight alongside him. On every count it is certain that the modern picture of David the little shepherd boy who defeated Goliath just does not fit with the fact that Saul chose David to be his armour bearer long before he killed Goliath at Elah.

When thinking about Saul's armour bearer forget the little shepherd boy image beloved of the modern popular version. The correct picture is found in the Bible very near to the story of David and Goliath where we read about another armour bearer to the house of Saul. This shows clearly that it was normal for members of this royal house to have a young man as armour bearer who was expected and well able to fight in combat supporting his master:

"Now it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man (Hebrew "naar") that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison, that is on the other side. But he told not his father . . . And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet and his armour-bearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan: and his armour-bearer slew after him."

1 Samuel Ch. 14 vv 1 and 13

THE RESULT OF CONSISTENT TRANSLATION

It is important to realise that the word translated as "young man" in connection with Jonathan's armour bearer is

the Hebrew word "naar" (see Young's Analytical Concordance). This word "naar" is also translated as "youth" in several places, and significantly, three of these are in the David and Goliath story. However, the original Hebrew "naar" is the same for Jonathan's armour bearer who "slew after him", as for Saul's armour bearer David who slew Goliath. It would be just as permissible to put "young man" in the case of David, as it would in the case of Jonathan's armour bearer; especially as "naar" is translated as "young man" 90 times, but as "young" many fewer times.

"And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou (art but) a youth, (Hebrew "naar"), and he a man of war from his youth (Hebrew — "neurim").

1 Samuel Ch. 17 v 33

"And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was (but) a youth (Hebrew "naar"), and ruddy, and of a fair countenance."

1 Samuel Ch. 17 v 42

"And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? (Hebrew — "naar")."

1 Samuel Ch. 17 v 55

Proof that the Hebrew word "naar" can legitimately be translated as "young man" rather than "youth" in connection with David and Goliath is found in the Bible itself, for that is just what it is translated as, three verses later!

"And Saul said unto him (David), Whose son (art) thou, (thou) young man (Hebrew — "naar")? . . ."

1 Samuel Ch. 17 v 58

The perverted modern version of the David and Goliath story which portrays David as a child is largely based on an undue emphasis and a misunderstanding of the word "youth" used in these three verses in the Authorised Version.

It is questionable whether the popular modern version of David and Goliath would have developed if the word "naar" had been consistently translated as "young man," rather than as "youth," in the above verses. The translators also slipped in the word "but" in two places, but they put it in

italics to warn and remind us that it is not in the original Hebrew. Here then is what these verses say putting "young man" (the form used 90 times) instead of "youth" (used much less often), and omitting the word "but" which is not in the original Hebrew:

"And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art a young man, and he a man of war from his youth."

"And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was a young man, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance."

"And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this young man?"

THE EDITORS OF 1 SAMUEL GOT IT RIGHT

So far we have concentrated on David's age and appearance when he first came to court as a harp player and armour bearer to Saul. David had the look of a warrior even then, and this would only increase with time. So much does this disagree with the modern version of David and Goliath that some have questioned whether the editors of the first book of Samuel put the passage in chapter sixteen verses fourteen to twenty-three in the wrong place. They suggest that David was harp player and armour bearer to Saul **after** he killed Goliath, not before. However, this suggestion is demolished by the Bible text which makes it quite clear that David was at Saul's court before he killed Goliath. The verse that proves this is in chapter seventeen; after the description of Goliath:

"And the three eldest sons of Jesse went and followed Saul to the battle: and the names of his three sons that went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, and next unto him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. And David was the youngest: and the three eldest followed Saul. But David went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem." Chapter 17 vv 13 - 15.

NATIONAL SERVICE BY COURSES IN ISRAEL

We don't know how long it was before the Goliath incident

that David was at Saul's court. The Bible does not tell us. However, we do know that he went home to Bethlehem **after** serving Saul and **before** he came to Elah. We also know that it was quite normal for those engaged in national service in Israel to serve for a while and then to return home for most of the year while others took over the national duties for a turn. This was the established practice in Israel in the service of the tabernacle, and later in the Temple, where twenty-four courses of priests served the Lord in succession each year (1 Chronicles Ch. 24 vv 1 - 19 and Luke Ch. 1 vv 5 and 9 — N.B. Zacharias belonged to the eighth shift or course). Not only did the priest serve in shifts with a few weeks on duty and most of the year back at home, but so did the civil service and the captains of the army at the time of David's reign.

> "Now the children of Israel after their number, to wit, the chief fathers and captains of thousands and hundreds, and their officers that served the king in any matter of the courses, which came in and went out month by month throughout all the months of the year, of every course were twenty and four thousand."

1 Chronicles Ch. 27 v 1 (and see 2 - 15)

A similar shift system was used by David's son Solomon for building the Temple:

> "And king Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel; and the levy was thirty thousand men. And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month by courses: a month they were in Lebanon, and two months at home: and Adoniram was over the levy."

1 Kings Ch. 5 vv 13 - 14

Thus, it seems likely that David too was involved in a course, or shift, system, which allowed him to be armour bearer to Saul for a period, and then to serve his father at home for a longer period. Certainly, after the death of Goliath, Saul changed David's instructions in a way which clearly implies that he had come and gone from court previously.

> "And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house"

1 Samuel Ch. 18 v 2

DID SAUL KNOW WHO DAVID WAS WHEN HE KILLED GOLIATH?

Those who question the editing of the account of David's time at Saul's court do so based on a less than careful reading of some verses which, they say, show that Saul did not recognise David either before, or after, Goliath's death. The verses are these:

"And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell. And the king said, Inquire thou whose son the stripling is. And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand. And Saul said to him, Whose son art thou young man? And David answered, I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."

1 Samuel Ch. 17 vv 55 - 58

If David had been close to Saul before then why, they say, did Saul and Abner not recognise him? However, as noted above, this question is based on a misconception and a less than careful reading of the passage.

Saul did not ask, "Who is that?," or "Who art thou?" He asked, "Whose son is this youth?" and "Whose son art thou?," which is not the same thing at all. Saul knew who he was. It was David, one of his armour bearers. However, Saul was contemplating David's possible change of status from armour bearer to son-in-law. Victory for David would require contacting David's father. After all the promise was that whoever killed Goliath would marry Saul's daughter. Saul was interested to know who the father-in-law would be, should Israel's champion be victorious. Thus, the question to Abner was not "inquire thou who the stripling is," but "inquire thou **whose son** the stripling is."

"And the men of Israel said, Have ye (David) seen this man that is come up? surely to defy Israel is he come up: and it shall be, that the man who killeth him, the king

will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel."

Victory would affect David's father and David's father's house! Hence Saul's question in anticipation of victory was concerning David's father, not concerning David. "Inquire thou **whose son** the stripling is." Similarly, the question when victory was assured concerned David's father, **"Whose son** art thou, young man?" David's answer was the right one. He did not say "I am David," for Saul knew that.

". . .And David answered , **I am the son of thy servant Jesse** the Bethlehemite."

Of course, Saul had been told this once before by another servant:

"And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me. Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing . . . Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep."

Clearly, Saul had forgotten this, which is not surprising since he probably never met the old man who seems to have stayed firmly at home:

". . . and the man (Jesse) went among men for an old man in the days of Saul."

Saul was king of a nation, and he had thousands to serve him. David as king had 288,000 servants in one class alone, coming at the rate of 20,000 each month. It would be too much to expect Saul to remember the name of David's father, and so he had to ask: "Whose son art thou young man?"

DAVID WAS MORE LIKELY 20 YEARS OLD THAN 10!

Apart from the facts already outlined, there are many more aspects of the bible account of David's confrontation

with Goliath which, taken at their face value, would normally indicate that David was considerably older than the little boy of the modern Bible story books, and more likely 20 years old than 10.

First, David was already an accomplished musician such as could charm the king. By itself this point is not strong, but in combination with the other points it suggests a "young man" rather than a little lad.

Second, David had already killed a lion and a bear with his own hands, while guarding his father's sheep. Now unless one is already blinded and brain-washed by the modern version, one would not expect a little lad to be capable of such feats. Nor could one expect a normal father (who had seven older sons) to allow his youngest son to be out working in such danger. Common sense tells us that, as a rule, youngest sons (and David was the youngest) are specially loved and protected, if not spoiled. This youngest son was also the anointed heir to Israel's throne. Knowing that, Jesse is hardly likely to have sent him out to face danger from wild animals until he was old enough.

> "And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear. . ."

1 Samuel Ch. 17 vv 34 - 36

Some little lad this! No, these facts fit the actions of the "valiant man' of scripture (1 Samuel Ch. 16 v 18) much more than those of the imagined boy.

Third, no loving or sensible father would send his little boy off alone to an active battlefield in a hot war zone. It just doesn't make sense. The Philistines were cruel people, and grown men went in fear of them. I have a nine year old son, big and strong for his age, who looks much like the imagined illustrations of little David, but he is not allowed to walk one mile to the village school by himself in peace-time England. Yet according to the modern David and Goliath

story, we are asked to believe that Jesse sent off his little son alone, aged about 10, to a valley fifteen miles away over rugged hilly country, to a battlefield in a war against the Philistines.

> "And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to thy brethren; And carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of their thousand, and look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge. Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel, were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him; and he came to the trench, as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle. For Israel and the Philistines had put the battle in array. . ."
>
> *1 Samuel Ch. 17 vv 17 - 21*

It makes much more sense if David, aged about 20 and well able to take care of himself as one of Saul's trained armour bearers, was sent to the battlefield by Jesse who was too old to go himself (1 Samuel Ch. 17 v 12).

Jesse need worry about David no more than for any other of his sons. Had it been David's turn to be on duty as Saul's armour bearer, then Jesse might well have been sending another son to see how David was faring at the war.

ISRAELITES MUST BE 20 YEARS OLD TO FIGHT

Fourth, the Israelite soldiers in general, and David's elder brothers in particular would not have tolerated a young boy fighting in the Israelite army. In the whole of Scripture there is no instance of such a thing happening. Indeed the whole tenor and weight of the Law of God in Israel was against it. Sadly so many of today's teachers are ignorant of the law of God, or even rail against it, as though it were some inhumane thing. Nothing could be further from the truth, for God's laws were always framed to protect the innocent, and to look after the welfare of all. The point is that, just as the Levites could not minister in the service of the tabernacle until they were twenty-five (and must cease when they became fifty = Numbers Ch. 8 v 25), so it was

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not possible to fight in the Israelite army until the age of twenty was reached. Those under twenty were judged by God as "unable" to go forth to war — they didn't count, and they were not counted.

"And the LORD spake unto Moses . . . Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their polls; <u>From twenty years old and upward</u>,a all that are able to go forth to war in Israel: thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies.' *Number Ch. 1 vv 1 - 3*

Under the judgeship of Samuel, the law of the Lord was taught and generally observed. So, for example, witches had been cut off (1 Samuel Ch. 28 v 3) as commanded in the law (Exodus Ch. 22 v 18). Thus, it is reasonable to expect that while Samuel lived, the law restricting national service in the army to those aged twenty or over was known and obeyed. A little lad aged about ten or twelve would neither have been allowed in the army, nor to fight. Moreover, David was a type of Jesus. Priests of the house of Aaron did not start their ministry until they were thirty, and so Jesus as great high priest began His public ministry at thirty, and David began his reign when he was thirty (11 Samuel Ch. 5 v 4). By this token one would not expect David as a symbol of Jesus to be breaking God's law while delivering Israel from Goliath. Just as Jesus fulfilled all His Father's law, so David while acting as a type of Jesus must have done likewise. Thus, it is arguable that David was in fact just twenty when he killed Goliath, though with the appearance of a youth several years younger than twenty by virtue of his boyish good looks, fair skin and rosy cheeks.

"And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was (but) a youth (a young man — "naar"), and ruddy, and of a fair countenance."

1 Samuel Ch. 17 v 42

No doubt David appeared extra young to Goliath because he came against him without helmet or armour, and with no obvious weapon beside his staff. Goliath knew that Israel did not send out youths under or twenty to fight, and he felt

insulted by the sight of the unprotected young man. David was too good looking and unscarred by far to be an experienced warrior, and hence not a worthy opponent — or so Goliath thought.

"And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou come to me with staves? . . ."

1 Samuel Ch. 17 v 43

SAUL WAS NOT WITHOUT WORLDLY WISDOM

Mention of the lack of armour on David brings us to the **fifth** reason in the story why David could not possibly have been only a child when he fought Goliath:

"And Saul armed David with his (Saul's) armour, . . . And David girded his (Saul's) sword upon his (Saul's) armour . . ."

1 Samuel Ch. 17 v 38 - 39

We know that Saul was in many ways a bad lot, but he was not without worldly wisdom. Indeed, that was his main fault, he had too much worldly wisdom. Yet, according to the modern perversion of the David and Goliath story we are asked to mock Saul as a fool, and to believe that he, the outstandingly largest man in Israel, tried to kit out a little lad with his own outsize clothes and equipment, in order to help him fight Goliath. No worldly wise man would have done such a stupid thing. The modern version of the story makes Saul out to be an even bigger fool than he was. it is quite unthinkable that Saul, who knew more about war ("Saul has slain his thousands" — 1 Samuel Ch. 18 v 7) than most, would knowingly encumber a little lad with his outsize equipment given the gravity of the situation. No! Saul was prepared to lend David something which fitted him and the need of the hour. It follows then that Saul's equipment fitted David, who must therefore have been a large young man, and definitely much older than an 8, 10 or 12 year old. Saul's offer makes even more sense when we recall that David had already been Saul's armour bearer, and hence Saul could expect him to be quite familiar with its size and purpose. Naturally enough then David both allowed Saul to kit him out, and even tried to go and fight using Saul's equipment.

It might look good in the picture book of Bible stories to see little David struggling inside Saul's outsize armour, but it doesn't make sense, and it isn't scriptural. David was no fool either. The Bible does not suggest that David discarded Saul's equipment because it was too big for him. He chose to put it off because he realised that he was not experienced enough in fighting with that equipment. That is what the Bible says:

> "And saul armed David with his armour . . . and he assayed to go . . . And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him."

> *1 Samuel Ch. 17 v 38 - 39*

David felt it wiser to fight with the offensive weapon with which he had the most experience — his sling. And Saul obviously agreed with David that this artillery should be so used.

Sixth, and continuing with the theme that Saul was not as big a fool as the modern version of David and Goliath would have us believe, it is unthinkable that Saul would have allowed a small boy to fight Goliath when one considers what was at stake. For an Israelite champion to fight Goliath and to lose, was to become the Philistines slaves. That was the condition, and that was why no experienced warrior had dared to fight him. No doubt many adventurers would have dared hoping that they might win and marry the princess. Human nature has not changed. However, Saul would not allow that. Too much was at stake:

> "And he (Goliath) stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us . . . When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid,"

> *1 Samuel Ch. 17 v 8 - 11*

They were greatly afraid of having to serve the Philistines by accepting the challenge and losing the fight. This being so, is it likely that Saul would have allowed a little lad to go as champion against Goliath, bearing in mind what the consequences would be if he lost? Of course not! The worldly wise Saul had to believe that Israel's champion stood a good chance of winning, or he would have insisted that Goliath remained unchallenged. The Bible makes it clear, that David went with Saul's agreement. Saul believed that David could win, and he would never have believed that if he had sent out the little boy illustrated in the modern Bible story books. Saul sent out "a mighty valiant man, and a man of war," who was big, strong, experienced with the sling, and who exuded confidence in God. It is true that when David first volunteered, Saul had his doubts. However, it was not David's age that troubled Saul but his lack of experience of fighting to the death. Once David recounted his aggressive experiences in chasing, fighting and slaying wild animals, Saul was content to let him fight Goliath as Israel's champion. he would not have allowed it had David been a mere child.

> "And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him . . . And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And **I went out after him, and smote him,** and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them . . . And Saul said unto David, **Go, and the LORD be with thee."** *1 Samuel Ch. 17 v 33 - 35 and 37*

The doubt in Saul's mind was not about David's physical ability to kill Goliath, but whether he would have had the mental will to kill in combat. He questioned David's experience of fighting to the death. A young man, well able to kill, might well take fright and fail at the critical moment:

> "And he (Gideon) said unto Jether his firstborn, Up, and slay them. But the youth (Hebrew "naar") drew not his sword: for he feared, because he was yet a youth." *Judges Ch. 8 v. 20*

David had no such compunction about killing Goliath!

"So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine . . . and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith . . . And David took the head of the Philistine, and brought it to Jerusalem . . . "

1 Samuel Ch. 17 vv 50 - 51 and 54

That little stone which destroyed Goliath by striking him in the head was arguably the foundation stone of David's kingdom, and as such is linked with that other stone in Daniel chapter two which destroys one by one, and altogether all the great empires of the world by striking this time at their feet.

"Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."

Daniel Ch. 2 v 35

Seventh, unless one is completely blinded and besotted with the modern picture of "little" David, it is too much to ask that a ten year old child took Goliath's sword and cut off his head with it before carrying the bloody proof of his victory back to Jerusalem. Neither is it easy to imagine the little shepherd boy emasculating two hundred Philistines so that he could marry Saul's daughter (1 Samuel Ch. 18 v 27). Like all the other facts considered above, these details are much more in keeping with the "man of war" of the true Bible story than the boy of the modern perversion.

The significant thing about the story of David and Goliath is not that a child defeated the giant despite the foolishness of Saul, for David was not a child. What was significant was that a young warrior with no previous experience of battle defeated a battle-hardened champion with many adult years of experience of war, and did so by using the most unusual tactics because of his faith in God. This truth, though almost abandoned by modern illustrators was clearly understood by earlier generations,

as Michelangelo's famous statue of David completed by him in Florence in 1504 AD, clearly shows.

JONATHAN WAS MIDDLE-AGED WHEN DAVID KILLED GOLIATH

Not only do modern books for children get David's age wrong, but they often get Jonathan's age completely wrong as well. Thus, modern books about David and Goliath often show David and Jonathan as two boys, both about 10 years old, making firm friends (e.g. the book mentioned in the first paragraph of this article does). In fact Jonathan was at least 35, and probably 45 - 50 years old, when David killed Goliath. The Bible facts which prove this are these:

(1) Saul reigned for 40 years over Israel (Acts Ch. 13 v 21) before David began to rule over Judah.

"And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years."

(2) David became king when Saul died at which time he was thirty years old (11 Samuel Ch. 5 v 4): "David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years."

Thus, Saul was king for ten year before David was born.

(3) In the third year of Saul's reign, and hence 7 years before David was born, Jonathan was already at the head of an Israelite army and actively fighting the Philistines. He was therefore at least 20 years old, if not more:

"Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, Saul chose him three thousand men of Israel; whereof two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: . . . And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba,. . ."

1 Samuel Ch. 13 vv 1 - 2

(4) Seven years later, when David was born, Jonathan was at least 28 years old, and by the time David killed Goliath (even if the modern version were correct and David was then aged about 10 - 12 years), then

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Jonathan would have been about 38 - 40. However, if David was about 20 years old as argued above, then Jonathan would have been at least about 48 or 50 years old.

CONCLUSION AND HOPE

This study of the story of David and Goliath shows just how far the modern version illustrated for children has strayed from the simple scriptural account. This is not an isolated example, for unfortunately such perversion and misrepresentation of simple Bible Truth is all too commonplace. This study of David and Goliath proves beyond doubt that the modern received version is a travesty of the Biblical facts. This is because many of those who teach or illustrate Bible stories have little real knowledge and grip of the factual detail of scripture. If they did, they would quickly realise most of what is written above for themselves. The sad truth is that they receive such knowledge as they have, not directly from the Bible itself, but from secondary or lesser sources.

This article is written in the hope that it will lead many to question whether their Bible knowledge is real or imagination, and to do so to the point where they will read the Bible itself, while abandoning all their preconceptions of what it is supposed to say. This is the only certain way to know your Bible. All those who are brave enough to submit to this simple discipline are guaranteed to have shocks and revelations as the Holy Spirit leads them in the ordained paths of His truth. They will find that, contrary to the modern perversion, sheep went into the ark not two by two, but seven by seven (Genesis Ch. 7 v 2). Why is this truth ignored or suppressed? They will discover that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were neither Jews nor Israelites but Hebrews, while Moses was certainly not a Jew although he was an Israelite. Why is this missed and muddled by so many modernists?

I trust that you will be brave like David, and willing to rightly divide the word of truth on these simple but fundamental matters. The alternative is to be the slave of giant lies and massive perversions of Bible truth.