



"I venture to suggest that patriotism is not a short and frenzied outburst of emotion but the tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime."

—Adlai Stevenson

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Benaiah

The Bible contains the story of a man whom history has not quite lost but does not remember too well. His name certainly must have been the "John" of his day because we can find references that show that somewhere from nine to thirteen men are so named in the Bible. That man is Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada the priest ([II Samuel 23:20-23](#); [I Chronicles 11:22-25](#)). He was chief over King David's bodyguard, and later King Solomon raised him to commander-in-chief.

Most references say that his name means "made by the LORD" or "[God](#) has built," but *Hitchcock's Bible Names* asserts that it means "son of the LORD." According to *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, Benaiah (#1141) is a combination of two words, *banah* (#1129, "to build") and *Jah* (#3050, "the LORD"). Interestingly, the word "son" (#1121) is also from *banah*, as in "a builder of the family name."

Benaiah, a general of David's army and his chief bodyguard, later demonstrated his fierce loyalty to David (and God) when he stood, along with Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet, against Adonijah's attempt to

supplant Solomon as David's successor. After this, he received his promotion to commander-in-chief of Israel's army.

His actions brought him national fame. He defeated two of Moab's best warriors; slew a lion in a pit on a snowy day; and attacked a 7½-foot Egyptian with a club, stealing the Egyptian's spear and killing him with it. With all of this carnage, we might think of him as a hard and insensitive man, but commentator Albert Barnes claims that another of his notable accomplishments was to fulfill David's longing for a drink of refreshing water from the well of Bethlehem ([II Samuel 23:13-16](#)). With Abishai and another unnamed mighty man, they broke through the camp of the Philistines and obtained the water for him.

[II Samuel 23:20](#) relates: "Benaiah was the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man of Kabzeel, who had done many deeds. He had killed two lion-like heroes of Moab. . . ." These two Moabite warriors are described by various translations as "two of Moab's best men" (NIV), "champions" (New Living Translation), "distinguished soldiers" (God's Word Translation), and "two lion-like Moabites." *Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* adds that they were "men of uncommon valour and fortitude." Perhaps they were specially trained soldiers, similar to Navy SEALs or Green Berets. Comparing them to lions emphasizes their strength, fierceness, and leadership. They were formidable enemies.

Benaiah is also credited with killing "a lion in the midst of a pit on a snowy day" ([II Samuel 23:20](#)). A great deal of speculation surrounds this feat and his motives in slaying this particular lion. Most people, seeing a lion in a pit, would simply leave it be, but not Benaiah. He was not a man to take the easy way out.

Barnes' Notes tells the story this way: "Apparently in a severe winter a lion had come up from its usual haunts to some village in search of food, and taken possession of the tank or cistern to the terror of the inhabitants, and Benaiah attacked it boldly and killed it." *Gill's Exposition* advances several different ideas, most suggesting that he either killed the lion in self-defense or to rid the country of a terrorizing beast.

In an article by Jim Cole-Rous in *The Lesser Known Bible People Series* argues for an intriguing possibility. He speculates that this lion was killed, not for its ferocity, but as an act of [kindness](#):

. . . for, if that lion was injured he would have been in pain, and needed to be put down. Certainly few men would have ventured to enter that slippery snowy pit, but just shrugged it off and left the lion to suffer and die. This man had principles of right and wrong and he held to them all his life.

He concludes, "He lived right and had a heart for those who were suffering and in need."

In [II Samuel 23:21](#), another action that Benaiah is praised for is killing an Egyptian giant with his own spear after wresting it away from him. Benaiah was armed only with a staff or perhaps a shepherd's rod, *shebet* in Hebrew, which means a twig or branch, like a switch a parent might use to correct a child. Whatever it was, it was obviously not very intimidating. With this stick, though, he was able to disarm the Egyptian and use his own weapon against him.

Although not as huge as Goliath, this Egyptian was still 7½ feet tall. We could compare him to retired NBA star Yao Ming, who stands 7½ feet tall and weighs over 300 pounds. A YouTube video shows him dunking a basketball without even jumping! In her blog, [Seek God with Me](#), Laura Domino writes:

Benaiah was crazy enough to use a club to go against a huge Egyptian who had a spear. After he got the Egyptian's spear away from him, Benaiah killed him with it. Benaiah was rewarded for his courage when David put him in charge of his bodyguard. David was smart. I'd want Benaiah next to me too.

The Bible shows what a loyal man he was to God and His purpose. When he fetched the water for David, he did much more than just what was required; David's wish was his command. More, he showed his [faith](#) in God's choice when he stood loyally with David and Solomon when Adonijah rebelled and attempted to supplant Solomon.

Benaiah was also not easily intimidated by reputation. The two lion-like heroes of Moab were undoubtedly very threatening, but Benaiah got the job done—not only once, but twice. When he slew the lion in the pit, it was not an impulsive act, but rather it was for the good of the community, and possibly for the lion himself. Nor was he overwhelmed by the size of the dilemma facing him. God provided what he needed when facing the Egyptian. He may have liked to have had a better weapon, but he resourcefully used what he had to his advantage.

We can learn a lot from Benaiah: Listen carefully and always be attentive to the needs of others; stay loyal to God and His purpose, regardless of how circumstances may change; do not be intimidated by reputation; always do the right thing; and think problems through. God is shaping and forming us into His image ([Romans 9:19-26](#)), and even now we bear His name. He will not give us a problem that we cannot overcome, and He will give us whatever resources we need to succeed. For our sakes, the task will not be easy, but it can be done!

- John Reiss

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Anticipating the Enemy](#)

by Martin G. Collins

There are two typical reactions to the spirit world—fear and ignorance. In the Old Testament, Satan's role (Job 1:12) is an investigator, tester, and prosecuting attorney, functioning totally within the parameters of God's power. The New Testament greatly expands the knowledge of Satan's character and wiles (Revelation 12:9), revealing him as tempter, deceiver, evil one, dragon, serpent, showing his hostility both to humanity and to God. We become vulnerable to Satan's wiles when we allow pride to consume us, cozy up to false doctrine, toy with him by experimenting with paranormal

activities, letting down on prayer, meditation, and Bible study, and compromising with God's law. We need to guard against destroying the hedge God places around us by remaining vigilant (James 4:7, I Peter 5:8).

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Playing With Fire](#)

by John O. Reid

Solomon uses the analogy of burning oneself to describe sinning, which is particularly apt in describing the pain and scars left by sexual sins. Fulfilling our desires outside the bounds of what God allows is playing with fire: The sexually immoral must deal with perverse thinking, hurt, distrust, and betrayal, not to mention sexual diseases. John Reid explains.

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