

“This is an excellent book! The retelling of the biblical narrative really draws you into the action and tension of the story and, importantly, excites your curiosity to read the pages of the Bible itself. My own kids will love reading this, and it will prompt some good discussions about God’s anointed King.”

**MIKE DICKER**, Principal, Youthworks College,  
New South Wales, Australia

“The Bible tells us that God works through living, breathing, real people. Katy brings to life an extraordinary biblical story of some of those people and how they laugh and cry and dance and fight so that young people feel the power of God to work in our ordinary lives to achieve his amazing purposes.”

**ED DREW**, Founder, Faith in Kids; Author,  
*Raising Confident Kids in a Confusing World*

“A super book by a gifted writer, this wonderful retelling of a Bible story gets under the skins of Saul, Jonathan, David and lots of other characters, during some of the most emotional and dramatic scenes in Israel’s history. While staying faithful to the Bible plotline, Katy Morgan draws out the hopes, the fears, the belief and the unbelief all used by God to bring David to the throne. Skilfully, she draws us into the story so that we turn the pages eager to read what happens next. Best of all, she whets the appetite to read the story in the Bible itself. Don’t miss out the Epilogue!”

**CHRISTOPHER ASH**, Writer-in-Residence,  
Tyndale House, Cambridge

“Far too many people believe the Old Testament is largely irrelevant. Katy Morgan shows us that it is bursting with promise, feasting and song. Her vivid writing, combined with her deep knowledge of the ancient world, plunges us into this unfolding drama. The heartbeat of this book is a longing for its readers to find confidence in the then-coming-now-arrived King of Israel. Katy is a gifted storyteller—the pacing will keep younger readers engaged while the detail will help older readers reflect. There’s food for all of us, and the Notes section is a must for those who want the recipe.”

**NATE MORGAN-LOCKE**, Creative Director,  
SpeakLife; Film-maker; Author

THE SONGS  
OF A   
WARRIOR

SAUL AND DAVID: A RETELLING

KATY MORGAN

the goodbook  
COMPANY

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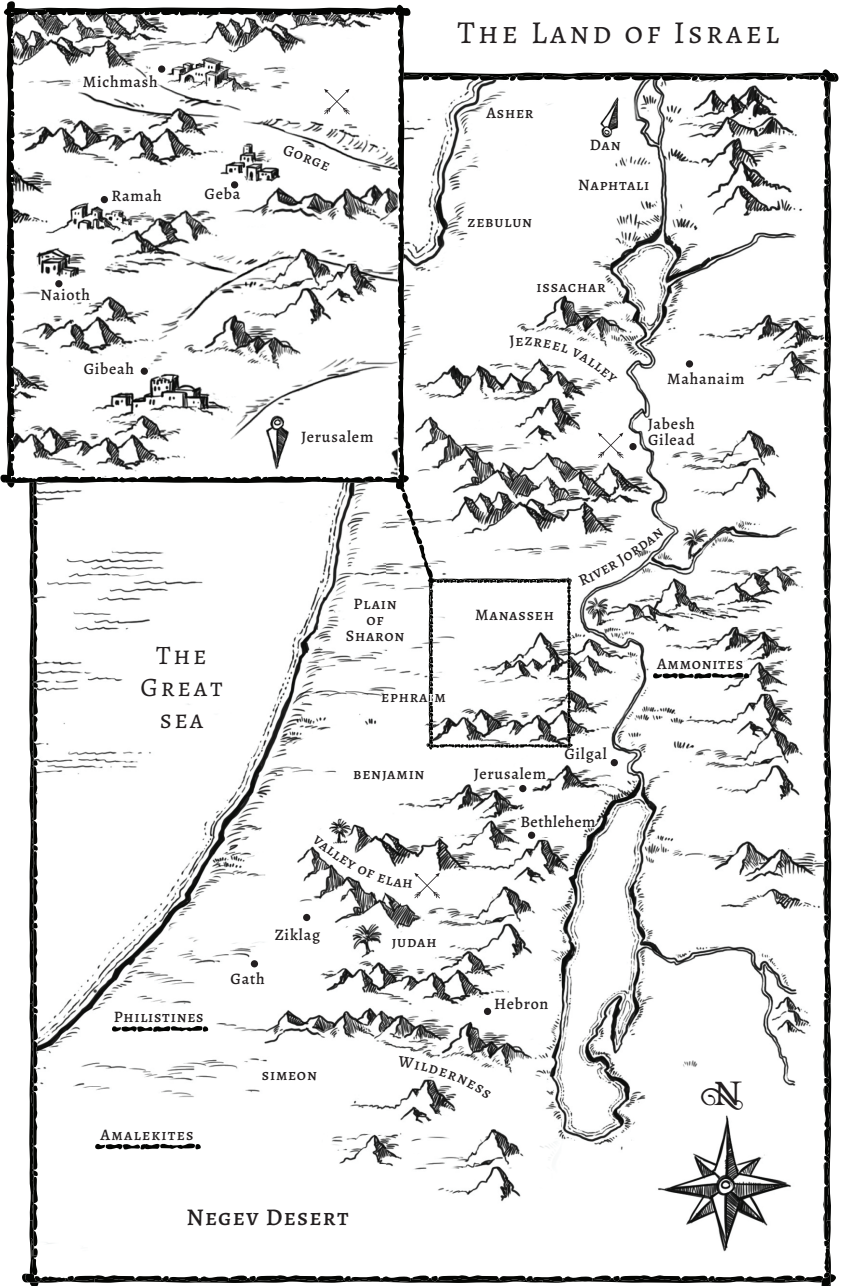
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The map on the right is full of real places, because the story you're about to read is based on a true one, found in the Old Testament part of the Bible. If you find yourself wanting to know more about the history that lies behind this book, turn to page 253—there are accompanying notes for each chapter.



# THE LAND OF ISRAEL



● Town/City    ✕ Site of battle    - - - Foreign tribe



# Cast of Characters

## THE HOUSE OF KISH

*Kish*, a wealthy farmer

*Saul*, Kish's son

*Abner*, Saul's cousin

*Jonathan and Ishvi*, the sons of Saul

*Michal and Merab*, the daughters of Saul

## THE HOUSE OF JESSE

*Jesse*, a sheep-farmer

*David*, the eighth son of Jesse

*Eliab and Abinadab*, two of David's brothers

*Zeruiah*, David's sister

*Joab, Abishai and Asabel*, the sons of Zeruiah

## OTHERS IN ISRAEL

*Samuel*, a prophet

*Nathan*, a prophet

*Abiathar*, a priest

*Oren*, a shepherd (invented character)

*Noa*, a servant (invented character)

*Maoz*, a bad man (invented character)

*Ahimelek*, a Hittite

## PHILISTINES

*Goliath*, a warrior

*Achish*, the king of Gath



*The God of Israel spoke,  
the Rock of Israel said to me:  
“When one rules over people in righteousness,  
when he rules in the fear of God,  
he is like the light of morning at sunrise  
on a cloudless morning,  
like the brightness after rain  
that brings grass from the earth.”*

2 Samuel chapter 23, verses 3-4

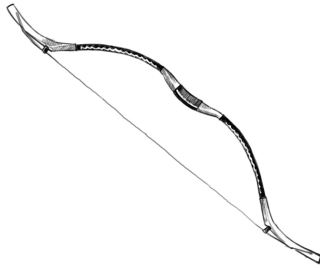


PART ONE

# A King for All Israel







## CHAPTER 1

# The Boy with the Bow

**T**here was a rock-dove in the tree. It was plump and purplish and looking happily away into the distance.

The boy on the ground beneath it was slowly raising his bow and carefully sliding an arrow out of his quiver.

*Gently, Jonathan,* he told himself, keeping his eyes fixed on the dove. He did feel a little sorry for it as it ruffled its feathers in a self-satisfied sort of way and clicked its beak. Poor silly bird. At least its last hour had been a happy one.

The arrow was out. He notched its feathered end to the bowstring.

Jonathan had made this bow himself, and it was a good one. It was small, just a hunting bow, not as big as the ones you'd use in battle. He had been practising with his grandfather's old war-bow but he couldn't

bend it far enough to shoot it—not yet. But this one was just right.

His feet were firm. His hands were steady. He closed one eye and drew the arrow back...

Then, suddenly, the moment was lost. Somewhere behind Jonathan a sheep bleated. All at once the rock-dove panicked and took off in a flurry of feathers.

Not its last hour, after all.

Jonathan groaned. Where had a *sheep* appeared from? Now he would have to go home empty-handed!

He turned round. There were three of them, all craggy old ewes with soft muzzles and dirty fleeces. They looked at him indignantly as if he had no right to be there.

Jonathan looked at them back. “You’re in *my* way, I’m not in yours,” he said.

He wondered who they belonged to. It would be odd to bring sheep into the woods deliberately. Had they got lost? They must have come up the hill... He’d better chase them back that way.

He had time. His grandfather Kish had said they had to leave for Mizpah at noon, and judging by the sun he wasn’t late yet.

His stomach squirmed. Today was the day! He’d been looking forward to the assembly at Mizpah for weeks. And now, at last, the day had come when—

But Jonathan’s thoughts were interrupted by a shout. Someone was calling out for help. Someone at the bottom of the hill, beyond the edge of the wood.

Without hesitating, Jonathan ran at the sheep, waving his bow in the air. "Yah!"

They jerked back, then lowered their heads and thundered away downhill. One of them almost got caught by the lower branches of a thorn tree, but she shook herself loose and followed her companions.

Jonathan followed too. His eyes took a moment to adjust to the sunlight as he left the wood, but soon he was watching the sheep race down to the valley-bottom—and there was the boy who'd shouted. He was still shouting, and waving frantically. He was about Jonathan's age and he had two more sheep at his heels.

What had happened? Jonathan set off running down the hill, sending small rocks tumbling as he did. He jumped from side to side to avoid them, took on speed, skidded down the last steep slope, and arrived at the bottom with a heaving chest and a wide grin on his face. He liked running.

But the shepherd boy wasn't smiling. "Did you see them?" he said urgently. "Did you see where they went?"

"Who? The sheep?"

"The thieves." The boy's dirty face was streaked with tears. "My master will kill me—they're all gone—some men came and took them—I couldn't stop them—but I can't go home with just five sheep—"

"Don't worry," Jonathan interrupted gently. "Those three were up in the wood. Maybe others will have escaped as well. Is this the direction the thieves came in?"

How long ago did they take them?”

“Not too long. Maybe half an hour ago.” The boy was calming down. He focused on Jonathan, grasping his arm. “You’re Kish’s grandson, aren’t you? Can you help me? I’m Oren. I’m only a shepherd but—” His eyes were pleading and eager.

“I’ll help,” Jonathan said. Then he hesitated, glancing up at the sky. “But I’ve got to go soon. We’re going to Mizpah.”

“To the assembly!” Oren’s eyes widened. “Then you’d better not help me. You can’t be late for that. Not when...”

It was too huge a thing to say out loud. But Jonathan finished the other boy’s sentence in his own head. *Not when God is going to choose a king for us.*

He looked at the sky again. It wasn’t noon yet. “I have time,” he decided. “A bit, anyway.”

Oren nodded, suddenly becoming businesslike. “If I keep these five together, will you run ahead? Look for the others? You’re a good runner.”

Jonathan grinned—and sprinted away at full speed. His sandals left clouds of dust behind him.

But he didn’t find any of the other sheep.

“Maybe they’ll just wander home,” he told Oren encouragingly as the two of them trailed back towards the town. “Some of our donkeys went missing a couple of months ago, and *they* returned.”

“But your donkeys weren’t stolen, were they?” said

Oren gloomily. "They just got loose. I heard about it." He kicked at the dust.

Briefly Jonathan wondered what Oren had heard about the donkeys. His father, Saul, had gone to find them, but they'd wandered back while he was gone. Kish had raged, "That useless son of mine! He's probably halfway to Jabesh Gilead by now, and all the time the stupid donkeys were under his nose!"

Jonathan's cheeks went pink as he remembered. It wasn't a good feeling, thinking your father might be useless.

"My master will kill me," said Oren. "He hits me when I mess up just *small* things."

At that Jonathan forgot his father and grandfather. He wished he and Oren had been able to find the sheep. Fiercely, he said, "This is why we need a king. *He'd* stop people stealing and—and people beating up their servants."

"Maybe," replied Oren dully.

They'd reached the edge of Gibeah. Jonathan squeezed Oren on the arm, and the other boy trudged disconsolately away.

Jonathan followed the opposite path, looping around the low flat hill that supported the main part of the town. In front of him lay his grandfather's fields: they were bare and brown at the moment, ready for ploughing. Then there was the house, and the green rolling hills, with Kish's sheep grazing on them. Jonathan

smiled contentedly as the sun found its way through a crack in the clouds and filled the valley with brilliant colour.

Then he gasped, and broke into a run. The sun! It was past noon! He was going to be late.



He got away with just a raised eyebrow from Kish, who was standing impressively outside the house, his arms folded over his thick sheepskin coat. Abner was next to him, equally broad-chested but brown-haired instead of grey. Abner was Saul's cousin, Kish's nephew.

Jonathan's father, Saul, came out of the house. His tall frame was swaddled in a cloak, the richest one he had. There was fur sewn round its neck. He had put oil in his hair and rings on his fingers. "Jonathan," he exclaimed, "you're here at last." His eyes slid uncertainly to Kish. "You're late."

Kish said nothing, so Saul didn't say anything else either. A servant came round the house with the donkeys, and Jonathan hurried inside to get changed. He had to wear a heavy coat like his grandfather's, which he could already tell was going to be itchy and too hot. He had an embroidered cap over his hair and proper boots instead of sandals. His sister Merab handed him a thin gold ring: "Grandfather told me to give it to you. Now that you're one of the men."

Her voice was sarcastic, but Jonathan ignored that.

She was right: he was one of the men now, going with his father and grandfather to represent their family and clan and tribe at the great gathering of all Israel. Right now it was the house of Kish, and then it would be the house of Saul, but one day people would talk about the house of Jonathan, who was not only an excellent hunter but also owned hundreds of sheep, and treated all his shepherds with respect.

*Or, he thought excitedly, Jonathan, the right-hand man of the king, the king God chose, the one who rules over all twelve tribes of Israel.*

He slid the ring onto his finger. It was too big, but he didn't let Merab see.

Outside again, the donkeys had been spread with fine fabrics and leather saddlebags. Mizpah was close enough that they could have walked there, but that would have looked cheap and unimpressive. They were going to take donkeys, and five servants, and everyone would know that the house of Kish was one of the best families in the whole tribe of Benjamin.

Michal, Jonathan's other sister, had twined herself around Saul's arm. "When will you be back?" she asked. "You were gone for ages and ages last time."

Saul shook her off. "Soon," he said, and climbed onto his donkey.

Michal transferred herself to Jonathan. She was six years younger than him and much skinnier; her bony arms clung tightly around his waist.

Jonathan squeezed her back. "See you later," he whispered, bending to touch the top of her head with his chin. "I can't wait to tell you all about it."

Her dark head nodded, and she stood back, letting him get onto his donkey.

"Ready?" growled Kish.

"Let's go," answered Saul.