

This Too Shall Pass

ANCIENT ISRAEL—A KING SOLOMON LEGEND



*K*ing Solomon's captain of the guards was named Benaiah. He served the king with all his heart and took great pride in never failing to do what was requested of him. One day King Solomon heard Benaiah boasting to his soldiers, "I can accomplish any task King Solomon sets before me!" Solomon knew Benaiah to be a quiet man of action who rarely spoke. His boasting disturbed the king, who decided that Benaiah must be humbled.

King Solomon thought, "I will give Benaiah an impossible task. Then he will no longer brag that he can accomplish anything I ask." King Solomon called Benaiah to his side and said, "My heart longs to own a certain magical ring. I wish you to obtain it for me."

Benaiah bowed low and, smiling broadly, said, "Anything you wish is my command! Describe the ring so that I might set forth immediately to find it for you."

King Solomon's eyes twinkled mischievously. The ring he wanted did not exist! He commanded, "Within six months' time, bring me a ring that can make a happy person sad and a sad person happy."

Benaiah had never heard of such a wonder, but dedicating himself to the task, he said, "I will search the world if I must and bring you the ring you request."

Benaiah set off immediately for the marketplace. He visited every

goldsmith in Jerusalem, but none had ever heard of the magic ring Benaiah described. None of the silversmiths had seen or heard of the ring either.

Benaiah thought, "Perhaps this ring is from a distant land." He set forth to meet caravans traveling from afar. He approached each trader in precious gems and asked, "Have you ever seen a magical ring that can make a happy person sad and a sad person happy?" None of the camel drivers or traders had ever heard of such a ring.

Benaiah went to the ports where sea captains from distant lands anchored their ships. Benaiah asked each captain if he had ever seen or heard of such a magical ring. Each shook his head and scratched his beard, but none could help in the quest.

Months passed. Benaiah met every caravan that passed and visited every ship that sailed into port. He sought out jewelers far and wide. It seemed as though for the first time Benaiah would fail to do what the king had asked of him. He was downhearted and miserable.

The day before the ring was due, Benaiah went to the bazaar, distraught and worried. He searched the jewelry stalls once again. As he passed a ragged boy with some crude rings and bracelets set out on a rug alongside the road, he paused and said to himself, "I must not leave any stone unturned." He asked the boy, "Do you have a magical ring that can make a sad person happy and a happy person sad?"

The boy shook his head and replied, "I have no such ring."

Benaiah's eyes welled with tears. Now he was certain that he had failed. The boy's grandfather overheard the conversation. He stepped out of the shadows and said, "Perhaps I have just the ring you want."

The old man took a simple gold band and engraved some words on it. He then handed it to Benaiah. The moment Benaiah looked at the ring, his sad face spread with a smile. Instantly, a sigh of relief washed away the frustration and sorrow he had felt during his long search. "Yes, indeed, this is the ring!" he joyfully exclaimed.

The next day at the palace, Benaiah entered King Solomon's court. A feast was in progress, and King Solomon was in a jolly mood, laughing with all

his guests. King Solomon saw Benaiah enter and said to himself, "I will not let him suffer long in his humiliation. After he admits that he was unable to accomplish the task I set before him, I will tell him that I gave him an impossible task to do! I shall explain that I did this to humble him."

Benaiah bowed and presented the ring to King Solomon, who jovially took it in hand. The moment King Solomon's eyes gazed upon the ring, the cheerful smile vanished from his face. He looked about the grandeur of his court and realized that someday his life would all be dust.

The simple gold ring he held in his hand was inscribed with the Hebrew letters gimmel, zayin and yud and stood for the saying *Gam Zeh Ya'avur*, "This too shall pass." He knew that the same ring could bring comfort and relief to someone who struggled with grief or misfortune. It was indeed the magical ring he had requested of his loyal soldier.

King Solomon took Benaiah in his arms and begged forgiveness for testing him. He gave Benaiah his ruby ring and placed the simple gold band with the powerful thought "This too shall pass" on his own finger. King Solomon wore the magic ring from then on, for it offered him wisdom and balance all the days of his life.

boasting: bragging

obtain: to get

dedicating: If you dedicate yourself to something, you give a lot of time and energy to it;

precious: valuable

caravan: a group traveling together in a long line

bazaar: a market place with lots of stalls and shops

sorrow: sadness

jolly: happy

humiliation: embarrassment

jovially: in a happy, playful way

grandeur: Being magnificent or splendid or grand.

Hebrew: another language spoken by the characters in this story

port: A trading center where boats are loaded and unloaded

distraught: upset

