Who was Benaiah in the Bible?

Several men in the Bible bear the name Benaiah, but one stands out from the rest. Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, was one of David's "mighty men"—his toughest military troop. The Bible describes Benaiah as a fearless warrior noted for his heroic exploits. This Benaiah is the brilliant fighter who famously "went down into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion" (1 Chronicles 11:22).

Benaiah was from the southern Judean city of Kabzeel. Before David became king, Benaiah was making a name for himself through numerous daring military achievements: "He struck down Moab's two mightiest warriors. He also went down into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion. And he struck down a huge Egyptian. Although the Egyptian had a spear in his hand, Benaiah went against him with a club. He snatched the spear from the Egyptian's hand and killed him with his own spear. Such were the exploits of Benaiah son of Jehoiada; he too was as famous as the three mighty warriors" (2 Samuel 23:20-22).

When David fled from King Saul, he placed Benaiah in command of "the thirty" (1 Chronicles 27:6), a select group of warriors second only to "the three" of highest rank and bravery. Later, when Joab was made commander-in-chief, Benaiah was appointed to a high place in David's armed forces as commander of the Cherethites and Pelethites, an elite mercenary company in David's bodyguard from Crete and Philistia (2 Samuel 8:18; 20:23; 23:23; 1 Chronicles 18:17).

Benaiah's loyalty to King David earned him the rank of third army commander, with 24,000 men in his division. This troop served as part of the army rotation system established by King David (1 Chronicles 27:1-6). Benaiah remained devoted to David during Absalom's rebellion (2 Samuel 20:23; see also 15:18) and also when Adonijah attempted to take

control of David's throne (1 Kings 1:8).

Benaiah was instrumental in safeguarding the passing of the royal succession to Solomon after David's death and thus gained the honor of assisting in Solomon's coronation at Gihon (1 Kings 1:32-40). As Solomon's supreme army commander and chief bodyguard, Benaiah was responsible for executing those who opposed the new king, including Adonijah, Joab, and Shimei (1 Kings 2:25, 34, 46).

Benaiah, a popular Hebrew name, means "the Lord has built." Other men named Benaiah in the Bible include a warrior from the town of Pirathon, who was also one of David's mighty men (2 Samuel 23:30; 1 Chronicles 11:31). This Benaiah was commander of 24,000 troops as well, in the eleventh division of King David's army (1 Chronicles 27:14).

First Chronicles 4:36 mentions a Benaiah as a descendant of Simeon and leader of his tribe. This Benaiah participated in the conquest of Gedor during Hezekiah's reign. Another Benaiah was one of the musicians and priests who blew the trumpet as the ark of God was brought into Jerusalem by King David (1 Chronicles 15:24). Later, he was appointed to minister in music regularly before the ark of the covenant (1 Chronicles 16:6). At least eight other Benaiahs appear briefly in the Old Testament (1 Chronicles 27:34; 2 Chronicles 20:14; 31:13; Ezra 10:25, 30, 35, 43; 11:1, 13). But none of these distinguish themselves like David's elite warrior, the Benaiah who single-handedly executed Moab's top soldiers, jumped into a pit in a snowstorm to wrestle and kill a lion, and outmaneuvered an Egyptian giant, slaying him with his own spear.