

# SASOUNTZA TAVIT

An Armenian Legendary Hero



Illustrated by **Nubar Apakian**



**H**igh, in the mountainous country of Sasoun, there lived a great and mighty Prince whose name was **ARUDZ MEHER**, or Meher the Lion. Arudz Meher had governed Sasoun for forty years.

Arudz Meher was so powerful that stories of his legendary might, strength and fame had crossed many mountains. The whole world spoke the prowess of this great and fearless lion of a man.

Not once in his lifetime did Arudz Meher have to exclaim "Ah" in despair but, now, when old age had caught up with him, a pain had crept into his heart. "I am in the autumn of my days and soon I will be committed to the ground and the name of Meher will be forgotten forever. Once I am gone, thousands will come to claim my land and I, the brave Meher, do not have an heir to carry my sword and defend Sasoun".

Upon these words, a sudden vision of fire was revealed to him from among the clouds and he heard the words: "Greetings, O mighty giant of Sasoun. Your voice has reached the throne of the Almighty. Soon you will sire a child, but, hear me O great king of the mountains, the day your heir is born, you and your wife will die".

The great king rejoiced at the news and said, "If it is His wish, let it be done. We have seen death many times and it has become part of us but, with the birth of our son, we shall be immortal and Sasoun will be safe". Thereupon, the vision disappeared.

Nine months from the day of his announcement, Arudz Meher had a son and he named his whelp **TAVIT**. Knowing his time was short, he called his brother **TZENOV OHAN** to him and gave both his son and his country into his keeping. That same day, **ARUDZ MEHER** and his wife were dead.





**A**t this time, there lived in the country of MESER another mighty king, MESRA MELIK. Hearing of the death of ARUDZ MEHER, he took advantage of the situation and gathering his armies he marched against Sasoun. Terrified at the impending attack against Sasoun and hoping to avoid the destruction of the country left in his care, Tzenov Ohan ran to greet the mighty enemy and falling at his feet, pleaded: — O Invincible Lord of Meser, be our master, be our prince. We will be your meek and humble servants. We will remain in your shadow but spare us and our country. Do not destroy us and look upon us, your subjects, with a smile, begged Tzenov Ohan.

— NO! said Mesra Melik, not unless you and obedience, promising never to take arms against me.

Tzenov Ohan ran to Sasoun and brought back pass under the conqueror's sword as a sign of

your people pass under my sword and show your the whole population with him and begged them to obedience.

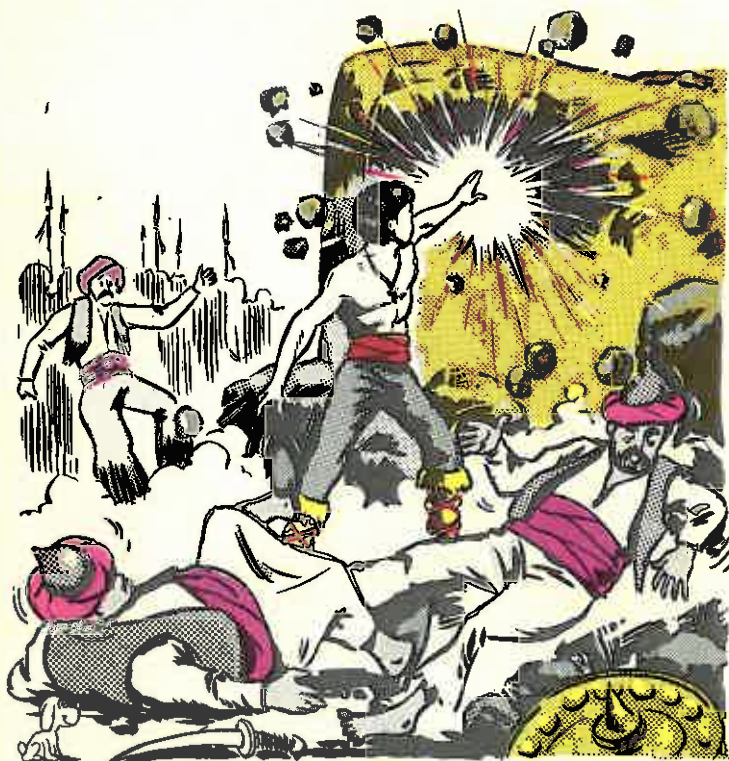


**A**ll but the young TAVIT passed under the enemy's sword. Young Tavit refused and brushing them aside with one little finger he threw them yards away and striking a rock with his bare hands frightened the enemy with the sparks he let fly.

— I will have to kill this little monster", said Mesra Melik to his advisors.

— O mighty Lord of Meser, what need for a king as strong and as powerful as you to fear a child, said they.

— SO BE IT, said Mesra Melik, BUT IF SOME DAY HARM BEFALLS ME, I CAN TELL YOU THAT THIS CHILD SHALL BE RESPONSIBLE.





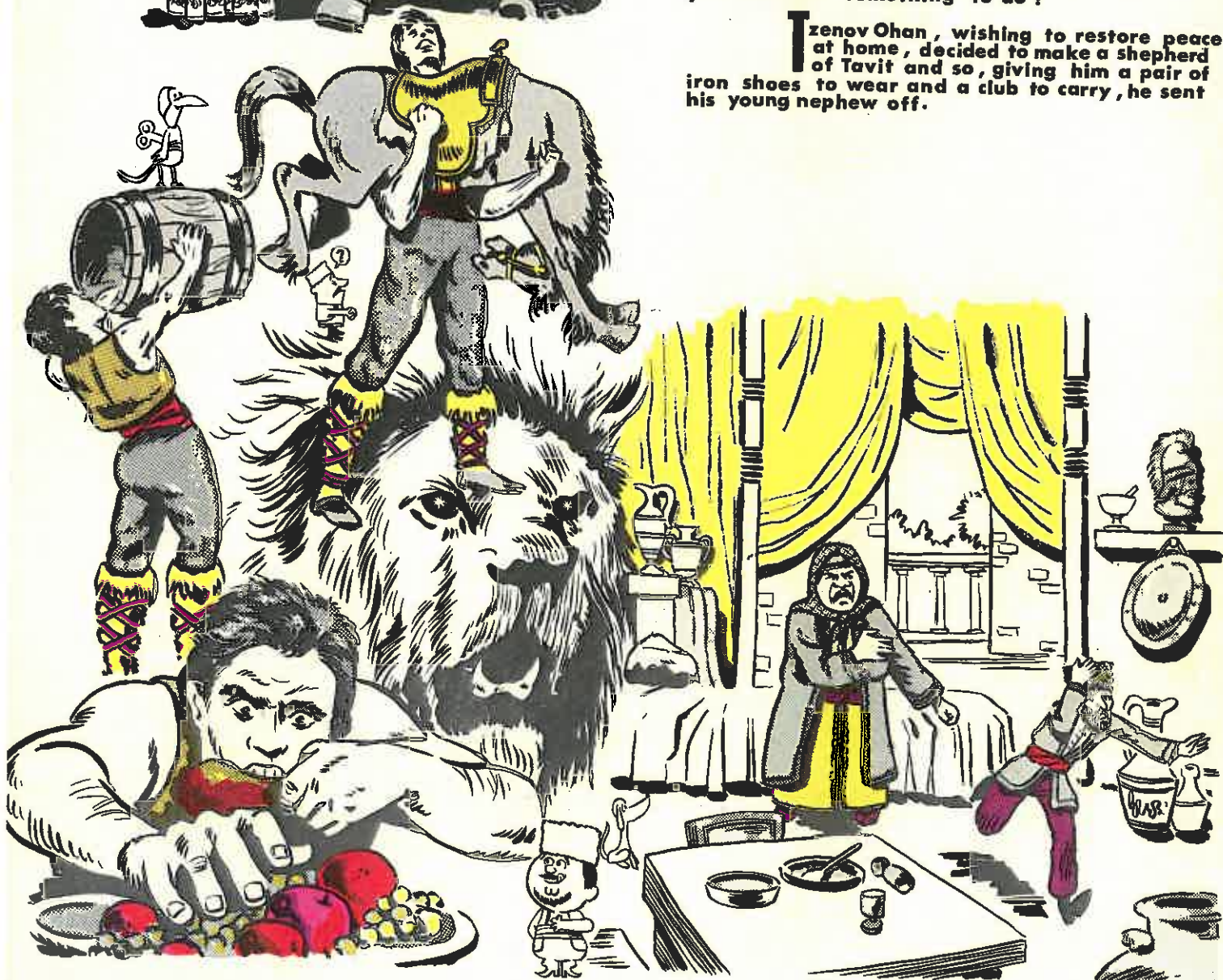


The years went by and Tavit grew into a mighty young giant. His strength was so great that the strength of a grown man was but that of a bee compared to his. His strength multiplied with each year that went by... he was indeed a young lion and the true son of his father.

His uncle, Tzenov Ohan had a mean and shrewish wife who plagued her husband day and night on the subject of young Tavit.

—I am alone with thousands of worries, she would say, why did you bring this young orphan into our house? Why do I have to feed him, cloth him and take care of him? Why don't you find him something to do?

Tzenov Ohan, wishing to restore peace at home, decided to make a shepherd of Tavit and so, giving him a pair of iron shoes to wear and a club to carry, he sent his young nephew off.





**D**riving his sheep ahead of him ,  
Tavit, the young giant, reached  
the mountain of Sasoun . On reaching the  
mountains , young Tavit let out a yell of  
ecstasy:

— OH ! BEAUTIFUL AND GLORIOUS  
MOUNTAINS OF SASOUN ! and the moun-  
tains and valleys reverberated and trem-  
bled at the sound of his fearful voice .

His sheep and the animals of the moun-  
tains and valleys fled in fear at the terrifying  
and deafening noise he made .

**Y**oung Tavit raced after them and ga-  
thered them one and all before him...  
his sheep along with the wild beasts  
rabbit , deer , goat and all .





In the evening, he drove this entire herd into the city and the sight so terrified the people that they ran screaming, howling and terror stricken, for shelter in their homes and in the churches, boarding up doors and windows for further protection.



Quite unaware of the consternation he had caused, Tavit reached the city square and called:

—HEY, YOU PEOPLE CERTAINLY SLEEP EARLY, WAKE UP YOU OWNERS OF SHEEP AND LAMBS. OPEN YOUR DOORS. I HAVE INCREASED YOUR HERD FOR YOU. THOSE WHO HAD TEN WILL NOW HAVE TWENTY. GET UP AND COME AND COLLECT YOUR HERD.

Puzzled at there being no response, Tavit took his herd back to the mountain and laying his head on a rock he slept till dawn.





In the morning, all the lords of Sasaoun went to see Tzenov Ohan to berate him:  
 - DOH ! TZENOV OHAN ! YOU MADE THAT MADMAN INTO A SHEPHERD OF SASOUN, WHEN HE CANNOT EVEN DISTINGUISH THE SHEEP FROM THE WOLF AND THE WOLF FROM THE LAMB. HE FILLED OUR CITY WITH WILD BEASTS. 'AMAN KEZ MADAGH', FOR GOD'S SAKE, TZENOV OHAN, DO SOMETHING BEFORE THE PEOPLE DIE OF TERROR BECAUSE OF HIM.

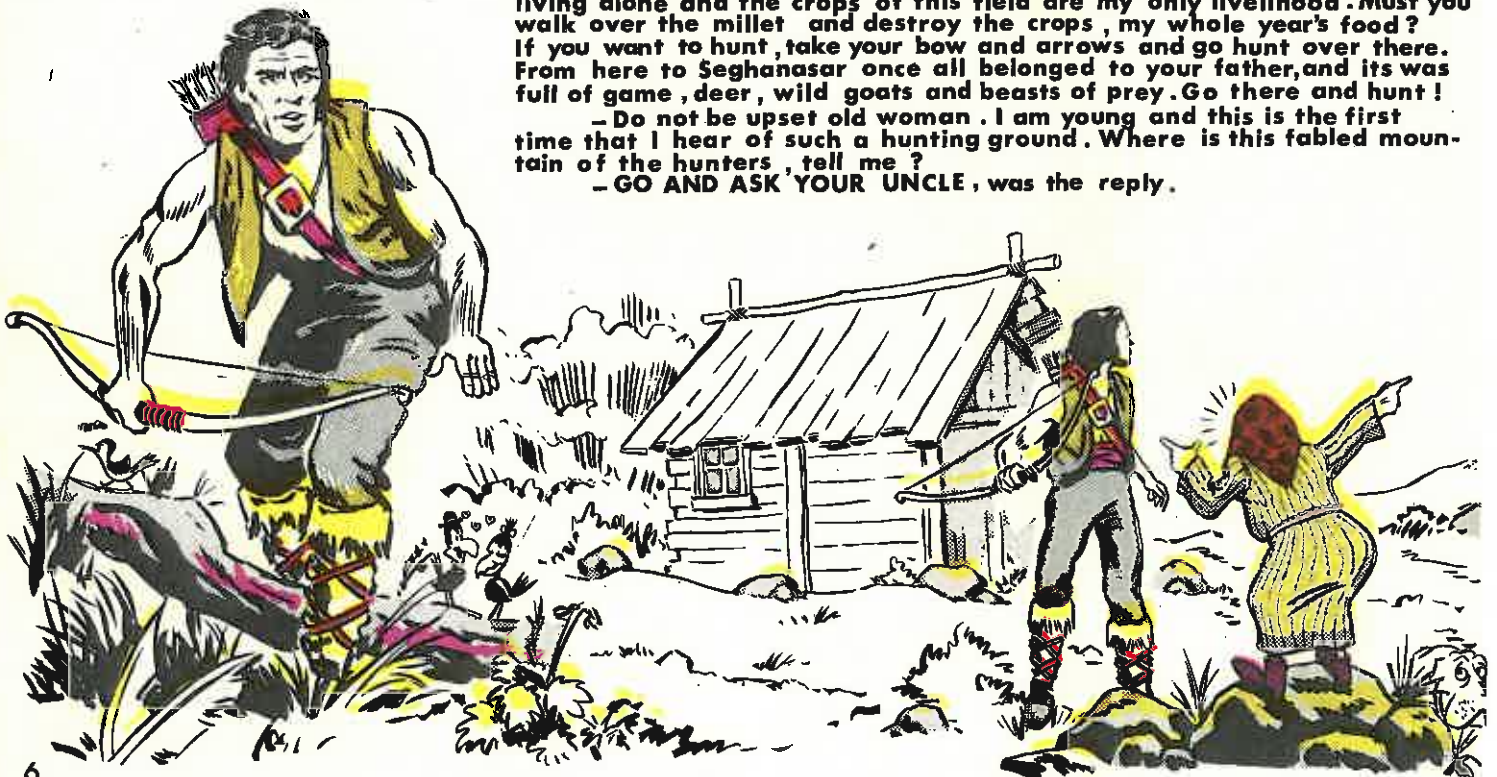


Caught between terror of his wife's vile temper and the people's terror of Tavit, Tzenov Ohan looked for another way out and this time gave Tavit a bow and arrows and said to him:  
 -TAVIT, MY SON, TAKE THESE AND GO AND HUNT IN THE MOUNTAINS ! So, armed with bow and arrows, Tavit went off and, on his way to the mountains, he crossed a millet field which belonged to an old and poor woman who lived alone and had once been a friend of Tavit's father.

-Vi, Tavit ! Must you be like your father ? I am an old woman living alone and the crops of this field are my only livelihood. Must you walk over the millet and destroy the crops, my whole year's food ? If you want to hunt, take your bow and arrows and go hunt over there. From here to Seghanasar once all belonged to your father, and it's was full of game, deer, wild goats and beasts of prey. Go there and hunt !

-Do not be upset old woman. I am young and this is the first time that I hear of such a hunting ground. Where is this fabled mountain of the hunters, tell me ?

-GO AND ASK YOUR UNCLE, was the reply.





**T**hereupon, Tavit returned to his uncle and asked:

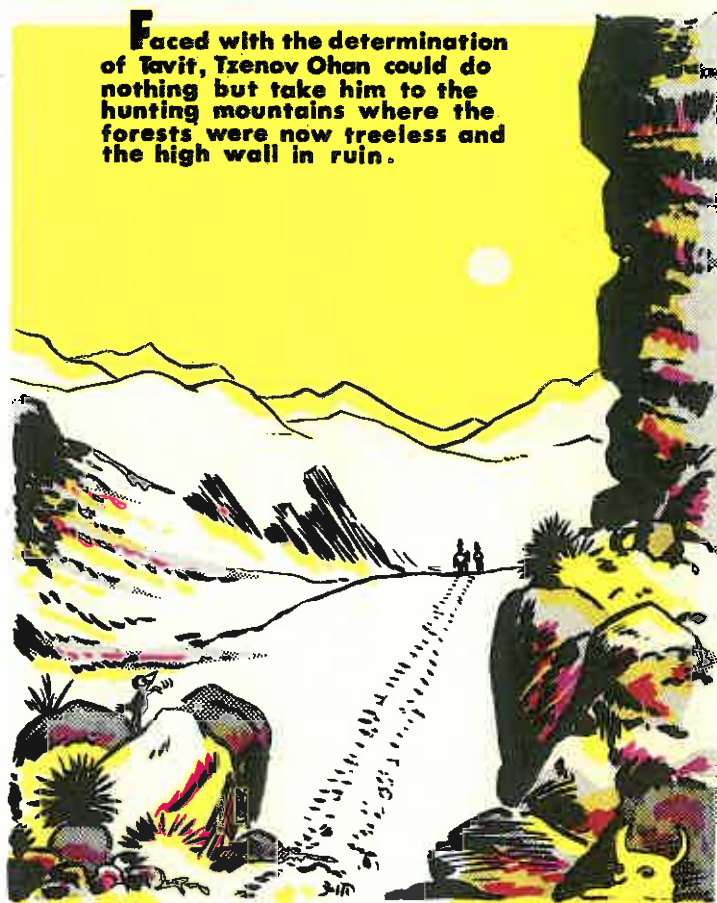
-Uncle Ohan, why didn't you tell me that my father had a mountain reserve full of wild goats, deer and beasts of prey for hunters? Tell me uncle and take me there!

-Vi! Who told you that? I wish they had held their tongue. That mountain, my son, was taken from us. There are no longer any wild goats and deer or other animals in those areas. When your illustrious father was with us (Ah, those bygone days, those good old days!), we ate meat often, but, when your father died, God rest his soul, King Mesra Melik gathered his army and came and destroyed our country. He also took the hunting animals from the mountains. The deer and goats are gone, all the beasts are gone. It was written that it should be this way, forget it my son. Go to your work. King Melik might hear us.

-What is King Mesra Melik to me? What can he do to me? King Melik can stay in his Meser, said Tavit. What business does he have in my father's land. Get up, uncle, take your bow and arrows, tie up your quiver and we will go hunt in the mountains!



**F**aced with the determination of Tavit, Tzenov Ohan could do nothing but take him to the hunting mountains where the forests were now treeless and the high wall in ruin.



**N**ight fell. Tzenov Ohan put his bow and arrows under his head and soon fell asleep.

Tavit's mind, however, was in a turmoil and he could not sleep but kept staring into the night where suddenly he saw a light burning in the distance.







**H**is curiosity aroused, he went to investigate and high on the peak of the mountain he saw a huge marble stone, broken in half. And, within the crack of the marble stone a fire burned. **THE LIGHT WAS COMING FROM THE STONE!** He ran back and awoke Tzenov Ohan.

**- GET UP UNCLE AND LOOK!** Look at that bright light in the distance. What kind of light is that?

Tzenov Ohan awoke and crossed himself.

**- Yes my son.** I would give my life for that light. That is our strong Maroutah mountain and, where that light is, there once stood the glory of Sasoun, the monastery and Church of The Holy Mother of Tchar-khapan, protector of our city. Before your father went to battle, he used to go up there and pray. Your father died and God was angry. King Mesra Melik wiped out and destroyed our monastery and Church, razing them to the ground. But, the light still glows from the Holy Altar.

**W**

hen Tavit heard this, he said:  
**- SWEET UNCLE, I'M AN ORPHAN AND BUT FOR YOU, I HAVE NO ONE IN THE WORLD. I HAVE NO FATHER. BE MY FATHER NOW. I WILL STAY HERE ON MOUNT MAROUTAH TILL I FINISH THE RE-BUILDING OF THE CHURCH AS IT ONCE WAS. GO DOWN TO THE CITY AND SEND UP TO ME 500 CRAFTSMEN AND 5,000 WORKMEN TO HELP ME ERECT OUR CHURCH AS IT WAS DURING MY FATHER'S DAY. I'LL FINISH IT IN A WEEK.**

**T**zenov Ohan went and brought back 5,000 workmen and 500 craftsmen.





**W**ITHIN A WEEK, TAVIT PROVED HIS PROMISE NO IDLE BOAST AS THE MONASTERY AND CHURCH OF THE HOLY MOTHER STOOD REBUILT IN ALL ITS FORMER MAGNIFICENCE AND GLORY.

**T**HE PRIESTHOOD, WHO HAD DISPERSED FAR AND WIDE, RETURNED AND ONCE AGAIN PRAYERS AND HYMNS BURST FORTH FROM A THOUSAND THROATS IN THE CHURCH OF MOUNT MAROUTAH.



**T**HE NEWS OF THE CHURCH REACHED MESRA MELIK. The fame and splendour of the Church of the Holy Mother was reported to him by the royal servants, who said:

—King and Lord of Meser, Tavit, son of Arudz Meher has rebuilt his father's church and proclaimed himself Prince, and as though this was not enough, he and the people of Sasoun have refused to pay their seven-year tax levy.

The King was angered at the news and called on his generals, PATEEN, GOSPATEEN, SUTEEN and TCHAR-KHATEEN to

"Go and destroy Sasoun, the land of the Armenians. Bring back the tax money of seven years and also 40 beautiful virgins, 40 short women to grind corn and 40 tall women to saddle my camels.

Having gathered their armies, Gospateen, acting as spokesman said:

—Your wishes are our command. We'll go and destroy Sasoun and bring back 40 weights of gold and all the women. You may rest assured.

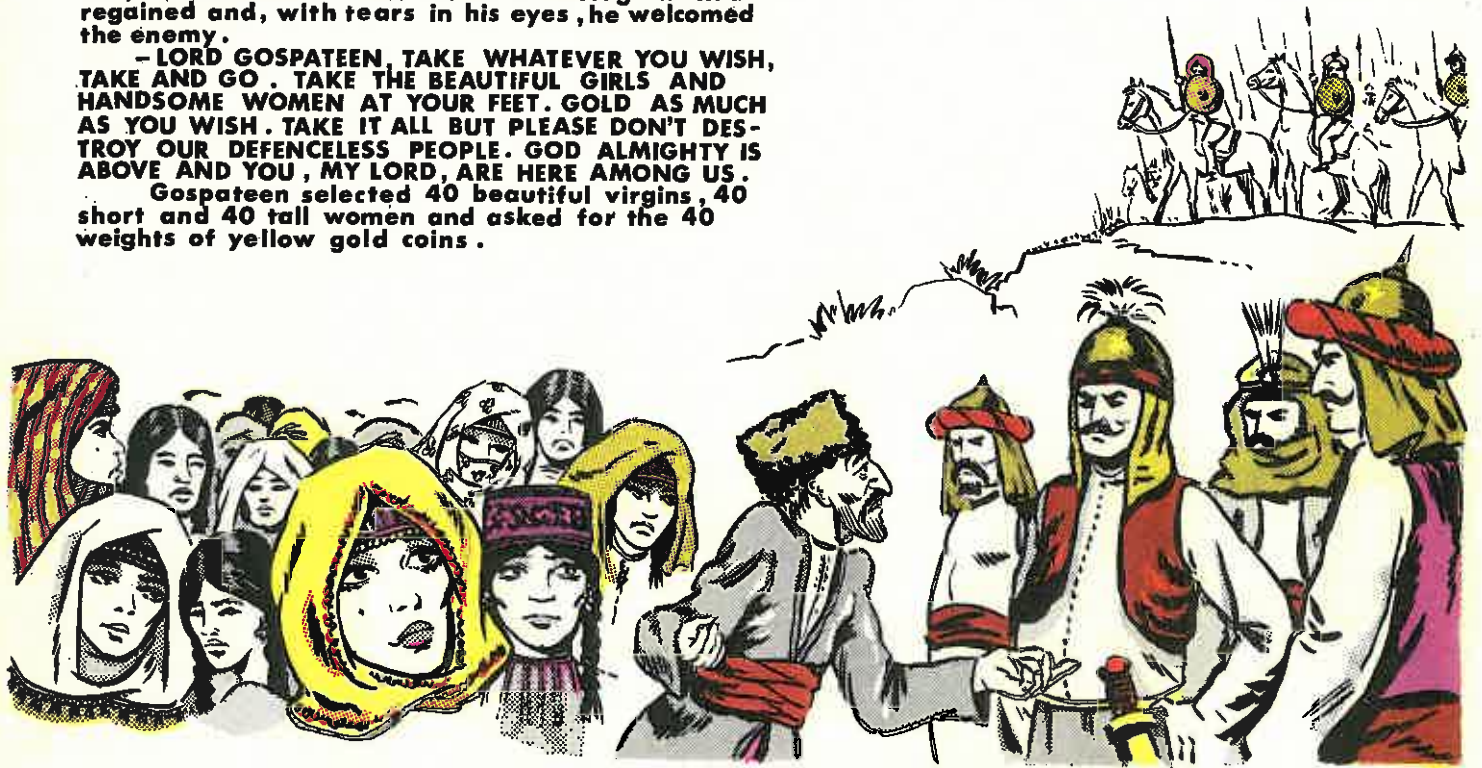




**A**t the head of his huge army and horde of tax-collectors, the proud Gospateen entered Sasoun. Hearing of the arrival of the enemy forces, TzenovOhan lost the shred of courage he had regained and, with tears in his eyes, he welcomed the enemy.

- LORD GOSPATEEN, TAKE WHATEVER YOU WISH, TAKE AND GO. TAKE THE BEAUTIFUL GIRLS AND HANDSOME WOMEN AT YOUR FEET. GOLD AS MUCH AS YOU WISH. TAKE IT ALL BUT PLEASE DON'T DESTROY OUR DEFENCELESS PEOPLE. GOD ALMIGHTY IS ABOVE AND YOU, MY LORD, ARE HERE AMONG US.

Gospateen selected 40 beautiful virgins, 40 short and 40 tall women and asked for the 40 weights of yellow gold coins.



**C**oming down the mountain of Maroutah, Tavit crossed the millet fields of the old woman. She cried to him: "Oh you madman. Did you come to destroy my fields again. If you are so brave and as strong as a bull, why don't you go to your father's estates and claim the land with its treasures? Why have you left it unprotected so that King Mesra Melik can take everything away?"

- Why do you scold me grandmother? What is it you are saying? I do not understand. What is it that King Melik is taking away?

- The King has sent his four generals to take away our gold and women!



**A**NGERED AT THIS NEWS, TAVIT RAN TO HIS UNCLE'S HOUSE AND PUSHING ASIDE GENERAL GOSPATEEN'S GUARDS.





**T**avit entered the house and saw Gaspateen weighing the yellow gold on scales, whilst his uncle, Tzenov Ohan, stood petrified in a corner of the room. The sight of the enemy and that of his uncle cowering in fear made Tavit see red, and he called:

- STAND UP GOSPATEEN ! STAY AWAY FROM MY FATHER'S GOLD. ALL THIS BELONG TO US, to which Gaspateen answered:

- HEY! TZENOV OHAN ! GIVE ME THE TAX MONEY FOR SEVEN YEARS OR I SWEAR ON MY SACRED BEARD THAT I'LL GO AND TELL MY KING MESRA MELIK. HE WOULD HAVE NO MERCY, I CAN TELL YOU. HE WILL COME TO DESTROY YOUR COUNTRY LEAVING NO STONE STANDING !



**G**ET LOST, YOU DOGS OF MESER ! YOU THINK WE ARE BUT SHADOWS BEFORE YOU ? WE SASOUNTZIS DON'T PAY TAXES TO ANYONE ANYMORE ! HAVN'T YOU EVER HEARD OF THE BRAVES OF SASOUN ? and saying this, the angered Sasountzi Tavit, took up the scale and threw it at Gaspateen's head. It is said, he threw it so hard that it sliced through the wall and has kept going to this day. This exhibition of strength so frightened the enemy that they left the gold lying there and ran back to their country, happy to have got away with their lives . . .

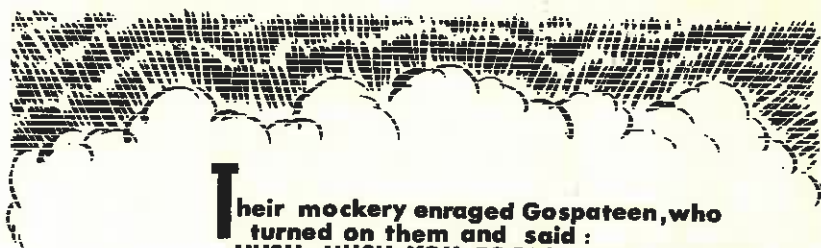




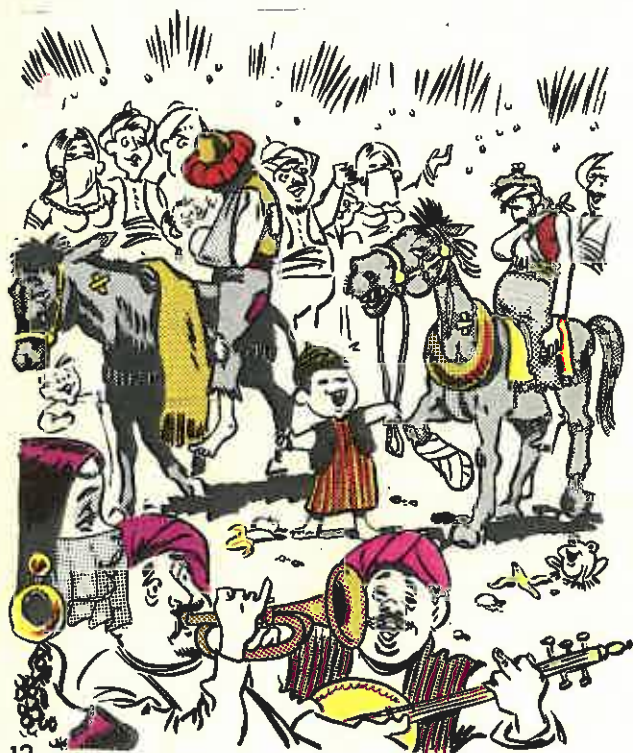
**V**I, UNCLE, VI ! WHAT CAN I SAY TO YOU. WHY DID YOU OFFER OUR GOLD TO THESE FOREIGNERS ?  
 - DEAR NEPHEW, I DID IT SO THAT MESRA MELIK WOULD SPARE OUR COUNTRY. HE WILL NOW SURELY SEND ALL HIS ARMY AND THEY WILL COME AND DESTROY US ALL AND OUR BELOVED SASOUN. WHO WILL OPPOSE HIM AND HIS ARMIES ?  
 - YOU WAIT AND SEE, UNCLE. LET MESRA MELIK COME AND I SHALL BE THE ONE TO STAND AGAINST HIS ARMIES .  
 then Tavit set the young girls free , and said :  
 - Go and live free . Ask the sun from me , and you shall have it .  
**I AM SASOUNTZI TAVIT !!!**



**I**n the meantime, a bloodstained Pateen, Gospateen, Suteen and Tcharkhateen reached Meser and the women folk, seeing them approach from a distance, started to welcome them home singing the praises of their brave warriors. But, once within the limits of their city, their songs turned to laughter and mockery  
 - Hey, Gospateen-the-big-talker, where do you come from with your thick head cut open? Didn't you say, 'I'll go to Sasoun and bring back women in forties and 40 weights of gold'. You went to Sasoun proud and assured and you have come back like a sick dog with your tail between your legs! Come on, tell us what happened to brave Gospateen !



**T**heir mockery enraged Gospateen, who turned on them and said :  
 - HUSH, HUSH YOU FOOLS ! YOU WOMEN HAVE BUT SEEN THE MEN OF MESER. YOU SHOULD SEE THE MEN OF SASOUN, BEFORE YOU MOCK US. EACH IS BUILT AS BIG AS A MOUNTAIN, THEIR ARROWS ARE LONG CLUBS AND EVEN THEIR GRASS GROWS LONG AND SHARP LIKE SWORDS. THEY KILLED THREE HUNDRED OF OUR MEN, and turning on his heels he ran to see his king.







**A**t the sigh of his generals King Mesra Melik burst into laughter and said:  
- EXCELLENT, EXCELLENT, MY BRAVE GOSPA-  
TEEN I SHOULD DECORATE YOU FOR YOUR OUTSTANDING  
BRAVERY AND VICTORY! WHERE ARE THEN THE GIRLS OF  
SASOUN AND THE GOLD YOU WERE TO BRING?

Gospateen bowed low, and said:  
- LONG LIVE MY KING. I BARELY COULD ESCAPE  
WITH MY LIFE. HOW COULD I BRING BACK ANY  
GOLD? A MADMAN WAS BORN AMONG THE  
ARMENIANS. HE DOES NOT KNOW THE MEAN-  
ING OF FEAR, NOR DOES HE KNOW MASTER  
OR OVERLORD. IT WAS HE WHO BROKE MY  
HEAD AND SAID 'I WILL NOT GIVE MY FA-  
THER'S GOLD OR THE ARMENIAN WOMEN  
OF SASOUN TO YOU. THERE IS NO PLACE  
FOR YOU HERE... YOUR KING CAN COME  
AND FIGHT ME, IF HE IS BRAVE ENOUGH'.

Mesra Melik thundered:  
- CALL ALL MY SOLDIERS! CALL  
EVERYONE OF THEM, THE BEARDED  
AND THE BEARDLESS, THE YOUNG  
AND THE OLD, THOUSANDS AND  
THOUSANDS OF THEM! CALL  
THEM ALL! CALL THOSE WITH  
WHITE HAIR AND WHITE BEARDS;  
CALL THEM ALL! GIVE THEM  
ARMOUR AND SWORD. BEAT THE  
DRUMS, BLOW THE TRUMPETS!  
THIS IS WAR!! I SHALL FIGHT  
TAVIT OF SASOUN AND  
DESTROY HIS COUNTRY!!!



**H**eading his vast army, Mesra Melik arrived on the  
plains of Sasoun and pitched his tents. Their number  
was so great that when they drank from the waters of the nearby  
river, it dried up entirely!

Tzenov Ohan was the first to see the enemy. He had climbed  
the mountain and when he saw the valley below covered with  
thousands of tents, at first he thought it had snowed during the  
night but, he realized that the enemy had encamped within his  
country's borders, he ran to the people, yelling.

- VI! ESCAPE, THEY HAVE COME, THEY ARE HERE! KING  
MELIK IS HERE AND IS ENCAMPED ON OUR PLAINS. HIS SOLDIERS  
ARE AS MANY AS THE STARS IN THE SKY. VI, TO OUR SUN AND TO  
OUR WORLD I COME, LET'S TAKE OUR GOLD AND MAIDENS TO HIM.  
WE'LL BEG HIM TO FORGIVE US, WE'LL IMPLORE HIM TO SPARE US.

Tavit intervened and said: "YOU STAY HERE UNCLE. DO NOT  
WORRY. I WILL GO TO THE PLAINS AND FACE KING MELIK!"





**T**hereupon Tavit went straight to the old woman in the fields.  
 -NANNY DJAN, DO YOU HAVE A PIECE OF IRON TO GIVE ME? ANYTHING WILL DO, A RUSTY PIECE OF IRON, A POKER OR A RAMROD? I SHALL ALSO NEED A DONKEY TO RIDE. I'M GOING TO FIGHT THE SOLDIERS OF MESRA MELIK!

-VI TAVIT! DURING THE BATTLES YOUR FATHER FOUGHT, HE RODE A FIERY HORSE AND WORE A GOLDEN BELT. HIS SHINING HELMET WAS A LEGEND IN ITSELF. HE WORE A CROSS ON HIS RIGHT ARM AND HIS ARMOUR WAS GIVEN TO HIM BY GOD. AND NOW YOU COME AND ASK ME FOR AN IRON POKER AND A DONKEY! ARE YOU SURE YOU ARE YOUR FATHER'S SON?

-OH NANNY, PLEASE TELL ME WHERE I CAN FIND MY FATHER'S ARMOUR!

-GO AND ASK YOUR UNCLE, said the old woman.

**H**HEY, UNCLE OHAN. I HEAR MY FATHER HAD A FIERY HORSE, A GOLDEN BELT AND SHINY ARMOUR. GIVE THEM TO ME!

-VI, TAVIT DJAN exclaimed the old man in his terror. SINCE YOUR FATHER'S DEATH, I NEVER TOOK THE HORSE OUT OF THE STABLES AND HIS ARMOUR AND ACOUTREMENTS ARE GETTING RUSTY WITH DISUSE. GO, TAKE THEM IF YOU WISH BUT LEAVE ME ALONE. ALAS, A THOUSAND TIMES ALAS FOR THE HORSE AND THE ARMOUR.

But, when TzenovOhan saw Tavit in his father's armour, he felt more heartened and blessed the brave young man and sent him to meet the enemy on the plains of Sassoun.







**S**ASOUNTZI TAVIT had another uncle, TOROS, a giant of a man and his dead mother's brother. When Toros heard of the impending battle, he ran into the enemy camp roaring: -WHY DID YOU COME, YOU FOOLS! HAVEN'T YOU HEARD OF SASOUNTZI TAVIT? DON'T YOU KNOW HIM? HE'S HERE AND HE COMES MOUNTED ON HIS FIERY HORSE! ESCAPE WHILE YOU CAN! I'VE COME TO CLEAN UP THE PLAIN AFTER HE IS FINISHED WITH YOU!

**T**OROS HAD SCARCELY FINISHED TALKING WHEN TAVIT APPEARED ON TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN RIDING HIS FIERY HORSE!

-AWAKE! HE ROARED. ARM YOURSELVES. SADDLE AND MOUNT YOUR HORSES. PREPARE YOURSELVES SO YOU WON'T SAY LATER THAT TAVIT ATTACKED WITHOUT WARNING!!!





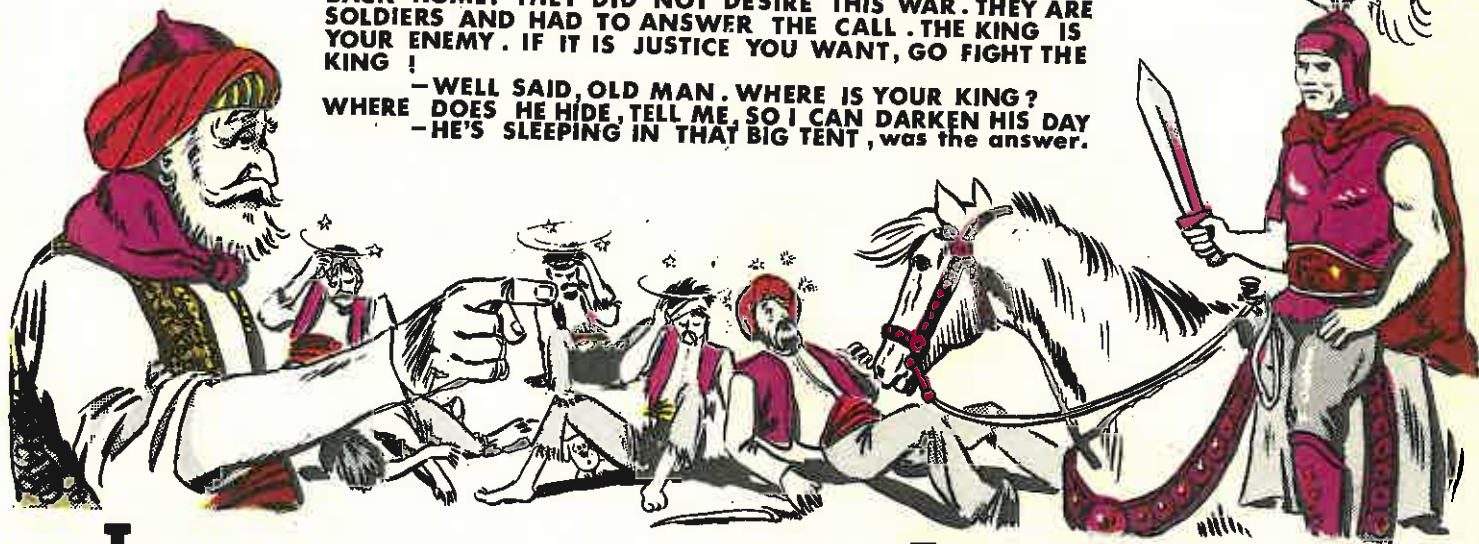
**L**IKE A STREAK OF  
LIGHTENING TAVIT  
FLEW OVER AND ALIGHTED  
RIGHT IN THE CENTRE OF THE  
ENEMY CAMP WITH HIS INVIN-  
CIBLE SWORD HELD HIGH.

**H**HE STRUCK THE ENEMY  
TO THE LEFT AND TO THE  
RIGHT OF HIM.  
HIS SWORD STRUCK AND  
STRUCK AGAIN, KILLING THE  
ENEMY TILL THE RIVERS OF  
BLOOD SURROUNDED HIM...  
THOUSANDS LAY DEAD !!!





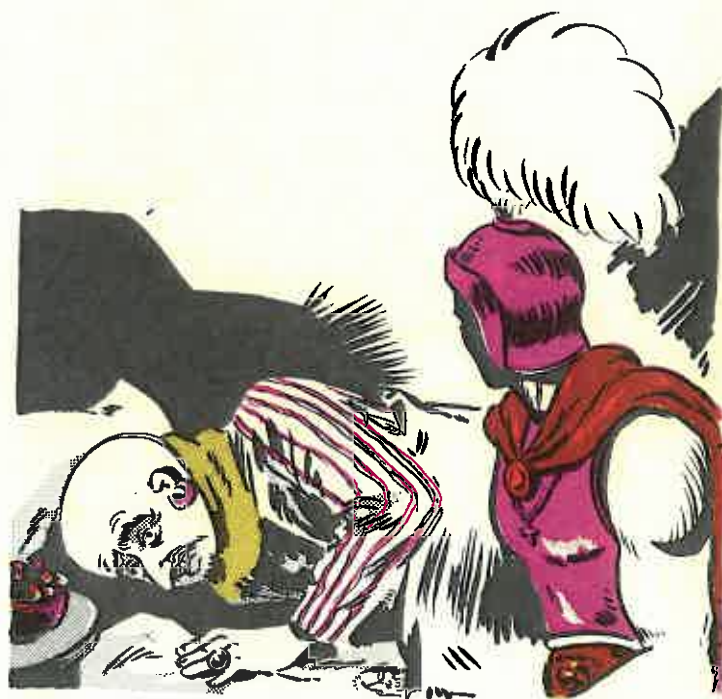
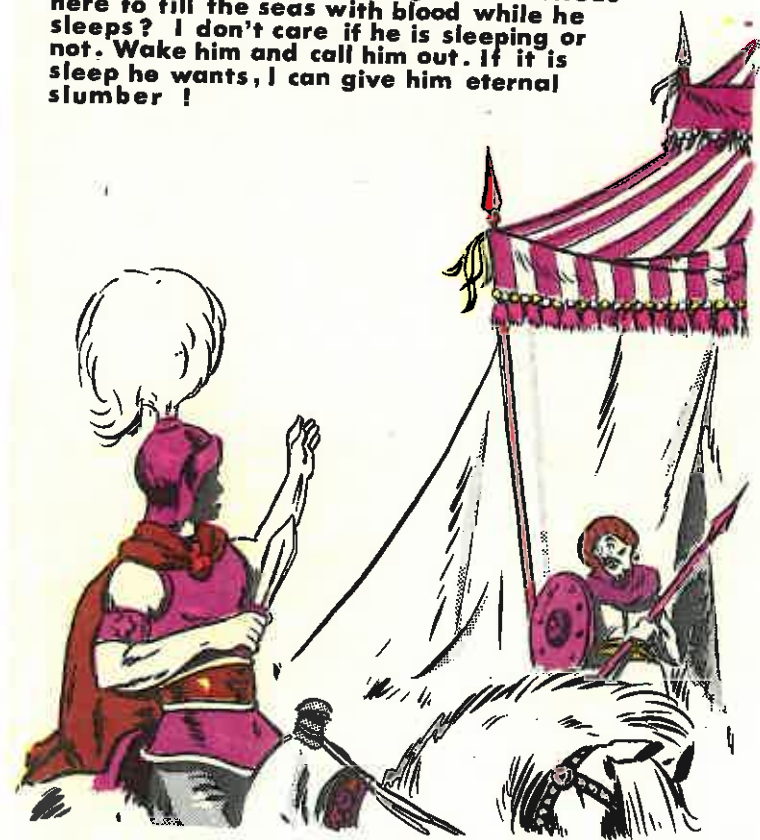
**A**n old enemy soldier, a man of wisdom who had seen many battles, came forward and called:  
 - TAVIT, O BRAVE SASOUNTZI ! LONG LIVE YOUR RIGHT ARM AND YOUR SHARP SWORD ! I BEG YOU, LISTEN TO AN OLD MAN. WHAT HAVE THESE POOR MEN DONE TO YOU TO DESERVE YOUR WRATH ? EACH IS HIS MOTHER'S SON, AND THE LIGHT IN HIS HOUSE. THEY HAVE WIVES AND CHILDREN WAITING FOR THEM TO COME BACK HOME. THEY DID NOT DESIRE THIS WAR. THEY ARE SOLDIERS AND HAD TO ANSWER THE CALL. THE KING IS YOUR ENEMY. IF IT IS JUSTICE YOU WANT, GO FIGHT THE KING !  
 - WELL SAID, OLD MAN. WHERE IS YOUR KING ?  
 WHERE DOES HE HIDE, TELL ME, SO I CAN DARKEN HIS DAY  
 - HE'S SLEEPING IN THAT BIG TENT, was the answer.



**T**avit rode towards the royal tent and called:  
 - Where is he ? Where ? Call him out and let him meet his destiny ! If he is not dead, death awaits him outside !

A servant crept out and said :  
 - My royal master sleeps. He must sleep for seven days. He has slept the last three days and I can wake him not until another four days are passed.  
 - Why then did he bring this multitude here to fill the seas with blood while he sleeps ? I don't care if he is sleeping or not. Wake him and call him out. If it is sleep he wants, I can give him eternal slumber !

**T**hough unwilling, the servant went in to awaken his king. He pushed him once, he pushed him twice and finally the Meser giant opened his eyes :  
 - OOOOF, can't you people let a man sleep ? But, when he saw the brave Tavit towering above him, his angered turned to fear and he felt his strength diminish. He sat up, and smiling his appeasement, he said :  
 - Welcome to my tent, Tavit. You must be tired. Come, sit and rest yourself and, if later you still want to fight, you can name the terms.





**H**owever the wily tyrant had had a deep hole dug in the middle of his tent and covered with a carpet to trap his enemy in the event the battle went against him, and it was right in the centre of this hole that he indicated Tavit should sit...

- HAHHAHA! laughed Mesra Melik when Tavit fell into the well. NOW HE CAN GO AND STAY THERE TILL HE ROTS and bringing a huge grinding stone, he placed it over the top of the well.



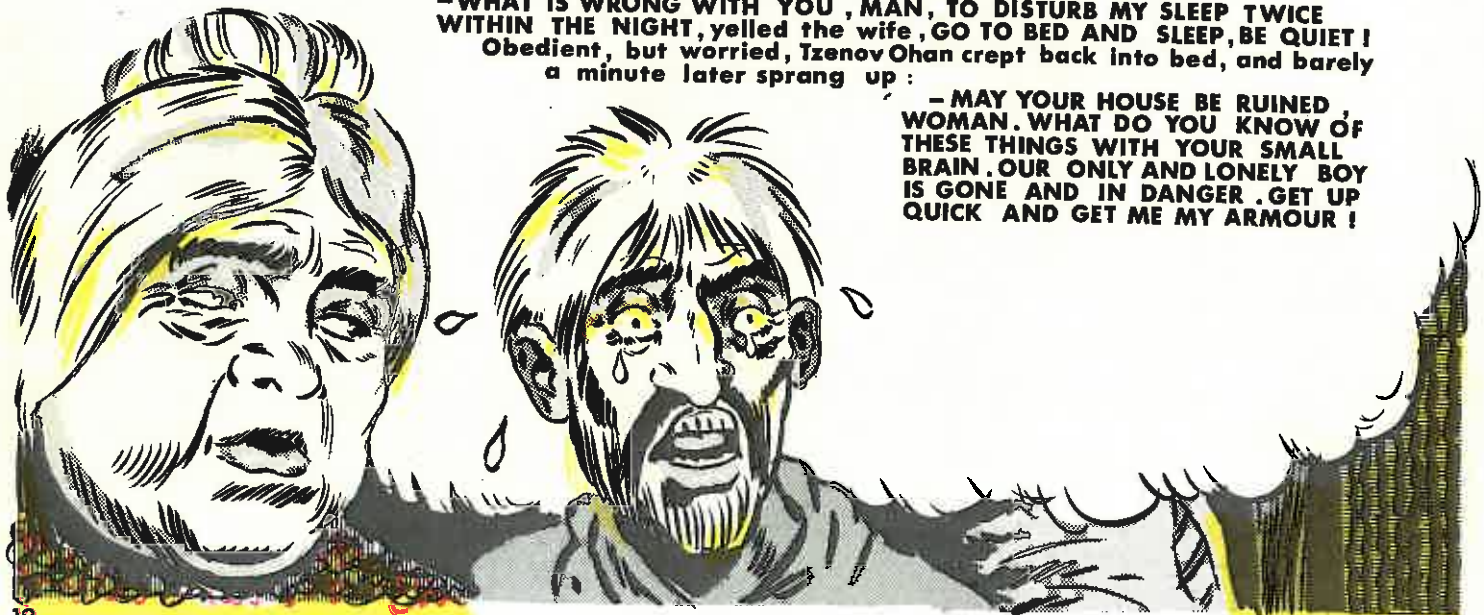
**J**ust as this took place, Tzenov Ohan was shaken out of his sleep by an evil dream.  
- VI GENIG (woman), LIGHT A CANDLE. TAVIT HAS DISAPPEARED FROM OUR LANDS. A BLACK CLOUD COVERS THE SKIES OF SASOUN. I HAVE JUST DREAMT THAT SASOUN WAS LEFT IN DARKNESS!

- DON'T WORRY ERIG (husband), said his wife who could ask for nothing better than to be rid of Tavit, WHO KNOWS WHERE TAVIT IS AT THIS MOMENT. HE IS PROBABLY HAVING FUN SOMEWHERE. WHY DO YOU HAVE TO DREAM SUCH DREAMS?

Tzenov Ohan slept once more only to wake again in a few minutes.  
- GENIG, I TELL YOU, TAVIT IS IN DANGER SOMEWHERE. A BRIGHT STAR SHINES OVER MESER AND OUR STARS LOOK DIM.

- WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU, MAN, TO DISTURB MY SLEEP TWICE WITHIN THE NIGHT, yelled the wife, GO TO BED AND SLEEP, BE QUIET! Obedient, but worried, Tzenov Ohan crept back into bed, and barely a minute later sprang up:

- MAY YOUR HOUSE BE RUINED, WOMAN. WHAT DO YOU KNOW OF THESE THINGS WITH YOUR SMALL BRAIN. OUR ONLY AND LONELY BOY IS GONE AND IN DANGER. GET UP QUICK AND GET ME MY ARMOUR!





**I**ZENOV OHAN jumped on his black horse and sped to the top of the Sasoun mountains and in the distant enemy camp he saw Tavit's horse surrounded by the enemy soldiers, and Tavit himself was nowhere to be seen. So, tying eight thick buffalo skins around him to protect his lungs, he yelled out with all his might:

**- HEY, HEY, TAVIT !!! TAVIT, WHERE ARE YOU? REMEMBER THE CROSS ON YOUR RIGHT ARM. SAY THE NAME OF THE HOLY MOTHER AND YOU WILL FIND YOURSELF FREE AND UNDER THE SUN !**



**O**, HOLY VIRGIN MOTHER OF MAROUTAH. O IMMORTAL DIVINE CROSS. TAVIT OF SASOUN IS CALLING YOU. HELP HIM!, said Tavit, upon hearing his uncle's instructions from within the depths of the well.

Tavit could feel great strength fill in him and with one bound he let fly a blow against the giant grinding stone that broke into a million pieces and flew every which way across the sky. It is said, the stones fly to this day!

Terror struck the heart of Mesra Melik when he saw Tavit come out of the well.

- Tavit, my brother. Here you are still. Come, sit and have dinner with me.

- I will never sit and share bread with you. You are a fraud and a coward. Quick now! Arise and wear your armour. Ride your horse and meet me outside! We are going to fight!, to this the king replied

- We shall fight, but mine will be the first 3 blows!

- So be it. I grant you the first three blows, said Tavit going into the middle of the battlefield where he awaited his foe.



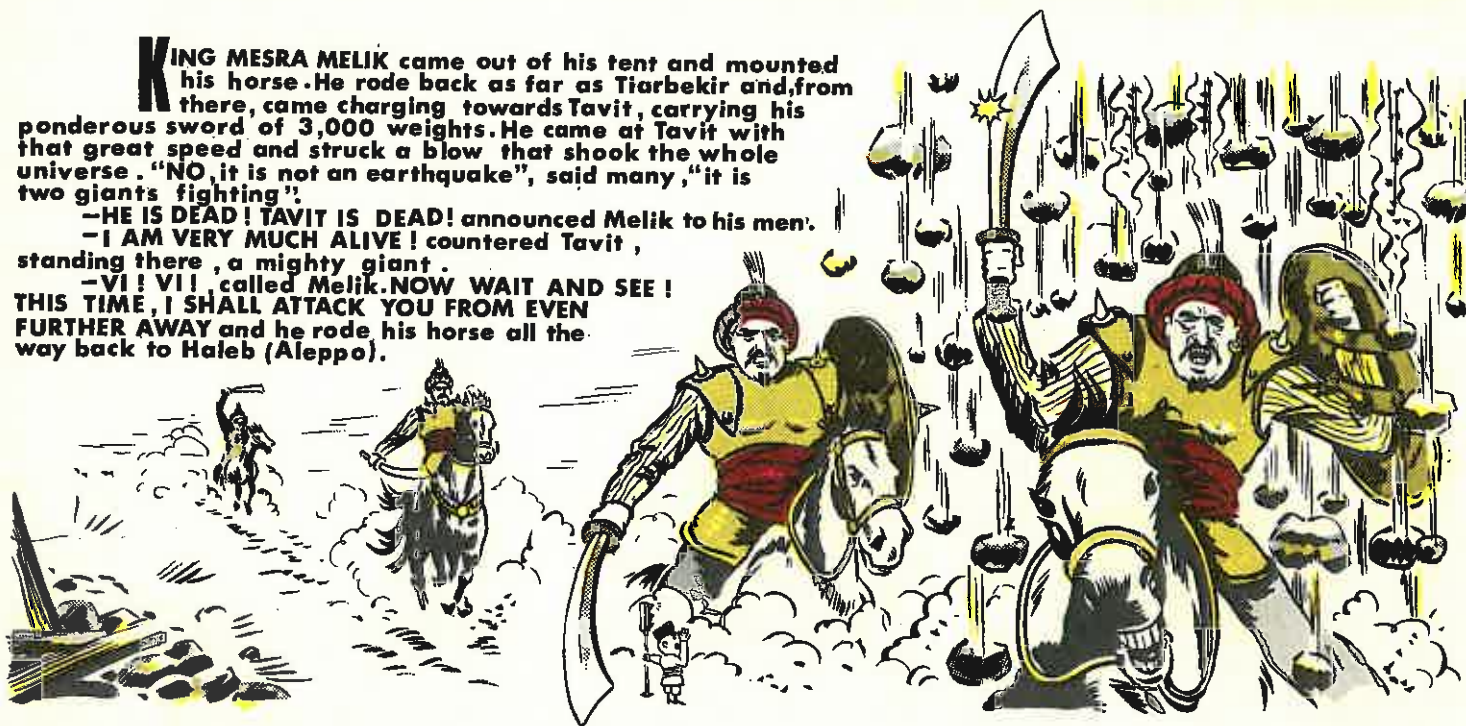


**K**ING MESRA MELIK came out of his tent and mounted his horse. He rode back as far as Tiarbekir and, from there, came charging towards Tavit, carrying his ponderous sword of 3,000 weights. He came at Tavit with that great speed and struck a blow that shook the whole universe. "NO, it is not an earthquake", said many, "it is two giants fighting".

-HE IS DEAD! TAVIT IS DEAD! announced Melik to his men.

-I AM VERY MUCH ALIVE! countered Tavit, standing there, a mighty giant.

-VI! VII! called Melik. NOW WAIT AND SEE! THIS TIME, I SHALL ATTACK YOU FROM EVEN FURTHER AWAY and he rode his horse all the way back to Haleb (Aleppo).



**T**he second charge of Mesra Melik's horse brought winds, and rain. The world shook under the impact of his second blow. The collision of armour was so great that people for many miles around lost their hearing for many hours.

-HE IS GONE! SASOUNTZI TAVIT IS GONE! exclaimed Mesra Melik.

-I AM ALIVE AND WELL! chanted Tavit.

-VI, VI, VI! said Melik. WAIT AND SEE THIS TIME. MAYBE CHARGING DISTANCE WAS NOT ENOUGH, and he rode back until he reached his own land Meser.



**T**HE THIRD CHARGE EXPOSED THE WORLD TO THUNDER AND LIGHTENING.

**H**E STRUCK SO HARD THAT A HEAVY DUST CLOUD COVERED THE PLAINS OF SASOUN FOR THREE DAYS AND NIGHTS...





**A**ND, FOR THREE DAYS  
AND THREE NIGHTS,  
THE PEOPLE BELIEVED THAT  
TAVIT HAD FINALLY BEEN KILLED ...

**W**hen the dust settled, however,  
Tavit stood there bigger  
than ever and called on  
Mesra Melik.

**- KING MESRA MELIK,  
YOU'VE HAD YOUR THREE BLOWS!  
IT IS MY TURN NOW !**

**T**error took hold of the heart  
of the bold and proud king.  
He ran to hide in a deep  
hole which he covered with 40  
skins of hard leather and 40 huge  
grinding stones.



**S**ASOUNTZI TAVIT, THE SON OF THE LION OF SASOUN,  
DREW HIS INVINCIBLE SWORD AND STUCK STRAIGHT  
AND TRUE. HIS SWORD CUT RIGHT THROUGH THE 40  
STONES AND 40 PIECES OF LEATHER AND WENT DEEP INTO THE  
WELL ... ALL THE WAY DOWN PLUS ANOTHER EIGHT MEASURES,  
DEEP INTO THE HOLE.





**I AM ALIVE** roared Melik  
**TRY ONCE AGAIN !!!**

**T**AVIT HEARD HIS ENEMY'S  
VOICE AND DISBELIEF IN  
SURPRISE, LOOKED AT  
HIS SWORD, AND SAID :

**-MELIK, COME AND STAND  
OUTSIDE AND SHAKE YOURSELF !**

**W**HEREPON MESRA MELIK CAME  
UP AND SHOOK HIMSELF ONCE  
AND HIS BODY FELL APART,  
CLEFT IN TWO, ONE HALF FELL TO THE  
LEFT AND ONE HALF TO THE RIGHT !

**KING MESRA MELIK WAS NO MORE...**





The soldiers of Meser stood petrified with horror and fear, until they heard Tavit say:  
- DON'T BE AFRAID, MEN OF MESER. YOU MEN ARE PEASANTS, LABOURERS AND HONEST CRAFTSMEN WITH ENOUGH WORRIES OF YOUR OWN. WHY DO YOU CARRY SWORDS, BOWS AND ARROWS? ARE YOU TIRED OF YOUR PEACEFUL WAY OF LIFE? WE TOO HAVE OUR HOMES AND OUR YOUNG AND OLD. GO BACK TO YOUR HOMES IN MESER. IF YOU SHOULD EVER THINK OF TAKING UP ARMS AGAINST US, REMEMBER WHAT YOU HAVE JUST SEEN. REMEMBER HOW HARD

**SASOUNTZI  
TAVIT** CAN STRIKE !

