





# CHAPTER 1

## DANGER!

The wind hadn't stopped blowing for five days. This wasn't unusual, but it did make staying warm at night hard. Summer had arrived in Bethlehem, and the days were hot. But the nights were bitter cold.

Twelve-year-old David retrieved a log and added it to the fire. Pulling his woolen cloak tight, he sat, leaning against an olive tree. Most shepherds complained about the lonely

days and nights with only their sheep for company. But David lived for these moments.

It was in these moments, out in nature, where he could most clearly hear the voice of his Maker—it was almost as if he had his own audience with God.

Every man, woman, and child in Israel knew the stories of Abraham. God, the Maker of the Heavens and Earth, had appeared to Abraham as a stranger and made a covenant with him that led to the creation of the nation of Israel.

David couldn't get enough of the priests' stories—Jonah swallowed whole, Noah defying the world to build an ark. Or Moses meeting God in a burning bush.



From his earliest days, David reveled in the stories of how God saved the people of Israel from the Egyptians, the plagues that befell Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, and the bread sent from heaven that sustained Israel in the wilderness.

“The God of miracles, Yahweh, is always speaking to us, my boy,” old Benjamin, the temple priest, was fond of telling him. “Learn to recognize His voice, and He will guide you in all things.”

David leaned back against the tree and let out a long, slow breath. He closed his eyes . . . and listened. Yes, he used his physical ears, but it was much more than that. He listened with his entire being. Though hard to explain,



in these moments, he felt Yahweh's love—as though God was a good Father who was pleased with him.

A gust of air blew over David as the fire flickered and danced. He smiled at the feel of the wind on his face. The entire world—all creation—boasted of his Father's goodness.

He could sense it. God was with him. David was about to reach for his harp and sing a new song when God spoke.

*DANGER!*

David opened his eyes. The impression of imminent threat washed over him. It was a feeling, but he recognized it as the voice of God. He knew it had not originated with him; God was speaking to his heart. David stood and retrieved a large stick from the fire. Holding it high as a torch, his free hand went to the sling at his belt.

The last time he had this feeling, a bear attacked his flock. David had only been eight, and the bear had easily been four times his size. Yet he had one job: protect his flock. And

though it had been a terrifying experience, his aim with his sling was true, and, in the end, the bear died, and not a single sheep had been harmed.

David's father was a stern and uncompromising man. The only time David ever thought his father might be proud of him was when he killed the bear. His father fashioned a necklace, ringed with the bear's three-inch claws, and gave it to David as a gift. He wore it proudly still.

As he walked among his sheep and rams, everything seemed normal. David looked after seventy-five sheep and six horned rams—none seemed agitated. But this didn't necessarily mean anything. If a jackal or

worse were nearby, the predator would be smart enough to stay downwind.

David reached down and scratched behind Orpah's ears. "How are you, my little friend?" he whispered.

David named and often spoke to the animals in his flock. Orpah glanced up at him, bleating happily. Her name meant stubborn, and she





proved it every time she planted her hooves and refused to move.

When he turned, David froze. The night sky was cloudy, obscuring the moon's usual brilliance and an eternity of stars. Even still, he was certain he saw the form of something enormous stalking toward him. Dropping the torch, he quickly retrieved a stone from his leather satchel and tucked it into the fold of his sling.

"Father," he whispered, "Give me the strength to do what I must." Then, without hesitation, David sprinted forward.

