

DAHVEED AND GOLIATH

Source: Terri Fivash, *Dahveed: Yahweh's Chosen* (Review and Herald, 2008), pp. 278–286



For use in *Animated/Engaged Learning*.

Zammar: singer

Hassar: crown prince

Eliab: Jesse's first born son, half-brother to Dahveed (David).

Balak: Young man from Bethlehem, four years older than Dahveed, who despises him.

Abner: General of Shaul's (Saul's) armies and his cousin.

Hassarrah: queen.
(Here referring to Dahveed's great-grandmother, Ruth, and wife of Boaz.)

I tried to see if anyone would fight the Philistine or knew of someone who would, but my questions only resulted in derision and laughter.

Commander Zorath walked up to me. "You don't think much of Goliath?" he asked.

"Not if he's the ignorant, cocky fool down in the valley insulting Yahweh!" I said in exasperation, unable to stand still, itching to get my hands on a weapon. "Does he think Israel's God is some piece of carved stone that sits in a room all day like Dagon?"

"Come on," Zorath said, and I went with him just to be moving.

"How can we not answer his insults?" I raged. "Does he think Yahweh will just stand still and let His name be dragged in the dust?"

We continued through the camp while I tried to bite back more words. "Where are we going?" I finally asked, struggling to keep my arms from trembling.

"To the king's tent."

It was as if cold water splashed on my rage. I didn't want to remind Shaul of my existence. Besides, I needed to be home in time to meet that wool buyer. What was wrong with me? But it was too late.

"Where is that man from the camp?" Shaul shouted, as we arrived. Zorath pulled the tent flap back

and motioned me inside. "This is the man you are looking for, Adoni," he said before backing out.

King Shaul looked up. "Zammar!" he exclaimed. "You've come at last! You look fully recovered from your sickness. I want you to play for me."

"I am recovered, Adoni," I said, bowing. "But I'm afraid I don't have my harp. I was here only briefly to supply my brothers."

Balak stood in the back of the tent, his wide eyes lingering on the long scars down my right shoulder and arm, visible under my sleeveless shepherd's robe. His anticipatory gaze made me uncomfortable.

The king looked around as if puzzled. "The commander brought the man Balak said was talking in the camp. Where is he?"

Goliath's voice rose in derision from the valley, and I had to grip my hands behind my back as I sensed Yahweh's gift rising in answer.

"I would guess that's the zammar, Adoni," the hassar said, his gaze taking me in.

Shaul looked surprised. "You were the one saying that someone should go and fight with the Philistine champion?"

"Yes, Adoni. Someone should."

In the sudden silence the king's face turned white, and the hassar stared at the tent wall. Had I said something wrong? Then the realization hit me that the king was afraid.

Balak waited in sardonic amusement for my blunder to crash down on my head.

"We must respond, Adoni," Jonathan said, sweat trickling down his neck as he looked directly at me, "even though it would dishonor you to fight a hireling, and you have forbidden me to go."

As his words sank into my mind, I suddenly knew this was why Yahweh's gift had been given to me—so that I could protect Israel, just as I had done for my flock. The king was paralyzed with his fear and guilt, and his house was impotent with him. This was why I felt the way I did, why the insult to Yahweh burned so terribly in my heart. And, as Roeh Shamuel had said, nothing stood in my way.

The hassar was bound by his honor to his father and could not disobey a royal command. I would take nothing from him if I fought. It was appropriate for a lesser warrior to battle in behalf of the king, and Shaul would not be dishonored before the people. I had only to accept the duty being given me.

I looked at the king. "Adoni, there is no reason for anyone to fear this champion or anything he says. I'll meet him." Yahweh's presence swelled in me again as if to underscore the rightness of my choice.

Jonathan's statue-like stance slowly relaxed.

"Nonsense, zammar," the king replied, surprised. "Your job is to play the harp for me. We will have to send for it."

"I will—after the battle."

"But you can't possibly," he protested. "You're still a youth, and he's a grown man, trained and battle experienced from his childhood. What you ask is ridiculous." King Shaul stirred restlessly on the chair, his hands clenching in front of him and his gaze wandering about the tent.

Stiffly, I bowed again, noting the signs of the king's distress and trying to keep my voice soothing and low. "Adoni, I have also been trained for this, and I have fought before, protecting my abbi's sheep. Both a lion and a bear have tried to take lambs, and turned on me when I intervened. I killed them both. And when that uncircumcised Philistine dared to insult Yahweh's army, he became just like the lion and bear. Yahweh will give him to me."

Just then we could hear Goliath roar his challenge again, and the light in the tent intensified, the colors on the king's robe hurting my eyes.

"The zammar speaks wisely, Adoni," Jonathan said persuasively. "Yahweh's spirit rests on him, and he is a formidable warrior."

I could hear the scribe breathing, and Balak watched the hassar closely, his face puzzled.

"Let me fight, Adoni. The same God who saved me from the bear and the lion will deliver me now."

King Shaul wavered, turning to the hassar. "Jonathan?"

"Yahweh has sent us a champion, Adoni. He must answer Yahweh's summons."

"But he brings the light to me!" Shaul fretted.

Gritting my teeth, I willed myself to stand still while the king debated with himself. I couldn't contain this much longer, and with or without the king's permission, I would fight that boasting man-mountain encased in bronze.

"Adoni, I know personally that Dahveed is truly a warrior. The giant will not be able to stand against him," the hassar pressed.

The king sighed. "Go, and may Yahweh go with you."

Relieved, I turned to go.

"Zammar," the king's voice stopped me. "You will need armor."

I looked back blankly at his determined face.

"Jonathan, help the zammar into my armor."

I couldn't move. The king's armor would be huge!

Balak stepped aside, his eyes suddenly gleaming, as the hassar went to the chest that held the king's battle dress and weapons.

I hadn't yet regained my mental feet when Jonathan and his personal guard slipped the battle dress over my head. The last row of scales dragged on the ground, and I could hardly move in the heavy thing. The helmet nearly covered my eyes. After comparing my legs with the greaves, the guard started to set them aside.

"Put them on," King Saul commanded.

The hassar held up the battle dress while the guard tied the greaves on. They banged against my knees every time I moved. Then Jonathan buckled on the king's sword. I had only to see Balak's expression to know that I looked worse than ridiculous. The king couldn't have found a better way to show me the impudence of my request.

I wasn't certain what to do. Did Yahweh want me to fight like this? How could I refuse the armor without angering the king more?

Shifting around a little, I started out of the tent. The hassar's guard pulled back the flap, and I walked out into the small crowd that had gathered in front. Every voice died away at the sight of me. I kept walking, but with each step, Yahweh's gift ebbed away a little more. Twenty feet from the door I tripped over the dragging battledress and nearly fell on my face.

Catching my balance again, I stood still, staring beyond the silently watching men. Again Goliath shouted his challenge, and I burned to answer him, but weighted down as I was, I could not respond. I knew what they would think if I turned around. But without Yahweh's strength and help, I would lose the battle before it even started. I needed Him—not armor.

Ethan's assessment of my abilities ran through my mind, along with the sight of Goliath's ponderous movements earlier this morning. That giant expected another heavy infantryman to battle him spear to spear and sword to sword, giving him every advantage of reach and power. But what would happen if his opponent stayed out of reach and struck from a distance? Someone quick, who refused to stand still and be beaten down?

I clenched my fists and felt my sling in my hand. Yahweh's gift seeped back into my bones, and I started back toward the king's tent, no longer caring what anyone might think. I must be free to let Yahweh use me as He willed, not as the king willed.

As I shuffled back to the tent, I glimpsed Eliab's red, angry face in the crowd watching me. My heart sank. Jesse's bekor would hold this over me for the rest of my life. I would just have to live with it, but now, I had other things on my mind. The Philistine's champion wouldn't wait down there much longer.

The hassar's guard opened the tent again, his face carefully expressionless. King Shaul lounged back, looking as if he wondered what took me so long to return, and the triumphant malice spilling from Balak twisted my stomach.

I bowed humbly to the king. "I can't go like this. I've never fought in anything like it before."

Saul eased back in the chair, and his face relaxed. "Remove the armor," he said.

The hassar and Josheb needed help getting me undressed, and Balak gravely stepped forward, his eyes promising me that he also would never let me forget this. Once free of the restricting armor, I picked up my shepherd's staff and faced the king.

"You may go, Zammar," Shaul dismissed me.

Jonathan watched, his gaze questioning. I nodded fractionally, then bowed to the king and left.

"What was that zammar doing here?" Abner demanded, striding in.

"Trying on the king's armor," the hassar replied, placing the battle dress in the chest.

"Who gave him permission to wear it?"

"I wanted him to see how big it was, Abner," King Shaul said coldly.

Balak bit the inside of his lip. Today just got better and better. Never in his life would he forget the way that Dahveed had looked in that armor,

and now the king was silencing Abner!

The king's cousin snorted. "Is he meddling in military business again? It's bad enough we have him hanging around the armory and—"

"Are you objecting to my armor bearer, General Abner?"

"Not as long as he stays out of my way. I'll not tolerate anyone who interferes with my duty to you."

The king and the general stared at each other for a minute. Then Shaul smiled. "No, you wouldn't. I doubt, however, that the zammar is in the way."

"Hasn't been yet," Abner conceded.

Just then Balak noticed the hassar facing the tent entrance as if listening. His intentness drew the king's attention.

"What is it, Jonathan?"

"Look! Who's that?" someone outside yelled, and a ripple of surprised exclamations reached their ears.

"What's happened?" Shaul demanded, rising.

"Someone saw the zammar," Jonathan replied. "He should be at the bottom of the valley by now."

"What's he doing there?" his father gasped. "He decided not to go."

"No, Adoni," Jonathan corrected. "He decided not to go in your armor."

Balak looked up in amazement. Surely Dahveed wouldn't actually fight that champion! He had to have been bluffing. After all, he'd proved that by coming back in just moments ago.

"He's not out there with no armor on at all, is he?" Abner asked, horrified. "He'll make us a laughingstock—

listen to them!" The general groaned as the derisive shouts of the enemy reached their ears.

"Dahveed's got everything he needs," the hassar said softly.

Balak glanced at the crown prince in wonder, hearing the utter confidence in that statement.

"No!" King Shaul exclaimed, rushing from the tent to the battle line overlooking the valley. "Call him back, Jonathan!"

"He wouldn't come, Abbi. Look at him. Yahweh walks with him."

The king stared, then turned to Abner. "All he's got is a staff! Who is he to be so fearless?"

"I don't know," the general replied, then fell silent.

"We must find out," Shaul commanded. "I want to know everything about him and his family."

Balak looked down in the valley and ground his teeth together. It was going to happen again. Somehow that unclaimed, warbling shepherd would emerge with even more honor when he should be suffering for not obeying the king! The day turned to ashes around him.

As Goliath roared his challenge again, I ducked through the silent crowd outside the king's tent, intent only on getting into the valley. Slipping into the gully channeling a streambed, I searched for large, smooth stones that would fly quickly. I didn't want anything warning the giant what was coming. Wondering how many I should take, I picked up two. Were all five of the giants here? What if the other four decided to come after me? Finding three more, I hesitated. If I took too many, the bulge and weight of my shepherd's pouch would give away what I carried, and while that giant might have poor sight, his shield bearer wouldn't.

I'd take five, I finally decided. The gully leveled off before emerging into the Elah. I knelt on the hard sod under a young terebinth, my face to the ground. "I am Your possession, Adoni Yahweh," I whispered. "Do with me as You will."

His presence grew within me, swelling until the hair on my neck rose, and I trembled again. Pulling myself up with the staff, I walked forward. Someone shouted. For several seconds not a sound followed, and then a derisive roar of laughter rose from the Philistines. My staff thudded on the ground with every other step, and the sling wound around my arm waited patiently.

Goliath looked around for the cause of the commotion, staring in amazement when he located me. Then his face clouded with rage. Watching him, I heard the sound of air in my chest at the same time I heard the first step he took.

I sank deeper and deeper into Yahweh's gift, knowing that I'd have only one chance to surprise that champion. Then, like that bear, once he went down, he had to stay down.

As I climbed the slope, Goliath peered at me. "A youth?

They send a fair, handsome youth to fight me?" Then he bellowed with rage. "Am I a dog you beat with a staff? You shall pay for this insult, servants of Shaul," he shouted at the Israelite army. "As for you, little boy, you are walking to your death! May Baal, and Dagon, and all the gods of the five cities look upon you with scorn and send their curses upon you! Your family shall hide their faces from the day you were born, and death shall rule in your house."

Neither replying or slowing my pace, I circled him. He pivoted to keep facing me, at the same time taking slow ponderous steps toward me. Heavy streams of sweat ran down his face and neck, and I smiled. Backing away, I lured him after me, and he tried to quicken his steps to catch me while I studied him and his shield bearer as I had the hassar and Dara.

Since Goliath was clearly impatient with his bearer, I kept circling that way. The sun blazed down, baking him inside all that metal. Unable to close the gap between us, he paused, irritated. "Come to me, pretty boy, and I shall give your flesh to the birds and the beasts," he shouted. "They will enjoy feeding on your tender body."

As the hassarah had taught me to, I made my voice ring. "I shall not die today, Philistine, for you come against me with a sword and a spear and a javelin. I come with the name of Yahweh, God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted and insulted."

I stepped closer. "Yahweh will deliver you to me, and I will cut your head from your shoulders as vengeance for the dishonor you have offered to Him. You boast that you will give my body to the birds and the beasts, but I will give the whole Philistine army to the wild animals, and all the earth will know that there is a God in Israel. Yahweh does not need swords or spears to deliver you into our hands, for the battle is His and you will be ours!"

With a shout of rage, he hurtled toward me as fast as he could go.

But Yahweh's gift sharpened down to one narrow focus, and with blinding clarity I saw how to stop the huge man. There was a small space below the edge of his helmet in the corner of his nose and eye. I had to place that sling stone precisely, letting it travel upward. I switched my staff to my left hand, circling downhill. Goliath followed, stumbling for a moment on the rough ground, then charging on.

His eyes wide, cursing in anger, he descended the slope. I had my hand in the pouch, gripping a stone, and remembering how the hassar had used the sunlight against me, I circled just a bit more until sun hit full in his face, blazing off the armor and helmet.

Instantly I charged, my hand out of the pouch and dropping the stone into the sling pan. Swinging my arm, I felt the sling unwind, once, twice, three times. I gave it two more whirls and just as I had with the bear, I stopped short, practically on my knees whipping the stone up and forward with all my strength, praying that I could hit the small moving target.

The stone flew true, and as the sound of its crack against the lower edge of the giant's helmet echoed in the valley, I charged again. For an agonizing moment nothing happened, and I was certain that I rushed to my death.

But then he fell full length, face down, his shield bearer too stunned to move. Dodging the spear that clattered to the ground almost on top of me, I grabbed the hilt of the long, sickle-shaped sword with both hands and yanked it from underneath him. Raising it over my head, I brought it down on the back of his neck with all my might.

Not a sound could be heard. The shield bearer stared at his fallen master as if he expected him to rise at any moment. Then he looked at me.

Too full with Yahweh's gift to contain it, I poured my victory to the sky in a savage war cry. Then I leaped towards the man. He fled, casting the shield away in his terror. Behind me a sound that shook the ground rose from the Israelites, and they poured down the valley like an irresistible avalanche that the Philistines didn't even try to meet. As one, they ran. I couldn't have stopped myself from following even if I had wanted to.