

## 1 Samuel 20:1-42

### The Parting of David and Jonathan

**1 Samuel 20:1** - "And David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?"

David, Like Jesus, was persecuted although he was innocent.

While Saul was lying in a prophetic trance for a full day at Naioth, David appears to have fled back to Saul's court at Gibeah to meet with Jonathan.

**1 Samuel 20:2** - "And he said unto him, God forbid; thou shalt not die: behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will shew it me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? it is not so."

Jonathan believed Saul's oath not to harm David was sincere. He was hoping that Saul's rage against David was something that only showed itself during one of Saul's frenzies. When Saul returned to his right mind, there was no logical reason to hate David. It's strange that Jonathan doesn't seem to know about the messengers sent to David's house at Saul's order. Or, maybe Jonathan didn't want to believe this of his own father - who had publicly said in his presence that David must be killed.

David suggests that Saul could be keeping his murderous intentions from Jonathan, knowing they are friends.

**1 Samuel 20:3** - "And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death."

David had had several brushes with death already.

### The Feast at the New Moon

Every new moon was to be celebrated with a burnt offering:

- **Numbers 28:11-13** - "At the beginning of every month, you are to present to the LORD a burnt offering of two young bulls, one ram, and seven male lambs a year old, all unblemished along with three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering with each bull, two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering with the ram and a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering with each lamb. This is a burnt offering, a pleasing aroma, an offering made by fire to the LORD."

The rabbis call this the "renewal" of the moon. The shofar was also blown to mark the

event:

- **Psalm 81:3-4** - "Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob."

Like the Sabbath and the other feasts, the new moon feast is "a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ." (**Colossians 2:16-17**)

The new moon was a foreshadowing of the birth of Messiah (as we talk about at Rosh Hashanah) and therefore an event to celebrate. The moon is completely dark, emerging from obscurity, with only the barest flicker of light visible in its thin crescent. At the same time, it also pictures the resurrection - "buried" for three days, when it is invisible.

- **Psalm 19:1** - "'The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork."

And in fact, David "hides" himself - as the moon does before it emerges - until Jonathan can tell him Saul's mood. The darkness of the moon matches the dark foreboding of this moment for David.

**1 Samuel 20:6-7** - "If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me that he might run to Bethlehem his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family. If he say thus, It is well; thy servant shall have peace: but if he be very wroth, then be sure that evil is determined by him."

Since the Tabernacle and the ark were separated, and most religious observances were in abeyance, it seems some of these feasts took place in each town. As a "yearly service," perhaps this new moon is Rosh Hashanah. Peace offerings would also be eaten, by the priest, the offerer and his family or friends.

**1 Samuel 20:8** - "Therefore thou shalt deal kindly with thy servant; for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the LORD with thee: notwithstanding, if there be in me iniquity, slay me thyself; for why shouldst thou bring me to thy father?"

David considers himself innocent of any crime against Saul. But if Jonathan discovers a sin unseen by him, he gives Jonathan permission to execute him himself, despite the covenant they had made together.

### **A Covenant Between Two Houses**

**1 Samuel 20:14-17** - "And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not: But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the LORD hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth. So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even require it at the hand of David's enemies. And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul."

The covenant between them should not be only between them personally, but include their posterity. The rabbis also saw in this a reference to the custom of a new king to kill the relatives of the previous king who might challenge his right to the throne. Jonathan, they said, knew that David would become king, and so asked him to spare his life and his family. i.e. it would be a "kindness" if David forgets all the evil Saul had done to him and treat Saul's son, Jonathan, and his descendants with compassion.

The rabbis also see this covenant as the basis for the long-standing bond between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, who constitute the remnants of the Jewish people today.

But Rashi notes that this covenant was violated in **2 Samuel 19:30**, when Ziba, who managed Saul and Jonathan's estate after their deaths, denounced Jonathan's son Mephibosheth as a traitor. David responded by taking away half of the estate and giving it to Ziba. A voice from heaven then announced that just as David had split Mephibosheth's estate in two, so God would split the Davidic kingdom in two after Solomon's death, resulting in the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

**1 Samuel 20:18-19** - "Then Jonathan said to David, To morrow is the new moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty. And when thou hast stayed three days, then thou shalt go down quickly, and come to the place where thou didst hide thyself when the business was in hand, and shalt remain by the stone Ezel."

"thou shalt go down quickly" = *yāraq* - "you must descend deeply" - Used of Jacob grieving when he sees Joseph's coat of many colors dipped in blood:

- **Genesis 37:35** - "And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into (*yāraq*) the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him."

Just as the new moon disappears for three days, so the Messiah would "go down deeply" and be buried for three days before resurrection.

Jonathan devises a plan to relay the information to David "in code."

**1 Samuel 20:20-22** - "And I will shoot three arrows on the side thereof, as though I shot at a mark. And, behold, I will send a lad, saying, Go, find out the arrows. If I expressly say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows are on this side of thee, take them; then come thou: for there is peace to thee, and no hurt; as the LORD liveth. But if I say thus unto the young man, Behold, the arrows are beyond thee; go thy way: for the LORD hath sent thee away."

"sent thee away" = *šālah* - One rabbinical interpretation says that since Jonathan did not use the word "escape" but rather "go, sent away," that means that there was no reason for anxiety or haste, because David was being sent by God, just as God had led him to the palace, and in every path of his life.

When they gather for the feast, Saul notices David's normal place is empty.

**1 Samuel 20:26** - "Nevertheless Saul spake not any thing that day: for he thought, Something hath befallen him, he is not clean; surely he is not clean."

If someone became unclean for some reason, they would have to wash and avoid social contact until evening (see **Leviticus 15**).

Rashi explains: He has experienced a seminal emission (after sex with his wife or in a nocturnal emission). and he has not yet immersed himself, for had he immersed himself for the uncleanness of his emission, he would not have to wait until sunset in order to eat ordinary food. Therefore, he did not come, lest he contaminate the feast.

But when David's place was empty again for the next day's feast, Saul asks about him:

**1 Samuel 20:27-29** - "And it came to pass on the morrow, which was the second day of the month, that David's place was empty: and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor to day? And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem: And he said, Let me go, I pray thee; for our family hath a sacrifice in the city; and my brother, he hath commanded me to be there: and now, if I have found favor in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brethren. Therefore he cometh not unto the king's table."

People would eat reclining in those days, and probably in a similar fashion as at Passover. The oldest or most respected (probably Jonathan) would sit on one side of Saul and the youngest on the other (perhaps David?) This would then be a sort of reverse arrangement of Jesus' Last Supper, with the young John on one side of Jesus and Judas on the other. - With David being the suspected "Judas" missing at the table.

### **Saul's Anger Redirected at Jonathan**

**1 Samuel 20:30-31** - "Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness? For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die."

"Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman" = "thou son of perverse rebellion" or "obstinate son, whose rebellion is intolerable"

Saul means that by choosing David over his own father, Jonathan is jeopardizing his succession to the throne, and making people think perhaps Jonathan is illegitimate or that his mother had played the harlot and he was not Saul's true son.

**1 Samuel 20:32-33** - "And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done? And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite

him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David."

Jonathan now is a target for defending David. In the same way, we should expect the world to hate us as it hated Jesus.

- **John 15:19, 25** - "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you....But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause."

Jonathan leaves the feast in anger:

**1 Samuel 20:34** - "So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame."

By rebuking Saul, Jonathan was also trying to save David's life.

"You shall not stand aside while your brother's blood is shed" (**Leviticus 19:16**)

From this incident the Talmud derives that to rebuke a sinner is to save his soul. It also prescribes three rules of the parameters of the obligation to rebuke a sinner, based on Jonathan's actions here:

- One must rebuke until the other person grows very angry.
- One must rebuke until the other person curses you.
- One must rebuke until the other person is ready to strike you.

### **The Three Arrows**

The next morning he goes to the field where he and David had arranged to meet. He shoots the arrows past David, the signal that David should flee. Then he send his young servant back to town with his bow and arrows.

Is there significance to the use of arrows as the sign?

The rabbis an allusion to the slanderous tongues of those like Doeg the Edomite who supported Saul's paranoia with slanderous insinuations about David.

- **Jeremiah 9:8** - "Their tongue is as an arrow shot out; it speaketh deceit: one speaketh peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait."

The three arrows represent three who are killed by slander - the slanderer, the one who is slandered, and the one who receives the slander.

**1 Samuel 20:41** - "And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded."

"until David exceeded" = "til David wept loudly."

**1 Samuel 20:42** - "And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city."

"The LORD be between me and thee" - They were united by the Lord "between them" and neither time nor space could separate them.

Here the friendship between David and Jonathan becomes tragic. Only once again, and that in sadly altered circumstances, did these two meet - see **1 Samuel 23:15-18** - Jonathan secretly went to David's hidden camp to encourage him, and he "strengthened his hand in God."