

1Samuel 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?

1Samuel 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.*

1Samuel 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 no longer felt safe with Samuel since Saul had discovered that he was with him, so he left Naioth in Ramah. He sought out Jonathan to try and discover why Saul now sought to kill him. He asked Jonathan to identify his sin, what he had done wrong to Saul.

Jonathan swore that he would protect David. He noted that Saul would do nothing against David without letting Jonathan in on his plans. He certainly hadn't bothered to hide his intentions to this point, but he had promised Jonathan that he would not harm David.

1 Samuel 19:6 "And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, As the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain."

David argued that Saul knew that Jonathan treasured David's friendship. Because of that fact, he would not want to let Jonathan know of any specific plans to kill David for fear that he would warn David. David was convinced that his life was forfeit if he made one wrong step or decision because Saul was determined to kill him.

In spite of all the previous evidence to the contrary, Jonathan had a hard time accepting that his father could be so wicked. It is natural to want to believe the best of our loved ones despite evidence to the contrary staring us in the face. I think that is one of the truths that contribute to people who choose to remain in abusive relationships without seeking help. I think pride and the fear of shame are also major contributing factors.

1Samuel 20:4 Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do *it* for thee.

1Samuel 20:5 And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, to morrow *is* the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third *day* at even.

1Samuel 20:6 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.

1Samuel 20:7 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.

Jonathan assured David that he would do whatever David asked. David

proceeded to present a plan to Jonathan. He noted that the next day was the new moon celebration, and he was expected to feast with the king and his men. He asked Jonathan for permission to go into hiding for three days. If Saul missed David, Jonathan was to say that David had begged him to let him go home to Bethlehem to participate in the yearly sacrifice for his family. If Saul had no issue with that decision, David would return in peace. If, however, Saul became angry, he would know that Saul was still determined to kill him.

1Samuel 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 shouldest thou bring me to thy father?

1Samuel 20:9 ¶ And Jonathan said, Far be it from thee: for if I knew certainly that evil were determined by my father to come upon thee, then would not I tell it thee?

David reminded Jonathan of their covenant of brotherhood before the LORD as he asked for his approval of the plan. If he did not approve, that would mean that his heart had turned against David; and he declared that he would rather Jonathan go ahead and kill him rather than let his father do so.

Jonathan assured David that he would never think of killing him. He told David that if he knew that his father determined evil against him, he would tell him.

1Samuel 20:10 Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? or what *if* thy father answer thee roughly?

1Samuel 20:11 And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field.

1Samuel 20:12 And Jonathan said unto David, O LORD God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about to morrow any time, *or* the third *day*, and, behold, *if there be* good toward David, and I then send not unto thee, and shew it thee;

1Samuel 20:13 The LORD do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father *to do* thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the LORD be with thee, as he hath been with my father.

1Samuel 20:14 And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not:

1Samuel 20:15 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.

David then asked Jonathan how he would inform him of his father's response. Jonathan asked David to go out into the field with him. Before the "LORD God of Israel" Jonathan promised to discover Saul's intent toward David. If he did not do so, he basically cursed himself calling for the LORD to judge him accordingly. He promised that if his father intended evil toward David, he would send David away in peace with the LORD's blessing. I thought it was interesting that he acknowledged that the LORD had been with his father as king,

and he was basically acknowledging David as his successor as he blessed him. Jonathan then asked David to show him kindness during his lifetime and to his descendants after his death. This seems to indicate that Jonathan was quite a bit older than David.

I think he was basically saying that when the LORD destroyed David's enemies, he wanted David not to treat Jonathan's descendants as his enemies. Guzik added some insight: "In those days when one royal house replaced another it was common for the new royal house to kill all the potential rulers from the old royal house. Jonathan knew that one day David and his descendants would rule over Israel and he wanted a promise that David and his descendants would not kill or mistreat the descendants of Jonathan."

1Samuel 20:16 So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even require *it* at the hand of David's enemies.

1Samuel 20:17 And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.

I think the NIV is clearer on verse 16: "*So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, 'May the LORD call David's enemies to account.'*"

Jonathan then asked David to reaffirm his side of the covenant. He truly loved David as he loved himself. He cared just as much about David's life as he did his own.

1Samuel 20:18 Then Jonathan said to David, To morrow is the new moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty.

1Samuel 20:19 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.

1Samuel 20:20 And I will shoot three arrows on the side *thereof*, as though I shot at a mark.

1Samuel 20:21 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.

1Samuel 20:22 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.

1Samuel 20:23 And *as touching* the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, the LORD *be* between thee and me for ever.

Jonathan goes on to make sure that David knows what to expect. The celebration of the new moon was the next day, and David's seat would be empty. After three days, David was to come back to the place where he had hid himself previously, by the stone Ezel. This seems to indicate that Jonathan expected him to go home and see his family.

After three days, Jonathan would bring his bow and shoot three arrows as if he were at target practice. When he sent his servant boy to find the arrows, his

words would reveal Saul's heart toward David. If he said, "Behold, the arrows are on this side of thee, take them," it meant that David's life was no longer in danger. However, if he said, "Behold, the arrows are beyond thee," it meant that David must flee—that the LORD wanted him to flee. He then reminded David that their covenant was eternal.

1Samuel 20:24 ¶ So David hid himself in the field: and when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat.

1Samuel 20:25 And the king sat upon his seat, as at other times, *even* upon a seat by the wall: and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul's side, and David's place was empty.

1Samuel 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.

1Samuel 20:27 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?

1Samuel 20:28 And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked *leave* of me *to go* to Bethlehem:

1Samuel 20:29 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 favour in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brethren. Therefore he cometh not unto the king's table.

David hid in the field as planned. When the king came to take his seat at the new moon celebration meal, Jonathan took his seat across from him (from the Hebrew for "arose") and Abner sat beside him. David's place was empty, but Saul said nothing, reasoning that he must be ceremonially unclean for some reason. When David's place remained empty on the second day, Saul asked Jonathan why "the son of Jesse" wasn't there both that day and the day before. This reference was derogatory in light of the fact that David was Saul's son-in-law; it was a reference to his lowly heritage rather than an acknowledgement of his position in the royal family.

Jonathan told his father that David begged his permission to go to Bethlehem to participate in a family sacrifice in the city because his brother had demanded that he come. It would seem that David's father was dead or infirm, and his oldest brother was now the head of the family.

He explained that though David was absent, it was with his permission.

JFB added some insight as to seating protocol: "The left-hand corner at the upper end of a room was and still is in the East, the most honorable place. The person seated there has his left arm confined by the wall, but his right hand is at full liberty. From Abner's position next the king, and David's seat being left empty, it would seem that a state etiquette was observed at the royal table, each of the courtiers and ministers having places assigned them according to their respective gradations of rank."

The IVP Commentary added this reminder about becoming unclean: “This could occur in a variety of ways: contact with bodily discharges such as semen or blood; contact with the dead or the diseased; and contact with an object that has come in contact with something that is unclean.”

JFB also added insight regarding the two-day celebration: “The time of the moon’s appearance being uncertain — whether at midday, in the evening, or at midnight, the festival was extended over two days. Custom, not the law, had introduced this.”

1Samuel 20:30 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?

1Samuel 20:31 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.

I’m sure Jonathan was grieved when his father exploded in anger at his explanation for David’s absence. He called Jonathan the “son of the perverse rebellious woman.” In other words, you are your mother’s son—not mine. It also seems to indicate that Saul had no love for Jonathan’s mother.

Saul declared that he knew that Jonathan treasured his friendship with David and was willing to cede his throne to him, an allegiance that Saul described as shameful to both Jonathan and his mother. Saul should have been praising his son for his willingness to yield to God’s will—as had been declared by Samuel. Instead, he was intent upon thwarting God’s will and ensuring that God’s anointed successor not ascend to the throne.

Saul knew that David, the son of Jesse, was the one anointed by God as the next king of Israel. He knew that Jonathan would never become king if David lived. He then demanded that Jonathan go and bring David to him.

1Samuel 20:32 And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?

1Samuel 20:33 And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David.

1Samuel 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.

Jonathan stood up against his father and demanded to know what David had done for which he should be condemned to death.

I am sure Jonathan was truly surprised when his father threw his javelin at him, obviously intending to kill him. He then understood that his father was determined to kill David. The NIV Commentary reasons, “In Saul’s eyes, Jonathan and David had momentarily become one.”

Jonathan left the table in fierce anger, leaving his meal untouched. He was grieved because of his father's irrational hatred of David and because his father had treated him so shamefully, actually turning in public anger against his own son.

1Samuel 20:35 ¶ And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad with him.
1Samuel 20:36 And he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot. And as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him.
1Samuel 20:37 And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried after the lad, and said, Is not the arrow beyond thee?
1Samuel 20:38 And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master.
1Samuel 20:39 But the lad knew not any thing: only Jonathan and David knew the matter.
1Samuel 20:40 And Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad, and said unto him, Go, carry *them* to the city.

The next day Jonathan went out into the field according to the plan he had made with David. He took his servant boy to retrieve the arrows he shot. As the boy was running out into the field, Jonathan shot an arrow beyond him. When the boy got to the area in which the arrow had fallen, he shouted, "Is not the arrow beyond thee?" Jonathan had just confirmed David's worst fear.

He told the boy to hurry up and bring the arrows back to him. He then gave the boy his weaponry and told him to take it back to the city.

Point is made that the boy knew nothing of David's presence.

1Samuel 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.
1Samuel 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.

When the boy was gone, David came out of his hiding place to fall with his face on the ground before Jonathan, bowing three times—a demonstration of his respect and love for Jonathan the prince and the man. They kissed one another and cried with one another until David was emotionally spent.

Jonathan told David that he should go in peace according to their sworn covenant. He affirmed the LORD as the witness to their covenant of peace between him and David and their descendants.

David departed in sorrow, and Jonathan returned home. David was now a fugitive in his own country.

It's always sad to me as a wife that David's wife never figures into the plans.

We know that God had determined that David would be the next king. David also knew that. Don't you know he wondered at all that the LORD allowed to endanger him when he had done nothing deserving of such treatment. I have to admit that I have certainly wondered at the situations in which my children have found themselves while trying to follow God's will even when others would consider them foolish. I know that they have grown through the trials and circumstances they have endured, and they have certainly been blessed throughout in ways I could never have imagined. I just keep reminding myself that the LORD loves them better than I do and KNOWS what is best for them. That is the truth that gives me peace when all I can do is pray. And I am so thankful that they have continued to walk in faith, even during the toughest times.

I liked this quote Guzik used from Alan Redpath: "A throne is God's purpose for you; a cross is God's path for you; faith is God's plan for you."