

1st Samuel 20

Verses 1 - 3

Then David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and he came and said to Jonathan, “What have I done? What is my guilt? And what is my sin before your father, that he is seeking my life?” ² He said to him, “Far from it, you shall not die! Behold, my father does nothing either great or small without informing me. So why would my father hide this thing from me? It is not so!” ³ Yet David vowed again, saying, “Your father is well aware that I have found favor in your sight, and he has said, ‘Jonathan is not to know this, otherwise he will be worried.’ But indeed as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, there is just a step between me and death.”

Then David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and he came and said to Jonathan, “What have I done? What is my guilt? And what is my sin before your father, that he is seeking my life?”

While Saul was in his trance at Naioth David fled to Gibeah to see Jonathan. David wanted to know why Saul was trying to have him killed.

² He said to him, “Far from it, you shall not die! Behold, my father does nothing either great or small without informing me. So why would my father hide this thing from me? It is not so!”

As one of the king's chief advisers Jonathan was sure that his father would have told him if he was planning any action against David.

³ Yet David vowed again, saying, “Your father is well aware that I have found favor in your sight, and he has said, ‘Jonathan is not to know this, otherwise he will be worried.’ But indeed as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, there is just a step between me and death.”

Jonathan was a bit naïve and forgetful about the intentions of his father concerning David.

See 1 Samuel 19:1-2

Now Saul told his son Jonathan and all his servants to put David to death. But Jonathan, Saul's son, greatly delighted in David. ² So Jonathan informed David, saying, "My father Saul is seeking to put you to death. Now then, please be on your guard in the morning, and stay in a hiding place and conceal yourself

Since Jonathan was unaware of the truth, David reminded Jonathan that his father knew how he felt about David and therefore the king had told others to keep this matter under wraps.

Verses 4 - 11

⁴ Then Jonathan said to David, "Whatever you say, I will do for you." ⁵ So David said to Jonathan, "Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I am obligated to sit down to eat with the king. But let me go so that I may hide myself in the field until the third evening. ⁶ If your father misses me at all, then say, 'David earnestly requested leave of me to run to Bethlehem, his city, because it is the yearly sacrifice there for the whole family.' ⁷ If he says, 'That is good,' your servant *will be safe*; but if he is very angry, be aware that he has decided on evil. ⁸ So deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a covenant of the Lord with you. But if I am guilty of wrongdoing, kill me yourself; for why then should you bring me to your father?" ⁹ Jonathan said, "Far be it from you! For if I in fact learn that my father has decided to inflict harm on you, would I not inform you?" ¹⁰ Then David said to Jonathan, "Who will inform me if your father answers you harshly?" ¹¹ Jonathan said to David, "Come, and let's go out to the field." So both of them went out to the field.

⁴ Then Jonathan said to David, "Whatever you say, I will do for you."

Jonathan believed David and offered to help in any way he could. David had devised a plan to reveal Saul's true motives and he told Jonathan what he could do to help.

⁵ So David said to Jonathan, "Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I am obligated to sit down to eat with the king.

The Jewish people followed a lunar calendar in which the new moon (dark or invisible to the eye) was the 1st day of the month. Since there is a new moon every 29.5 days, the months of the year rotated between 30 and 29 days.

See pic 2005

Number	Hebrew Month Names	Gregorian Calendar Months	Number of Days Per Month	Holidays
1	Nisan	March-April	30	Pesakh
2	Iyar	April-May	29	Lag B'Omer
3	Sivan	May-June	30	Shavuot
4	Tammuz	June-July	29	
5	Av	July-August	30	Tisha B'Av
6	Elul	August-September	29	
7	Tishrei	September-October	30	Rosh Hashanah Sukkot Yom Kippur Shemini Atzeret Simchat Torah
8	Cheshvan	October-November	29	
9	Kislev	November-December	30	Chanukah
10	Tevet	December-January	29	End of Chanukah
11	Shevat	January-February	30	Tu B'shvat
12	Adar	February-March	29	Purim

Seasons are indicated by color.

⁶ If your father misses me at all, then say, 'David earnestly requested *leave of me to run to Bethlehem, his city, because it is the yearly sacrifice there for the whole family.*'

If Saul missed David then Jonathan was to inform his father that David's family had a yearly sacrifice for the whole family so David was expected to be there. We know this was not true because David said he would be hiding in a field for the next 3 days.

Samuel used the excuse of going to a sacrifice to avoid being killed by Saul when he was told to anoint David as king. Now David does the same thing. Using deception to save one's life supersedes the command not to tell a lie. However, one has to be careful not to misuse this principle. Telling a lie to take advantage of others or to avoid a truth that reflects poorly on your reputation is not life or death.

⁷ If he says, 'That is good,' your servant *will be safe*; but if he is very angry, be aware that he has decided on evil.

This was David's plan to see how Saul really felt. If Saul said good, then David would be safe. If he became angry, then Jonathan would know that David was not safe.

¹⁰ Then David said to Jonathan, “Who will inform me if your father answers you harshly?” ¹¹ Jonathan said to David, “Come, and let’s go out to the field.” So both of them went out to the field.

When Saul returned home it would be difficult to get any information to David. So they came up with a clever plan to solve this problem.

Verses 12 - 17

¹² Then Jonathan said to David, “The Lord, the God of Israel, *is my witness!* When I have sounded out my father about this time tomorrow *or* the third day, behold, *if he has a good feeling* toward you, shall I not then send *word* to you and inform you? ¹³ If it pleases my father *to do* you harm, may the Lord do so to me and more so, if I *fail to* inform you and send you away, so that you may go in safety. And may the Lord be with you as He has been with my father. ¹⁴ And if I am still alive, will you not show me the faithfulness of the Lord, so that I do not die? ¹⁵ And you shall never cut off your loyalty to my house, not even when the Lord cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth.” ¹⁶ So Jonathan made a *covenant* with the house of David, *saying*, “May the Lord demand *it* from the hands of David’s enemies.” ¹⁷ And Jonathan made David vow again because of his love for him, because he loved him as he loved his own life.

¹² Then Jonathan said to David

Whether the news was good or bad, Jonathan would let David know.

¹⁴ And if I am still alive, will you not show me the faithfulness of the Lord, so that I do not die? ¹⁵ And you shall never cut off your loyalty to my house, not even when the Lord cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth.

The Lord would eventually cut off David’s enemies and more than likely, Jonathan would be at his father’s side when it happened.

If he did live, he wanted David to treat him well but if he died, he wanted his family to be treated well.

David agreed to that covenant and kept his promise

See 2 Samuel 9

Verses 18 - 23

¹⁸ Then Jonathan said to him, “Tomorrow is the new moon, and you will be missed since your seat will be empty. ¹⁹ When you have stayed for three days, you shall go down quickly and come to the place where you hid yourself on that eventful day, and you shall remain beside the stone Ezel. ²⁰ And I will shoot three arrows to the side, as though I shot at a target. ²¹ Then behold, I will send the boy, *telling him*, ‘Go, find the arrows.’ If I specifically say to the boy, ‘Behold, the arrows are on this side of you, get them,’ then come, because it is safe for you and there is nothing *to harm you*, as the Lord lives. ²² But if I say to the youth, ‘Behold, the arrows are beyond you,’ go, because the Lord has sent you away. ²³ As for the agreement of which you and I have spoken, behold, the Lord is between you and me forever.”

¹⁸ Then Jonathan said to him, “Tomorrow is the new moon, and you will be missed since your seat will be empty. ¹⁹ When you have stayed for three days, you shall go down quickly and come to the place where you hid yourself on that eventful day, and you shall remain beside the stone Ezel.

The meeting that Saul had with his men would last for 3 days. During that time David stayed hid in a field but at the end of that time he was to go to the place where the previous reconciliation had taken place.

See 1 Samuel 19:1-7

²⁰ And I will shoot three arrows to the side, as though I shot at a target. ²¹ Then behold, I will send the boy, *telling him*, ‘Go, find the arrows.

If King Saul was not angry at David, Jonathan would tell the boy that the arrows were to the right or left of where the boy was standing.

If the King was angry with David, Jonathan would tell the boy that the arrows were beyond him.

²³ As for the agreement of which you and I have spoken, behold, the Lord is between you and me forever.”

Jonathan reminded David of the covenant they had made in verses 14 & 15

Verses 24 - 29

²⁴ So David hid himself in the field; and when the new moon came, the king sat down to eat food. ²⁵ Now the king sat on his seat as usual, the seat by the wall; then Jonathan stood up and Abner sat down by Saul's side; but David's place was empty. ²⁶ Nevertheless Saul did not say anything that day, because he thought, "It *must have been* an accident; he is not clean, undoubtedly *he is not clean.*" ²⁷ But it came about the next day, the second *day* of the new moon, that David's place was empty *again*; so Saul said to his son Jonathan, "Why has the son of Jesse not come to the meal, either yesterday or today?" ²⁸ And Jonathan answered Saul, "David earnestly requested leave of me *to go to Bethlehem.*" ²⁹ He said, 'Please let me go, because our family has a sacrifice in the city, and my brother has ordered me *to attend.* So now, if I have found favor in your sight, please let me slip away so that I may see my brothers.' For this reason he has not come to the king's table."

²⁶ Nevertheless Saul did not say anything that day, because he thought, "It *must have been* an accident; he is not clean, undoubtedly he is not clean."

David's absence on the first day did not elicit any inquiry from Saul because he thought that David was probably unclean.

This is interesting because it tells us that the Jews were keeping some of the Law.

See Numbers 28:11-15

¹¹ 'Then at the beginning of each of your months you shall present a burnt offering to the Lord

This was a Holy Day for the Jews and if David was unclean he would not be able to take part in the proceedings or the sacrificial meals. To be clear a burnt offering was not eaten but after the burnt offerings were offered those who desired to offer peace offerings (which could be eaten) could do so.

²⁷ But it came about the next day, the second day of the new moon, that David's place was empty *again*; so Saul said to his son Jonathan, "Why has the son of Jesse not come to the meal, either yesterday or today?"

On the second day Saul demanded a reason for David's absence. Because Jonathan was close to David, Saul assumes he knows why David is not at the feast.

²⁸ And Jonathan answered Saul, “David earnestly requested leave of me to go to Bethlehem.

Jonathan tells the king why David was gone but Saul wasn't buying the story.

Verses 30 - 34

³⁰ Then Saul's anger burned against Jonathan, and he said to him, “You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you are choosing the son of Jesse to your own shame, and to the shame of your mother's nakedness? ³¹ For, as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Now then, send *men* and bring him to me, for he is doomed to die!” ³² But Jonathan replied to his father Saul and said to him, “Why must he be put to death? What has he done?” ³³ Then Saul hurled his spear at him to strike and kill him; so Jonathan knew that his father had decided to put David to death. ³⁴ Then Jonathan got up from the table in the heat of anger, and did not eat food on the second day of the new moon, because he was worried about David since his father had insulted him.

³⁰ Then Saul's anger burned against Jonathan, and he said to him, “You son of a perverse, rebellious woman!”

Interestingly, this kind of insult was meant to demean the person it was directed at but was in no way meant to demean the character of the woman. The others sons were born of the same woman but they were not offended by the insult.

Do I not know that you are choosing the son of Jesse to your own shame, and to the shame of your mother's nakedness?

Saul meant that Jonathan's mother would become the wife of the new king (David).

See 2 Samuel 12:7 – 8

⁷ This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says: ‘It is I who anointed you as king over Israel, and it is I who rescued you from the hand of Saul. ⁸ I also gave you your master's house and put your master's wives into your care, and I gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if *that had been* too little, I would have added to you many more things like these!

³¹ For, as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Now then, send *men* and bring him to me, for he is doomed to die!”

Samuel had told Saul that his kingdom would not continue but Saul still expected Jonathan to succeed him and continue his dynasty.

See 1 Samuel 13:13-14

¹³ You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you, for the Lord would now have established your kingdom over Israel forever. ¹⁴ But now your kingdom shall not endure. The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has appointed him ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.”

Saul either forgot or did not accept the word of God from the prophet Samuel.

³³ Then Saul hurled his spear at him to strike and kill him; so Jonathan knew that his father had decided to put David to death.

Nothing is said about an evil spirit here; Saul's anger problem was totally out of control.

Verses 35 - 41

³⁵ Now it came about in the morning that Jonathan went out to the field at the time agreed upon with David, and a little boy was with him. ³⁶ He said to his boy, “Run, find now the arrows which I am about to shoot.” The boy ran, and he shot an arrow past him. ³⁷ When the boy reached the location of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan called after the boy and said, “Is the arrow not beyond you?” ³⁸ Then Jonathan called after the boy, “Hurry, be quick, do not stay!” And Jonathan's boy picked up the arrow and came to his master. ³⁹ But the boy was not aware of anything; only Jonathan and David knew about the matter. ⁴⁰ Then Jonathan gave his weapons to his boy and said to him, “Go, bring *them* to the city.” ⁴¹ When the boy was gone, David got up from the south side, then he fell on his face to the ground and bowed three times. And they kissed each other and wept together, until David *wept* immeasurably. ⁴² Then Jonathan said to David, “Go in safety, since we have sworn to each other in the name of the Lord, saying, ‘The Lord will be between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants forever.’” So *David* set out and went *on his way*, while Jonathan went into the city.

³⁷ When the boy reached the location of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan called after the boy and said, “Is the arrow not beyond you?” ³⁸ Then Jonathan called after the boy, “Hurry, be quick, do not stay!” And Jonathan’s boy picked up the arrow and came to his master.

David was now officially an outlaw on the run and Saul had all of the resources of the kingdom at his disposal. The rest of 1st Samuel records how God protected David from these many dangers

⁴¹ When the boy was gone, David got up from the south side, then he fell on his face to the ground and bowed three times. And they kissed each other and wept together, until David wept immeasurably.

David falling on his face and bowing down before Jonathan was David's way of saying thanks to Jonathan for helping David with his plan to reveal the true intentions of Saul.

This was a very sad time for both Jonathan and David. They knew they would probably never see each other again and they could not hold back the tears.

For David it would be 10 years of hiding and avoiding capture. We know that God was with David but as an outcast of the Jewish community his life would be very difficult in many respects.