

David Goes On The Run (1 Sam. 20)

David Seeks Answers (1 Sam. 20:1-2)

1 Then David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and went and said to Jonathan, “What have I done? What is my iniquity, and what is my sin before your father, that he seeks my life?” 2 So Jonathan said to him, “By no means! You shall not die! Indeed, my father will do nothing either great or small without first telling me. And why should my father hide this thing from me? It is not so!”

- David is now growing weary of being persecuted. His language here is very forceful: what have I done, what is my iniquity, what is my sin?
- David must have reasoned that his only options was to have Jonathan intervene.
- Jonathan protests very strongly. Does he think David was exaggerating?

David's Plan To Sound Out Saul (1 Sam. 20:3-8)

3 Then David took an oath again, and said, “Your father certainly knows that I have found favor in your eyes, and he has said, ‘Do not let Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved.’ But truly, as the LORD lives and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death.” 4 So Jonathan said to David, “Whatever you yourself desire, I will do it for you.”

5 And David said to Jonathan, “Indeed tomorrow is the New Moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king to eat. But let me go, that I may hide in the field until the third

day at evening. 6 If your father misses me at all, then say, ‘David earnestly asked permission of me that he might run over to Bethlehem, his city, for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.’ 7 If he says thus: ‘It is well,’ your servant will be safe. But if he is very angry, be sure that evil is determined by him. 8 Therefore you shall deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a covenant of the LORD with you. Nevertheless, if there is iniquity in me, kill me yourself, for why should you bring me to your father?”

- David swears by Yahweh to emphasize the strength of his belief.
- David has an idea as to how they can gauge Saul’s true feelings towards him, by testing Saul with his absence.
- David is using deception for the first time.
- An important consideration for believers and leaders: don’t wrestle with pigs!

What About The New Moon?

Israel had a monthly festival of the New Moon. Although most modern Christians are unaware of it, the new moon feast was equal or greater than the Sabbath in importance.

- This feast was held on the first day of the month, and it was based on the time that the new moon could first be sighted.
- The feast could go two days, because it could be hard to time it.
- A new moon festival would give opportunity to celebrate and also consecrate every new month to the Lord. It was also extremely important to know when the new moon appeared, in order to calculate all the other important holidays.

- Israel’s calendar is based on the moon, with about 354 days in a year. In order to keep their lunar calendar in sync with the solar calendar over time, the Hebrew Calendar adds leap months every so often: seven months every 19 years.
- The New Moon was celebrated with blowing of trumpets and sacrifices. It was viewed as another Sabbath, and no work was done. We see this in a passage in which some complained about it: *“When will the New Moon be past, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may trade wheat?”* (Amos 8:5)
- Some must have viewed it as a time to worship, like the Shunammite woman. Her husband said, *“Why are you going to him [Elisha] today? It is neither the New Moon nor the Sabbath.”* (2 Kings 4:23)
- This festival will be celebrated in the Kingdom of God (Isaiah 66:22–23)
*“For as the new heavens and the new earth
Which I will make shall remain before Me,” says the LORD,
“So shall your descendants and your name remain.
And it shall come to pass
That from one New Moon to another,
And from one Sabbath to another,
All flesh shall come to worship before Me,” says the LORD.*
- David’s plan is to hide out until the third day.
- He wants Jonathan to treat him kindly because they are covenant friends.
- He says he is willing to die if he has committed iniquity.

Jonathan Looks To The Future (1 Sam. 20:9-16)

9 But Jonathan said, “Far be it from you! For if I knew certainly that evil was

determined by my father to come upon you, then would I not tell you?" 10 Then David said to Jonathan, "Who will tell me, or what if your father answers you roughly?"

11 And Jonathan said to David, "Come, let us go out into the field." So both of them went out into the field. 12 Then Jonathan said to David: "The LORD God of Israel is witness! When I have sounded out my father sometime tomorrow, or the third day, and indeed there is good toward David, and I do not send to you and tell you, 13 may the LORD do so and much more to Jonathan. But if it pleases my father to do you evil, then I will report it to you and send you away, that you may go in safety. And the LORD be with you as He has been with my father. 14 And you shall not only show me the kindness of the LORD while I still live, that I may not die; 15 but you shall not cut off your kindness from my house forever, no, not when the LORD has cut 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, "Let the LORD require it at the hand of David's enemies."

- Jonathan's touching response: may the Lord do so to me and more!
- Jonathan is looking to the future, and he seems to know already that the future of Israel will be in the hands of David. Is he saying that God is no longer with Saul?
- He wants David to be kind to his house when he dies, and when God has cut off, (killed) all of David's enemies. This likely includes Saul, or so he seems to imply.
- Jonathan makes a covenant of peace with David's house, that is, his descendants, and he says let anyone who violates it pay for it by the judgment of God.

Jonathan's Plan To Inform David (1 Sam. 20:17-23)

17 Now Jonathan again caused David to vow, because he loved him; for he loved him as he loved his own soul. 18 Then Jonathan said to David, “Tomorrow is the New Moon; and you will be missed, because your seat will be empty. 19 And when you have stayed three days, go down quickly and come to the place where you hid on the day of the deed; and remain by the stone Ezel. 20 Then I will shoot three arrows to the side, as though I shot at a target; 21 and there I will send a lad, saying, ‘Go, find the arrows.’ If I expressly say to the lad, ‘Look, the arrows are on this side of you; get them and come’—then, as the LORD lives, there is safety for you and no harm. 22 But if I say thus to the young man, ‘Look, the arrows are beyond you’—go your way, for the LORD has sent you away. 23 And as for the matter which you and I have spoken of, indeed the LORD be between you and me forever.”

- Jonathan makes David swear again, presumably that they will not harm each other, and Jonathan plans to give David a signal, so that David will know whether to go away for good.

At The Feast Of The New Moon (1 Sam. 20:24-34)

24 Then David hid in the field. And when the New Moon had come, the king sat down to eat the feast. 25 Now the king sat on his seat, as at other times, on a seat by the wall. And Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul’s side, but David’s place was empty. 26 Nevertheless Saul did not say anything that day, for he thought, “Something has happened to him; he is unclean, surely he is unclean.” 27 And it happened the next day, the second day of the month, that David’s place was empty. And Saul said to Jonathan

his son, “Why has the son of Jesse not come to eat, either yesterday or today?”

28 So Jonathan answered Saul, “David earnestly asked permission of me to go to Bethlehem. 29 And he said, ‘Please let me go, for our family has a sacrifice in the city, and my brother has commanded me to be there. And now, if I have found favor in your eyes, please let me get away and see my brothers.’ Therefore he has not come to the king’s table.”

30 Then Saul’s anger was aroused against Jonathan, and he said to him, “You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you have chosen 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, you shall not be established, nor your kingdom. Now therefore, send and bring him to me, for he shall surely die.” 32 And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said to him, “Why should he be killed? What has he done?” 33 Then Saul cast a spear at him to kill him, by which Jonathan knew that it was determined by his father to kill David.

34 So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and ate no food the second day of the month, for he was grieved for David, because his father had treated him shamefully.

- Saul is becoming increasingly paranoid, sitting against the wall.
- Nor can he bring himself to speak David’s name, or perhaps he is insulting David’s humble origins by calling him “the son of Jesse.”
- In verse 30, Saul explodes with anger and he insults Jonathan (and Jonathan’s mother) in terms that were truly shocking in that culture.

- Saul’s outburst here may be the worst example of abusive language in the Bible. It is one more mark of his deficient and, by now, dangerous character.
- Essentially, he calls Jonathan a son of a whore. Saul’s outburst is even more strange because he’s speaking about his own wife.
- He says that Jonathan has chosen David to his shame, and to the shame of his mother’s nakedness. Saul’s explanation is that Jonathan is siding against his own interests, and his own future kingdom.
- Jonathan defends David, at which point Saul tries to kill Jonathan, too.

Arrows Of Warning (1 Sam. 20:35-40)

35 And so it was, in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad was with him. 36 Then he said to his lad, “Now run, find the arrows which I shoot.” As the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. 37 When the lad had come to the place where the arrow was which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried out after the lad and said, “Is not the arrow beyond you?” 38 And Jonathan cried out after the lad, “Make haste, hurry, do not delay!” So Jonathan’s lad gathered up the arrows and came back to his master. 39 But the lad did not know anything. Only Jonathan and David knew of the matter. 40 Then Jonathan gave his weapons to his lad, and said to him, “Go, carry them to the city.”

- Jonathan sends the signal that David will have to go away.
- Sending the boy back to Gibeah will allow for a private conversation.

Friends Departing (1 Sam. 20:41-42)

41 As soon as the lad had gone, David arose from a place toward the south, fell on his face to the ground, and bowed down three times. And they kissed one another; and they wept together, but David more so. 42 Then Jonathan said to David, “Go in peace, since we have both sworn in the name of the LORD, saying, ‘May the LORD be between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants, forever.’” So he arose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city.

- This is the last time these two best friends will see each other for a while.
- David shows his respect by bowing to the ground.
- Jonathan says to David that he can go in peace; he has nothing to fear from Jonathan because they have made a covenant, and the LORD will be watching over them.
- David will now go on the run.
- In his desperation, David will neglect to seek the Lord, and he will become a little bit like Saul, looking to the energy of the flesh, and engaging in deception.

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