

Bible Stories

JONATHAN

1 Samuel 18:3-4

November 26, 2022

We know virtually nothing about Jonathan. He was the oldest son of Saul and Ahinoam and next in line for the throne of Israel. The Bible does not tell us if he was married, but we are told that he had a son, Mephibosheth, who was 5 years old when Jonathan was killed on Mt. Gilboa fighting the Philistines – **2 Samuel 4:4**.

We know he was well loved – **1 Samuel 14:24-45**.

We know that he was much older than David – 20 years at least.

- Saul was 30 when he became king and reigned for 42 years = 72 years old when he was killed.
- David was 30 when he became king, which means Saul had already reigned for 12 years when David was born. By that time Jonathan was already a commander in Saul's army.
- By the time David – under 20 – fought Goliath, Saul had reigned in Israel for between 30-32 years, making Jonathan potentially 40+ years old.

Jonathan was going to be the next king – until Saul's disastrous choices and Yahweh's declaration that Saul's kingdom would come to an end.

With that, Jonathan became an heir with nothing to inherit. This fact is what makes his story truly extraordinary.

The unwritten rule of Monarchy was you eliminated anyone who might stand between you and the throne. I mean, anyone, including your own kin, if necessary. History is full of such stories:

- Abimelech, son of Gideon, employed assassins to help him eliminate his 70 brothers, who stood in his way.
- Herod the Great murdered his own sons because he thought they were a threat to his rule.
- Richard III had his nephews imprisoned in the Tower of London and may have ordered their executions in order to maintain his claim the throne of England.

A shepherd boy with some killer sling skills was definitely a potential threat and yet after David's victory over Goliath, scripture tells us that Jonathan loved David and made a covenant – the 1st of 3 – with him. Jonathan, the heir-apparent to the Israelite throne, recognized that David was going to be the next king and he put himself in the lower position within this covenant relationship – **1 Samuel 18:1-4**.

Amazing!! Talk about humility and bending to the authority and will of God. What a stark contrast between Jonathan and Saul.

When we left David last week, he was in hiding with Samuel.

Previously, Jonathan had successfully interceded with Saul on David's behalf, so David went to find Jonathan:

David: *What have I done? What is my iniquity? And what is my sin before your father, that he is seeking my life?*

Jonathan: *What are you talking about? My father doesn't do anything without telling me about it, so why would he hide this from me?*

David: *Your father knows that we're friends. He wants to avoid conflict with you so is not telling you of his plans concerning me. But as surely as Yahweh lives and you have breath in your lungs, your father is trying to kill me.*

Jonathan: *What do you want me to do?*

David: *I am supposed to be at the New Moon Festival. If your father misses me, tell him that I asked you for permission to go spend some time with my family in Bethlehem. If he says 'Fine, no problem,' it means all is well. However.... If he gets angry, you will know that he intends to kill me. Deal kindly with me because of our covenant before Yahweh. If I am guilty, then kill me now, but don't take me to your father.*

Jonathan: *I would never! Don't you think that if I knew my father intended to kill you, I'd tell you?.... As Yahweh is my witness, I will talk to my father. If he has positive feelings toward you, I will get a message to you. May Yahweh punish me if I discover my father intends to kill you*

and I don't give you a warning so that you can escape. May Yahweh be with you, as he was with my father. Show me unfailing kindness as long as I live and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family -- not even when Yahweh has cut off every one of your enemies from the face of the earth **{Covenant #2 – again Jonathan puts David in the position of power within the covenant}**. Remain beside the stone of Ezel. In 3 days I will come back and pretend I am target shooting. I will shoot 3 arrows and then I will tell my servant to go retrieve them. If I say, **'The arrows are to your side'** it means all is well. But if I say, **'The arrows are beyond you,'** Yahweh has sent you away. Yahweh is between you and me forever.

David hid and Jonathan went to the New Moon Festival. Saul noticed that David's seat was empty, but didn't say anything the 1st day. On the 2nd day, Saul asked Jonathan where David was and Jonathan told him that David had asked to go to Bethlehem to spend time with his family.

Saul grew angry. **"You son of a perverse and rebellious woman!"** he screamed. **"You have sided with the son of Jesse to your shame! As long as David lives your kingdom will not be established! Bring him to me.... He. Must. Die!"**

Jonathan: *Why should he be put to death? What has he done?"*

Saul hurled his spear at Jonathan, trying to kill **HIM**, and in that moment, Jonathan knew his father intended to kill David. Jonathan got up from the table – furious – not only because of Saul's treatment of David, but because Saul had dishonored him.

Jonathan knew what he had to do. The next morning, he went to the field and gave the code phrase, **"the arrows are beyond you."** David got up from his hiding place and bowed 3 times before Jonathan. They embraced and wept together – David wept the most.

In that moment, David realized everything that Jonathan had given up for him – and it broke his heart.

David didn't ask to be the next king of Israel... God chose him and Jonathan honored that choice. Not only rejecting any future claim to the crown, but aligning himself with the enemy of the King... the enemy of his father.

Jonathan: *Go in peace, because we have sworn an oath in the name of Yahweh, saying, "Yahweh will be between me and you, and between my offspring and your offspring forever.*

- **1 Samuel 23:14-18** - David remained in the wilderness, in the strongholds, and in the hill country in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him continually, but God did not give him into his hand... ¹⁶ So Jonathan the son of Saul got up and went to David at Horesh, and encouraged him through God. ¹⁷ He said to him, "Do not be afraid, for the hand of my father Saul will not find you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. My father Saul knows *this* also." ¹⁸ Then the two of them made a covenant {#3} before Yahweh.....

David ran and Jonathan went home.

This would be the final meeting between Jonathan and David.

Jonathan will die in battle – fighting alongside his father – a good son to the very end.

What do we do with this story?

When we think about heroes of faith in the Old Testament, the names, **"Abraham, Moses, Joseph, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Dainel"** come immediately to our minds, but not ever the name Jonathan. For most of us, he doesn't even make the list. But He should..... Why? Because his story is an extraordinary example of humility, loyalty, self-sacrifice, duty, faithfulness, fidelity, submission and honor in all scripture.

Jonathan knew David would be king, but he never showed a hint of resentment or jealousy. He went out of his way to help David.

Jonathan knew that it was his father's choices that created the situation, yet he did not abandon his father. His loyalty was with David, but his duty was to his father. He did not cancel his father, but remained to the bitter end.

In an era of cancel culture and the quest to remain in power at all cost, the story of Jonathan is worth knowing about.

Finally, I want to deal with a popular myth about David and Jonathan. They are often used as propaganda by the LBGTQ community as an example of homosexual lovers in the Bible. That when the Bible says that Jonathan **"loved David as his own soul"** that it **MUST** mean in a sexual way. Ridiculous! God's stance on homosexual behavior is clear and He would not alter it just because David was **THAT DAVID**. Why is it so difficult to believe that 2 men or 2 women, for that matter, can be kindred spirits and yet **NOT** want to have sex with each other? What a disgusting thing it is – to take something beautiful and wholesome and innocent – and turn it into propaganda fodder to further an agenda.