–Save This Page as a PDF–

David and Y'honatan
First Samuel 20: 1-42

It is sad to say, but from the moment that **David** killed **Goliath, his** days of peace in **Isra'el** were numbered. The reason was the insane jealousy of **King Sha'ul**, who saw **David** only as a threat, despite **the young man's** continual record of humble and faithful service. In the chapters that follow **David's** victory, we are inching toward **his** exile, with each chapter presenting a different character study during this time of crisis and trial. In **Chapter 18**, the key actor is **David** in **his** response to **Sha'ul's** sudden attempts to take **his** life. **Chapter 19** focuses on **Sha'ul**, whose **evil spirit** drives **him** from one failed attempt against **David** to another. **Chapter 20** returns our focus to **Y'honatan**, **Sha'ul's son** and **David's** covenantal friend. **Y'honatan** finds **himself** trapped in what many people would consider a terrible vise, with **his** faith and godliness competing against ambition and personal gain. **Y'honatan** shows us how a man of **God** approaches a situation which appears to be governed by anger, fear, and hatred, but in fact is governed by **his** faith and the bonds of covenant faithfulness.[69]

The rabbis teach that this chapter raises problems that are quite baffling. Y'honatan had been urged by his father to kill David (First Samuel 19:1-2), yet here he seems ignorant of his father's intention (First Samuel 20:2). After his three escapes, as recorded in the previous chapter, why should David have ventured back to Gibeah for the New Moon festival? Still more surprising, why should he have taken it for granted that Sha'ul would expect to see him in his usual place at the king's table? And when Sha'ul realizes David's absence, why was he so forgetful of his murderous attempts on David's life as to think that the reason for David's absence was ritual uncleanness? And then to inquire of Y'honatan why David was not present? One of the best answers to these seemingly perplexing actions is found by understanding **David's** godly heart and attitude. **David** could have stayed in **Naioth** for however long it took **Sha'ul** to give up or to die. **The Ruach HaKodesh** protected **David** in **Naioth** in a powerful way. Yet **David** left for a good reason: **He** wanted to know if **Sha'ul's heart** had changed, and if there was still a chance to reconcile with **him**. **David** also wanted to know if **Y'honatan** had come

to a place of agreement with **his father Sha’ul**. **David’s** willingness to seek reconciliation, even in a situation of life and death, shows **he** was **a man after God’s own heart** (**Acts 13:22).**