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Y'honatan Defends David
First Samuel 20: 24b-42

DIG: How is the Adversary's influence seen in the life of Sha'ul? How did Sha'ul justify his anger? What did it take for Y'honatan to finally catch on to his father's true intent with regard to David? Why is Y'honatan so slow to catch on? Does he want to believe the best about his father at all costs? Or is Sha'ul that good at masking his motives? Knowing his father tried to kill him also, why did Y'honatan go back home instead of going into hiding with David? How do you think Y'honatan felt about being caught in the middle? How did Y'honatan demonstrate his friendship with David in Chapter 20? What did it cost him?

REFLECT: In your experience, how common is deep and faithful friendship between women? Between men? When is it right going against authority in obeying ADONAI? When is it wrong? What elements in civil disobedience or family dissonance are never right? Has the pressure of some trial thrown you into despair, causing you to doubt God's promises? Do you have the peace of the Lord that passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7)? Why or why not? What are some examples of this peace in your life?

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Y'honatan's Defense of David Before Sha'ul: Y'honatan's duty to **David** required **him** to go back to the presence of **his father** in **his** palace at **Gibeah**. **When Rosh-Hodesh came, the king sat down to eat his** sacrificial **meal** on **the first day**, which could only be eaten in **ceremonial** cleanliness**.** Constantly afraid of personal attack, **the king sat at his usual place** with **his** back against **the wall. Y'honatan stood up, and Abner sat next to Sha'ul** (which was highly unusual because **he** normally sat next to **his father**) and **Y'honatan** sat across from **his father**. All the principles were there, **but David's place was empty. However, Sha'ul didn't say anything that day; because he thought, "Something has happened to him to make him ceremonially unclean. And as if Sha'ul were trying to convince himself that uncleanness was the only**

reason for David's absence, he repeated the phrase over and over again to himself. Yes, that's it, surely he is unclean. An acceptable excuse . . . once **(First Samuel 20:24b-26 CJB)**.

But the day after Rosh-Hodesh, the second day, David's space was still empty and Sha'ul said to Y'honatan his son, "Why hasn't Jesse's son (the use of this name is deliberately contemptuous) come to the meal either yesterday or today? Uncleanness only lasted one day **(Leviticus 15:16)**, so that could not account for **his** absence. **Y'honatan answered Sha'ul, "David begged me to let him go to Beit-Lechem." He said, "Please let me go, because our family has a sacrifice in the city and my brother demanded that I come. The eldest brother exercised a measure of authority over the others. So now, if you look on me favorably, please let me get away and see my brothers." That's why he hasn't come to the king's table (First Samuel 20:27-29 CJB).** However a savvy person such as **Sha'ul** was able to see right through **him. The king's** explosive response was stunning.

It took almost nothing to set **Sha'ul** off when the subject was **David**. **At that Sha'ul flew into a rage,** but instead of attacking **David, Sha'ul** attacked **his** own **son**! Had **YHVH** not intervened back in Ramah, **Sha'ul** would have killed **David** in the very presence of **Samuel (First Samuel 19:22-24)** and now **he** detested **his** own **son**, saying: **You son of a perverse** (meaning thoroughly **perverse** in **his** resistance to **his father's** will) **and rebellious woman!** In the Near East it is the greatest possible insult to a man to call his mother names. **Don't I know that you've made this son of Jesse** (couldn't even say **his** name) **your best friend? You** have chosen **him** over **me**! **You don't care that you're shaming yourself and dishonoring your** family**? Because as long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, you** will not be crowned **king, neither you nor your kingdom will be secure. Sha'ul was haunted by the fear that David's popularity with the people would secure for him the succession to the throne.** But, **Y'honatan** already knew that **David** would be the next **king**, moreover, **he** wasn't concerned about **his** own ambitions. By this point, even **Sha'ul** must have realized that **David** must have been the one that **God** chose according to **Samuel's** prophecy **(First Samuel 15:28)** and **he** blindly thought **he** could reverse it. With these poisoned darts planted in **Y'honatan's** heart, **Sha'ul** than issued **his** demand: **Now send someone to bring him to me, for he must die (First Samuel 20:30-31)!**

Sha'ul's great concern was the preservation of the Kingdom that **ADONAI** had already token from **him**! **YHVH** had made it very clear that none of **Sha'ul's** sons

would ever inherit the throne and **David** was the king of **God's** choice, so **Sha'ul** was fighting the will of **the LORD** and asking **his** son to do the same thing.[75]

Y'honatan answered his father, "Why should he be put to death? What has he done." In the heat of the moment **Sha'ul threw his spear at him, aiming to kill,** but narrowly missing **his** target. Nobody moved. The only sound in the room came from the still-vibrating **spear** handle plunged ominously into the wall. **Y'honatan could no longer doubt that his father was determined to put David to death.** This incident erased any doubt in **Y'honatan's** mind that **his father** wanted to **kill the** next **king of Isra'el, his** best friend – **David**. The tension for **Y'honatan** had become unbearable. Silently seething with rage, **he got up from the table and** made a quick exit. **He ate no food the second day of the month,** although it was a feast day**, both because he was upset over David and because his father had put him to shame (First Samuel 20:32-34 CJB).** In retrospect, this was an act of stunning loyalty on **Y'honatan's** part.

If anyone comes to Me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters – yes, even their own life – such a person cannot be My disciple. The word **hate** here is not an emotion, but rather the act of choosing or not choosing **(Malachi 1:2-3)**. A better translation would be: **Anyone who comes to Me but refuses to let go of parents, spouse, children, brothers and sisters – yes, even one's own life! – such a person cannot be My disciple.** The theme of this verse is not alienation from one's family, but the cost of **discipleship**; nothing, not love for **father** or **mother** or even **one's own life**, is to come before loyalty to **ADONAI** and **His Meshiach**. **And whoever does not carry their cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple (Luke 14:25-27 The Message).**



The Final Separation Between David and Y'honatan: **The next morning** the melancholy **prince** found **his** way **out into the country at the [place] he had arranged with David** to discuss the test**, taking with him a young boy.** As **they** had prearranged, **he told the boy, "Now run and find the arrows I'm about to shoot." As the boy ran, he shot an arrow** far **beyond him. When the boy reached where the arrow was that Y'honatan had shot,** with a heavy heart, **the prince shouted to the boy, "Isn't the arrow beyond you?"** That coded question meant that **Sha'ul** was angry and set to **kill David**. And **he** shot more **arrows** far **beyond him.** And **Y'honatan continued shouting after the boy, "Quick! Hurry! Don't just stand there!" Y'honatan's boy gathered the arrows and returned to his master, but the boy didn't understand anything about the matter – only Y'honatan and David understood. Y'honatan gave his weapons to his young boy and said to him, "Go, carry them to the city" (First Samuel 20:35-40 CJB). When David heard Y'honatan dismiss the boy, indicating that he wished to stay behind, David understood that Y'honatan felt that it was safe for the two of them to have a few minutes together before they finally parted.**

As soon as the boy had gone, David got up from his hiding place behind **the Departure Stone** and came to say goodbye to **Y'honatan**, who had remained. Pent up emotion found relief, first in tears and then in remembrance of **their** mutual commitment before **YHVH**. **David fell down on the ground and prostrated himself three times; and they kissed one another** as brothers **and wept together until it became too much for David.** Then **Y'honatan** repeated the oath of **First Samuel 20:23**, but now the stakes of the covenant are much higher. **He said to David, "Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of ADONAI, saying, 'ADONAI is a witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants** (**to see link click Da – David and Mephiboseth**) **forever" (First Samuel 20:41-42a).** There is something final and breathtaking about these words. It is as though **Y'honatan** now fully recognized that the tide had turned. **Sha'ul** had failed, and **his** own life as **Sha'ul's son** was gravely in danger. **David** would have **his** way in the future and **Y'honatan** wanted access to the future that only **David** could give.

Then Y'honatan went back to Gibeah. David was only about 24 years old when **he** left **his friend (First Samuel 20:42b). David** slowly departed and **Y'honatan** went back to **his** path of duty to live with a **father** who didn't understand **him** at

all, who hadn't the slightest interest in **his** principles. Only once more, briefly in a desperate and dangerous setting, would the two men meet again in life. Though physically separated and pulled apart by different obligations they would remain inseparably joined by the oath they swore.

Y'honatan speaks the final words in this bitter chapter**, "Go in shalom."** On the face of it, these words are ridiculous. They were leaving for war and conflict. **David** was about to flee for **his** life and would live for five years as a fugitive, and **Y'honatan** was returning to the service of **his** wicked and deranged **father**. How could **Y'honatan** speak of **their** going in **shalom**? The answer was the covenant **they** had made, which established peace between **them**. Although troubles would come, both men would be faithful to their covenant till the day **they** died. So in the midst of great conflict, they departed in peace and lived in peace. If we will likewise commit to a life of faithfulness in covenant with others, we too will enjoy peace in a world of conflict.

More important still was the **peace** they received through **their** covenant with **ADONAI**. **Their shalom** rested on **YHVH's** covenant promises and **His** faithfulness to keep **His** oath. This is where our souls find **peace** as well. We gain **peace** with **God** through the covenant of grace, which says: **Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved (Acts 16:31)**. Through **faith** in **Messiah's** blood, we are forgiven of our sins and **justified** (meaning *just as if I'd* never sinned) in **His** sight. **His** covenant promise then secures our **peace, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1)**. Though all the world should overwhelm us, **Ha'Shem's** covenant of faithfulness will calm our souls. Like **Y'honatan** and **David**, we do not have the power to control the events around us. Nevertheless, like them, we can live in troubled times with **the peace of the Lord that passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7).**

Just as **Y'honatan** and **David** separated in **peace**, having rested **their** hearts in a bond of covenant love, we rest our souls in the promised grace of our sovereign **Lord** and **Savior**. **He** promises to **His** covenant people: **What I AM leaving with you is shalom – I AM giving you My shalom. I don't give the way the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid (Yochanan 14:27 CJB).**[76]