

## FIRST SAMUEL

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 20

- Vv. 1-10 *David's appeal to Jonathan.* Since Jonathan had helped David to return to Saul's court at one time, David sought him out again. Jonathan was still David's friend and agreed to assist David.
- Vv. 11-23 *Jonathan's plan.* Jonathan renewed his covenant with David and agreed to find out his father's intentions concerning David. He also arranged a plan whereby David would know the outcome of Jonathan's inquiry of his father.
- Vv. 24-34 *Saul's attack on Jonathan and David.* When Saul found out that Jonathan was in touch with David he berated not only Jonathan but also his own wife Ahinoam as well.
- Vv. 35-42 *David's and Jonathan's parting.* When David learned of Saul's implacable anger, he knew that he could not return to the court. He knew that he was doomed to live the life of a fugitive. The parting with Jonathan was sad, but in the best interests of both.

### LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *The value of faithful friends.* At the risk of his own life Jonathan was willing to help David. Their friendship is classic in its very nature. The two stand as examples of what friends ought to be to each other.
2. *The vile fruits of jealousy.* Saul became so intense in his hatred, fear and jealousy of David that he attempted to kill his own son. He called his wife a "perverse, rebellious woman" (v. 30). Such is the way of one who is proud and selfish.

## STUDIES IN SAMUEL

3. *The strengthening of truth in adversity.* The parting of Jonathan and David is filled with heartwarming lessons. The two wept unashamedly, for their souls had been knit inseparably together by their experiencing danger together. Such is the outcome of the fires of testing on friendship that is true.

David's Farewell to Jonathan, 20:1-42.

*David's Appeal to Jonathan.* 20:1-10

And David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what *is* mine iniquity? what *is* my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?

2 And he said unto him, God forbid; thou shalt not die: behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will show it me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? *it is not so.*

3 And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly *as* the Lord liveth, and *as* thy soul liveth, *there is* but a step between me and death.

4 Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do *it* for thee.

5 And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, tomorrow *is* the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third *day* at even.

6 If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked *leave* of me that he might run to Beth-lehem his city: for *there is* a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.

7 If he say thus, *it is* well; thy servant shall have peace: but if he be very wroth, *then* be sure that evil is determined by him.

8 Therefore thou shalt deal kindly with thy servant; for

thou has brought thy servant into a covenant of the Lord with thee: notwithstanding, if there be in me iniquity, slay me thyself; for why shouldst thou bring me to thy father?

9 And Jonathan said, Far be it from thee: for if I knew certainly that evil were determined by my father to come upon thee, then would not I tell it thee?

10 Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? or what *if* thy father answer thee roughly?

1. *Why did David appeal to Jonathan? 20:1*

Samuel was the man who had anointed David to be king over Israel. In this role, Samuel had showed himself to be a friend of David. David first fled to him. After he had been with Samuel in Ramah, his thoughts must have turned to other friends and supporters. No one had been any closer to David than Jonathan. In addition Jonathan would have full access to the court of Saul. Jonathan would know if there were some possible reasons for Saul's continued animosity. It was for these reasons that David next turned to Jonathan. His question was three-fold: What had he done? What was his iniquity of any kind? What was his sin against Saul? David thought Saul had surely indicated some reason why he was seeking to take his life.

2. *Why did Jonathan deny his father's intentions? 20:2*

Jonathan did not so much deny his father's intention as to utter a prayer that God would spare David's life. It was unthinkable to Jonathan that David should be slain. His continued speech, however, reveals that he evidently thought that his father was not intending to take such drastic action. As heir apparent to the throne, Jonathan would be taken into his father's most intimate confidence. Nothing of any significance would be hidden from Jonathan; and he felt that Saul's intentions towards David were ultimately for good, except when his father was in the throes of the state of depression into which he fell.

3. *Why did David insist that Saul did intend to kill him?*  
20:3

David said that Saul knew that there was a deep friendship between Jonathan and David. On account of this friendship he believed Saul had failed to reveal his full intentions towards David as a part of the information he gave to Jonathan. This was one aspect of the kingdom's business into which Saul had not taken Jonathan into his confidence. David thought that Saul did not want to grieve Jonathan in this matter and had spared him the mental anguish of knowing his father was intending to slay his best friend. David insisted that there was only a very slight chance that he could escape. He was just one step away from death.

4. *What was the plan devised between Jonathan and David?* 20:5

David proposed being absent from the feast of the new moon. He intended to go and hide himself in a field for three days while Jonathan made specific inquiry into the status of Saul's plans. Should Jonathan find out that David could safely come back into the court, he was to come out into the field and get him. If there were no possibility of his being reinstated at the court, Jonathan was to come and inform him so that he could flee from Saul.

5. *Was there a feast at Jesse's house?* 20:6

The feast of the new moon was a very important feast to the Israelites. Every male member was expected to observe the beginning of the new month. It is quite possible that there was a feast being held at Jesse's house in Bethlehem. The Tabernacle in Shiloh had lost its significance to the people since the Ark had been captured by the Philistines. The Ark itself was still in the house of Abinadab on the western border of the tribe of Judah. The faithful people of Israel would continue to hold their feast. Since this is mentioned as an annual feast, it may

have been the first day of the new year, the first day of the month Abib.

6. *How would David's absence indicate Saul's attitude?*  
20:7

David would surely be missed. This may have been the very time at which Saul had laid the plot to catch David. He may have been waiting for this occasion when all his courtiers were expected to be with him. The fact that David was gone would irritate the king. The extent of his irritation would indicate his attitude towards David.

7. *What covenant of the Lord was between David and Jonathan?* 20:8

The covenant of friendship into which David and Jonathan had entered (18:1, 2) was considered a holy covenant by David. It was more than a statement of friendship between two men. David did not take it lightly. He had sworn unto the Lord that he would show kindness to Jonathan. Jonathan had made the same vow to him. This covenant was renewed time and time again throughout the lives of the two men. It bound them together inseparably.

8. *What danger was there in the plan for Jonathan?* 20:10

David foresaw the possibility of Saul's answering Jonathan "roughly." As the matter transpired, Saul did answer Jonathan roughly. He called him the son of a perverse, rebellious woman (v. 30). Saul even cast his javelin at Jonathan to smite him (v. 33). It is hard to imagine any depth to which Saul could have fallen where he would be lower than he was at this time. He had turned upon his armor-bearer and champion, David. He had accused his own daughter of turning against him. He had imagined that his courtiers were all against him. He came to the place where he cast reproach and suspicion upon his own wife and then threw a javelin to kill his heir and prince.

## STUDIES IN SAMUEL

### *Jonathan's Plan: 20:11-23*

11 And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field.

12 And Jonathan said unto David, O Lord God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about tomorrow any time, *or* the third *day*, and behold, *if there be good* toward David, and I then send not unto thee, and show it thee;

13 The Lord do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father *to do* thee evil, then I will show it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the Lord be with thee, as he hath been with my father.

14 And thou shalt not only while yet I live show me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not:

15 But *also* thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the Lord hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth.

16 So Jonathan made *a covenant* with the house of David, *saying*, Let the Lord even require *it* at the hand of David's enemies.

17 And Jonathan caused David to swear again, 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 thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty.

19 And *when* thou hast stayed three days, *then* thou shalt go down quickly, and come to the place where thou didst hide thyself when the business was *in hand*, and shalt remain by the stone Ezel.

20 And I will shoot three arrows on the side *thereof*, as though I shot at a mark.

21 And, behold, I will send a lad, *saying*, Go, find out the arrows. If I expressly say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows *are* on this side of thee, take them; then come thou: for *there* is peace to thee, and not hurt, *as* the Lord liveth.

22 But if I say thus unto the young man, Behold, the

arrows *are* beyond thee; go thy way: for the Lord hath sent thee away.

23 And *as touching* the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, the Lord *be* between thee and me for ever.

9. *What is the meaning of Jonathan's prayer? 20:12, 13*

As Jonathan and David went into the field, Jonathan prayed to the Lord God of Israel. He asked God to do evil to him if he did not tell David the outcome of the matter. His prayer was really a vow. It was a solemn oath taken before the Lord that he would sound out his father and then tell David. If, for any reason, Jonathan failed to bring word to David, he prayed that God would smite him.

10. *What was the house of David? 20:16*

As yet David had no family. The covenant which Jonathan made with David was looking into the future to a time when David would have heirs. The covenant which Jonathan and David made was not only between themselves personally, but it was to be binding upon their descendants. It was a promise that neither family would turn upon the other. Such a covenant was needed because regal families quite often exterminated each other. One family coming to the throne would customarily seek out all the members of the other royal house and attempt to exterminate them. By doing this they would dispose of any threat which might be made to their claims to the throne.

11. *Where was the stone Ezel? 20:19*

The spot is lost to present-day archaeologists, but it was evidently near Ramah in Benjamin. The stone would have marked the field and spot where David was to hide. This would make it possible for Jonathan to come back to the area and be certain that he was in the vicinity of David's hiding place.

12. *How would the shooting of arrows be a sign to David?*

20:20-23

The signal was arranged so that David would know the outcome of Jonathan's inquiry without any direct conversation. If Jonathan shot arrows into the field, and then said to the lad who was to fetch the arrows that the arrows were beyond the boy, then David would know that he was to get up and flee. If Jonathan shot the arrows and then said to the lad who was fetching them that the arrows were between Jonathan and the lad, David would know that it was safe for him to come out of hiding. David was then to get up from his hiding place and come back with the boy and the arrows to Jonathan. Should Jonathan be followed into the field, there would be no danger to anybody concerned. If Saul were still threatening David's life, the boy would run on and get the arrows. He would bring them back to Jonathan and they would return to Gibeah. After they had gone David would get up and flee. If Saul were favorably inclined towards David, David could listen for the signal and then get up and come back with all in a friendly and amiable atmosphere.

*Saul's Attack on Jonathan and David. 20:24-34*

24 So David hid himself in the field: and when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat.

25 And the king sat upon his seat, as at other times, *even* upon a seat by the wall: and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul's side, and David's place was empty.

26 Nevertheless Saul spake not any thing that day: for he thought, Something hath befallen him, he *is* not clean; surely he *is* not clean.

27 And it came to pass on the morrow, *which was* the second *day* of the month, that David's place was empty: and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday nor today?



28 And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked *leave* of me *to go* to Beth-lehem:

29 And he said, Let me go, I pray thee; for our family hath a sacrifice in the city; and my brother, he hath commanded me *to be there*: and now, if I have found favor in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brethren. Therefore he cometh not unto the king's table.

30 Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious *woman*, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness?

31 For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send an fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die.

32 And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?

33 And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David.

34 So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.

### 13. *Where was David's seat?* 20:25

From the arrangement given in the text it appears that Abner sat on one side of Saul and David sat on the other. Mention is made of the fact that Jonathan arose which may be an indication of Jonathan's having given Abner his seat next to Saul. Saul's seat was by the wall, a reference that indicates the use of a room where Saul could come and dine. The feast itself was important to the Israelites and David might well be expected to attend.

### 14. *Why did Saul think David was unclean?* 20:26

Those who touched dead bodies were not clean and could not attend the feasts. Since David was a man of war and

was sent out to fight Saul's battles, he might be expected to be in this condition. Even some animals were considered unclean to the Israelites, and anyone who touched them was unclean until the end of the day (Leviticus 11:27). When Saul missed David from the feast of the new moon, he was hoping that he was absent for some unavoidable reason, and the most logical explanation would be that he was ceremonially unclean and therefore not eligible to participate in the feast. This would lead Saul to expect that David would be at the feast on the next day. With this thought in mind he dismissed the situation.

15. *Why would David's brother command him to be at home? 20:29*

The elder brother had the right of *prototokia*. This was the same as the Latin *primogeniture*. The firstborn in the family was given a double portion of the father's inheritable goods. He had the responsibility for the younger children and especially for the arranging of marriages for the daughters in the family. If the father left a widow, the older son was also responsible for her welfare. David's father was not yet dead, for we learn that he later joined David in his flight from Saul (22:3). Eliab, David's older brother, may well have been assuming many of the responsibilities of the head of the family during the years of Jesse's later life.

16. *Why would Jonathan's love for David cause confusion? 20:30*

Under normal circumstances Jonathan would have been heir to Saul's throne. The love that Jonathan had for David led him to honor David as the leading man in Israel. By doing this he was taking a second place himself and was not filling the prominent role which Saul thought belonged to the crown prince. Saul evidently believed that Jonathan would rather see David sitting on the throne than to sit on the throne himself. Such a situation would lead to a break in the genealogy of the house of Saul or at

least to a change of dynasties. In this way Ahinoam, Jonathan's mother, would not be the queen mother. This would cause confusion on her part.

17. *Why did Jonathan become angry?* 20:34

Jonathan became so angry that he left the feast. He did not participate in the services of the second day of the feast of the new moon, and he was filled with fierce anger. He had been convinced beyond all question or doubt of the fact that his father was determined to kill David. In addition to this Saul had cast reproach upon Jonathan's mother and even attempted to take Jonathan's life. Although Jonathan appears to be the kind of a person who would give the other fellow every benefit of the doubt, he finally saw the truth of the matter. Such a desperate situation filled him with grief and anger. He was grieved for David's sake. He was filled with fierce anger towards his father.

*David's and Jonathan's Parting.* 20:35-42

35 And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad with him.

36 And he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot. *And* as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him.

37 And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried after the lad, and said, *Is not the arrow beyond thee?*

38 And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master.

39 But the lad knew not any thing: only Jonathan and David knew the matter.

40 And Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad, and said unto him, Go, carry *them* to the city.

41 *And* as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded.

42 And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, The Lord be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.

18. *Why did Jonathan send the lad back to the city? 20:40*

Since no one else had come with Jonathan and the lad who fetched his arrows, Jonathan was safe in sending the lad back to the city so that he could have one more conversation with David. If anyone had come with them, Jonathan would probably have simply given the signal and then gone back to the city with the lad. Moreover, if someone had been watching the events, Jonathan would not have dared to bring David out of hiding. As they were alone except for the lad, Jonathan ordered the lad to leave them. After the lad left, David was free to come out of his hiding place.

19. *In what way did David exceed? 20:41*

The extreme warmth of the friendship of David and Jonathan found its expression on this occasion as they embraced one another and wept. Their weeping must have been filled with uncontrollable sobs. This condition continued for a time until finally David gained control of his emotions and led Jonathan to gain control of himself. The two were then able to talk about their affairs.

20. *What facts show the superiority of Jonathan's friendship with David? 20:42*

Jonathan had much to lose personally by befriending David. Events which were transpiring made it clear that David was the most outstanding citizen in Israel. Although Jonathan was probably unaware of David's being

anointed as king by Samuel, he must have realized that David was destined for a place of leadership in the kingdom. Jonathan did not try to press his claims to the throne but acquiesced to the Lord in the matter. Their friendship was bound by an oath which they swore "in the name of the Lord." Their prayer was that the Lord would be between them and between their houses forever. Their parting prayer is of the same spirit as that of Jacob and Laban as they separated. They gave us the Mizpah saying, "the Lord watch between me and thee while we are absent one from another" (Genesis 32:49). As Jonathan and David parted, they prayed that God would watch them while they went their separate ways. When they could no longer be together personally to counsel and aid each other, their prayer was for the Lord's abiding presence.

## CHAPTER 20 IN REVIEW

1. To whom did David go after he left Samuel? \_\_\_\_\_
2. From what feast was David absent? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Where did David say he was going? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Why did Saul think he was not at the feast? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Near what stone was David to hide? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How did Saul describe his wife? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What did Saul hurl at Jonathan? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Who sat by Saul's side at the feast? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Who went to the field with Jonathan? \_\_\_\_\_
10. What did Jonathan shoot into the field? \_\_\_\_\_