

Loyal  
1 Samuel 20:30-34; 41-42

Jonathan embellished the request (which both here and in v 6 is expressed by an infinitive absolute plus a perfect verb) by adding that David's brothers had insisted he attend. The king should not think his excuse was trivial! David's request to Saul was based on the possibility that he had found favor with Jonathan (v 29). Earlier David had told Jonathan that the king already knew that David had found just such acceptance with his son (v 3).

Body:

- I. Pick a Side v.30 1 Samuel 18:1-4
  - a. Father Son Divide
    - i. Saul's Anger burned against Jonathan
      1. While Jonathan had repeatedly referred to Saul as "my father," Saul referred to him neither as "my son" nor by his name. Saul accused Jonathan of being a comrade or ally of David, a friendship that should be embarrassing to him as it was embarrassing to the nakedness, or genitals, of his mother. Saul treated Jonathan as if he had been a mistake from the start!
      2. Furthermore, Saul distanced himself from Jonathan: no longer was the royal heir referred to as "my son" (cf. 14:39-42); he had now become the "son of a perverse and rebellious woman" (20:30).
    - ii. Choosing the son of Jesse to your own Shame
      1. First, he noted that Jonathan's scandalous betrayal was bringing about personal "shame." Second, in an attempt to elicit feelings of guilt, Saul noted that Jonathan's actions were also bringing shame on "the mother who bore you" (lit., "the shame of the nakedness of your mother"), that is, Ahinoam (cf. 14:50), whom he himself had just shamed by calling her "perverse and rebellious." Third, Saul appealed to his son's greed, noting that "as long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established" (v. 31).
      2. In an apparent effort to bring Jonathan back to his side, Saul appealed to three powerful motivators: shame, guilt, and greed
  - b. Family Insults
    - i. Mother
      1. Perverse - "bastard of a wayward woman"
        - a. His dear friend was called a son of Jesse and a son of death; Saul hated David so much that he called his own son by a foul epithet and tried to kill him. And these were reactions to a seemingly innocent request to attend a family worship service
        - b. Saul in his excitement puts the thought into coarse language
      2. Shame to you Mother's Nakedness

- a. Curse formula - to the shame of you yourself and of your mother's womb
    - c. Loss v.31
      - i. As Long as David Lives
        - 1. Your kingdom will not be established
        - 2. By Jonathan's friendship with David he was foolishly destroying his chance to continue the dynasty (the rejection of the dynastic ideal for Saul in 13:13-14 is Deuteronomistic)
        - 3. Saul now accused his dynastic heir of being in league with the very one whom Saul believed would destroy the family dynasty.
      - ii. Bring David to his death.
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- II. Ride or Die v. 32-34
  - a. Questions Saul 1 Samuel 19:4-5
    - i. Why should he be put to death
      - 1. The defense took the form of asking his father two parallel questions that hit at the heart of Saul's responsibilities as God's representative: "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" (1 Sam 20:32).
    - ii. What has David Done
      - 1. As king over God's people and thus chief enforcer of the Torah (cf. 1 Kgs 1:3), Saul must not execute the innocent (Exod 23:7), and David had not committed any capital offense.
      - 2. However, Saul was no longer acting as God's representative; matters of justice were being subordinated to the king's mad drive to eliminate
  - b. Evades Spear
    - i. Confirms Saul's Hatred
      - 1. Since Saul's son had chosen to identify himself with David, he must be treated like David.
    - ii. Does not eat second day of new moon
      - 1. tomorrow is the new moon
      - 2. His abrupt departure, without participating in the common meal, symbolized his anger and his sorrow. He grieved for David, just as Saul had known he would, at least according to David (v 3). Jonathan's anger in v 34 seems righteous while Saul's in v 30 is marked by fear and envy.
  - c. Grieved for David
    - i. Saul dishonored David
      - 1. The reason for Jonathan's understandable reactions is not one that could have been anticipated; Jonathan did not grieve because of the humiliating or murderous treatment accorded him by his father but because of "his father's shameful treatment of David." Jonathan's reaction thus serves as one of the purest displays of human loyalty found in the annals of human history.

### III. Loyal v.41-42

#### a. Friends

1. In the solitude of the empty field, David and Jonathan met together face-to-face. Expressions of respect and mutual commitment marked their encounter
- ii. Bowed
  1. Instead, he silently displayed subservience and utmost respect for his friend by bowing before Jonathan three times—the greatest number of times anyone in the Bible is depicted as performing this act in a single encounter
- iii. Fell on Face
- iv. Kissed
  1. Jonathan countered David's symbolic expression of subordination with one that implied acceptance as a respected peer—he kissed him (cf. 2 Sam 14:33). In this case kisses were exchanged because they also functioned as expressions of farewell (cf. Gen 31:55; Acts 20:37).
- v. Wept
  1. The observation “David wept the most” emphasizes David's loyalty and commitment to the heir-apparent of the Saulide dynasty

#### b. Between Me and You

- i. Safety - intactness, well-kept: α) with verbs of motion: with to reach a destination safely
  1. Jonathan sent David away in peace, as v 13 had promised he would. Their kisses expressed their love; their tears, their bitter sorrow. The deuteronomistic addition based their peace on the oath the two had sworn in the name of Yahweh (cf. vv 16–17).
  2. David he urged him to “go in peace”—an expression of goodwill used elsewhere in the Old Testament in situations involving extended or permanent separations (cf. Exod 4:18; 2 Kgs 5:19).
- ii. Sworn
  1. Sworn- may also be used to introduce the name of God as the witness and the guarantor of the oath
    - a. joined by the oath they swore in the Lord's name (v. 42). Furthermore, their commitment would be intergenerational, continuing between their “descendants forever.
  2. Me and You
  3. Descendants 2 Sam 9:13; 21:7

**20:30–34** When Jonathan lied to his father regarding David’s absence, “Saul’s anger flared up” (v. 30). Furthermore, Saul distanced himself from Jonathan: no longer was the royal heir referred to as “my son” (cf. 14:39–42); he had now become the “son of a perverse and

rebellious woman” (20:30). Saul now accused his dynastic heir of being in league with the very one whom Saul believed would destroy the family dynasty.

In an apparent effort to bring Jonathan back to his side, Saul appealed to three powerful motivators: shame, guilt, and greed. First, he noted that Jonathan’s scandalous betrayal was bringing about personal “shame.” Second, in an attempt to elicit feelings of guilt, Saul noted that Jonathan’s actions were also bringing shame on “the mother who bore you” (lit., “the shame of the nakedness of your mother”), that is, Ahinoam (cf. 14:50), whom he himself had just shamed by calling her “perverse and rebellious.” Third, Saul appealed to his son’s greed, noting that “as long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established” (v. 31).

Having thrust these three barbs into Jonathan’s soul, Saul then issued a royal command, ordering his son to “send and bring” David, “for he must die!” Surely Jonathan must have felt as though he had betrayed his father and dishonored his mother; surely he must have felt some urge to claim the amenities of royalty for himself. Any one of these emotions could have motivated him to break his commitment to David and obey his father’s edict.

Remarkably, however, Jonathan resisted all urges to the contrary (cf. Ps 15:4) and defended David. The defense took the form of asking his father two parallel questions that hit at the heart of Saul’s responsibilities as God’s representative: “Why should he be put to death? What has he done?” (1 Sam 20:32). As king over God’s people and thus chief enforcer of the Torah (cf. 1 Kgs 1:3), Saul must not execute the innocent (Exod 23:7), and David had not committed any capital offense.

However, Saul was no longer acting as God’s representative; matters of justice were being subordinated to the king’s mad drive to eliminate David. Since Saul’s son had chosen to identify himself with David, he must be treated like David. Thus, “Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him” (1 Sam 20:33). Though Saul’s spear missed him, Jonathan got the point—“his father intended to kill David.”

Immediately Jonathan left the room “in fierce anger” (v. 34) and spent the remainder of the day fasting and grieving. The reason for Jonathan’s understandable reactions is not one that could have been anticipated; Jonathan did not grieve because of the humiliating or murderous treatment accorded him by his father but because of “his father’s shameful treatment of David.” Jonathan’s reaction thus serves as one of the purest displays of human loyalty found in the annals of human history.<sup>1</sup>

In the solitude of the empty field, David and Jonathan met together face-to-face. Expressions of respect and mutual commitment marked their encounter. In the gravity of the moment David initially spoke no words. Instead, he silently displayed subservience and utmost respect for his friend by bowing before Jonathan three times—the greatest number of times anyone in the Bible is depicted as performing this act in a single encounter.<sup>827</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robert D. Bergen, [1, 2 Samuel](#), vol. 7, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 217–218.

<sup>287</sup> Amarna Letters indicate that multiple prostrations were a common means of expressing subservience and loyalty to an authority. A formulaic phrase often found in

Jonathan countered David's symbolic expression of subordination with one that implied acceptance as a respected peer—he kissed him (cf. 2 Sam 14:33). In this case kisses were exchanged because they also functioned as expressions of farewell (cf. Gen 31:55; Acts 20:37). The pathos of the moment is evident in the fact that they also “wept together.” The observation “David wept the most” emphasizes David's loyalty and commitment to the heir-apparent of the Saulide dynasty and thus blunts implied accusations that King David tried to exterminate his predecessors.

Jonathan seemed to understand that this encounter would be a watershed; never again would these two best friends enjoy an easy, informal camaraderie. In his final moments with David he urged him to “go in peace”—an expression of goodwill used elsewhere in the Old Testament in situations involving extended or permanent separations (cf. Exod 4:18; 2 Kgs 5:19). Though David and Jonathan would be physically separated from one another, they would remain inseparably joined by the oath they swore in the Lord's name (v. 42). Furthermore, their commitment would be intergenerational, continuing between their “descendants forever.” Having affirmed that commitment, the two friends left each others' presence for the next-to-last time.<sup>3</sup>

The wrath of Saul flames out upon his son: *Son of a rebellious slave girl!* Universal custom abuses a man by throwing opprobrium upon his parents. The son of a slave girl was of mean lineage; and in case the mother were rebellious, her son might be suspected of being a bastard.

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them was “At the feet of the king, my lord, seven times, seven times I fall” (cf. EA 234, 244, 250, 254, 270, 271, 286 in *ANET*, 483–90).

<sup>3</sup> Robert D. Bergen, [1, 2 Samuel](#), vol. 7, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 219.

Saul's anger did not allow him to reflect on the injustice of his abuse. *Do I not know that thou art a companion of the son of Jesse, to thine own shame and to the shame of thy mother's nakedness?* To revile a man by the nakedness of his mother is still common among the Orientals (Dought<sup>4</sup>y, l. p. 269). That a man may disgrace the womb that bore him is evident enough. But Saul in his excitement puts the thought into coarse language.—**31.** The reason for the anger is, that David is a rival for the throne: *For as long as the son of Jesse lives upon the earth, thy kingdom shall not be established*] the succession would naturally fall to Jonathan as the most capable, and probably the oldest of the sons of Saul. In the correct feeling that Jonathan will know where David is, Saul orders him to send and take him, adding: *for he is doomed to death*] cf. 2 S. 12:5.—**32, 33.** At Jonathan's question why this should be, Saul's rage gets beyond control: *And Saul raised the spear at him to smite him*] as he had attacked David.—*So Jonathan knew*] more evidence could scarcely be expected, *that it was determined by his father to put David to death.*—**34.** *And Jonathan rose from the table in hot wrath and did not eat bread on the second day of the month because his father had reviled him*] the result of the inquiry was not simply the discovery of Saul's purpose towards David, but had brought unexpected insult to himself.<sup>5</sup>

The verses give the account of a final interview, with renewed expressions of affection. They stultify the whole preceding account, however, and must be regarded as an interpolation. If it was so dangerous for Jonathan and David to be seen together before Saul's mind was fully known, it was more so after the open breach between him and his son. Jonathan's return to the city without his arms, after sending back the lad, would be an invitation to suspicion. The interview is moreover without a purpose. The solemn agreement had been made. The leave had been taken. Two seasoned warriors cannot be supposed to have so little steadiness of purpose that they must have one more embrace, even at the risk of their lives. For these reasons we must regard the paragraph as no part of the narrative just considered. Nor does it agree with any earlier part of the book. Its allusions to what took place in vv. 35–39 are unmistakable. We must therefore regard it as an editorial expansion, pure and simple.

**40.** The first thing is to get rid of the boy, and he is therefore sent with Jonathan's weapons to the city.—**41.** David then *arose from the side of the stone heap*] mentioned above as his hiding-place, *and fell with his face to the ground, and prostrated himself three times*] the occasion would not seem to admit of such exaggerated politeness.—*And each kissed his friend and each wept with his friend until ...*] a point of time seems to have been given, but is not now discoverable.—**42.** Jonathan dismisses David with a reminder of their covenant: *As to what we two have sworn, in the name of Yahweh, Yahweh will be between me and thee, and between my*

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<sup>4</sup>Doughty Travels in Arabia Deserta, by C. M. Doughty. Cambridge, 1888.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Preserved Smith, [\*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel.\*](#) International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1899), 193.

*seed and thy seed forever.* The Bedawy also says: There is none between us but Allah (Doughty<sup>6</sup>, l. p. 267).<sup>7</sup>

This is repeatedly used in a disparaging way to refer to David (cf. vv 30, 31; 22:7, 8, 13; 25:10; 2 Sam 20: 1). Jonathan began the answer, which he and David had agreed upon, by referring to his friend by his name (v 28). Jonathan embellished the request (which both here and in v 6 is expressed by an infinitive absolute plus a perfect verb) by adding that David's brothers had insisted he attend. The king should not think his excuse was trivial! David's request to Saul was based on the possibility that he had found favor with Jonathan (v 29). Earlier David had told Jonathan that the king already knew that David had found just such acceptance with his son (v 3).

Saul was not fooled for a moment. The king called his wife (Ahinoam?) a rebellious woman, and his oldest son was just like his mother (cf. Jdt 16:12)! Jonathan was accused of forsaking his father to whom, as son and subject, he owed allegiance. While Jonathan had repeatedly referred to Saul as "my father," Saul referred to him neither as "my son" nor by his name. Saul accused Jonathan of being a comrade or ally of David, a friendship that should be embarrassing to him as it was embarrassing to the nakedness, or genitals, of his mother. Saul treated Jonathan as if he had been a mistake from the start! By Jonathan's friendship with David he was foolishly destroying his chance to continue the dynasty (the rejection of the dynastic ideal for

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<sup>6</sup>Doughty *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, by C. M. Doughty. Cambridge, 1888.

<sup>7</sup> Henry Preserved Smith, [\*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel.\*](#) International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1899), 195–196.



Saul in 13:13–14 is deuteronomistic). Saul’s fear of David’s power anticipates what Jonathan reports in 23:17: “My father Saul knows you are going to be king.” Having called David “the son of Jesse” three times, Saul now indicated his intent to kill him referring to him as a son of death (v 31). Jonathan sharply questioned his father’s plan and thereby affirmed David’s innocence (cf. v 1, vv 8–9). When Saul picked up his spear, ready to kill his son because of his association with David, Jonathan knew his father’s true intent without a doubt. His abrupt departure, without participating in the common meal, symbolized his anger and his sorrow. He grieved for David, just as Saul had known he would, at least according to David (v 3). Jonathan’s anger in v 34 seems righteous while Saul’s in v 30 is marked by fear and envy. McCarter attributes Jonathan’s angry departure to Saul’s humiliation of him. In our understanding, Jonathan was more shocked at his father’s humiliation of David. His dear friend was called a son of Jesse and a son of death; Saul hated David so much that he called his own son by a foul epithet and tried to kill him. And these were reactions to a seemingly innocent request to attend a family worship service!<sup>8</sup>

But the story was expanded with vv 40–42a, which let us see the emotional parting scene between the two friends. Jonathan gave his weapons, or his gear, to his servant boy and told him to take them home, thus leaving him alone with David. Could he not have used this ploy to gain secrecy right away, or did this excuse seem cogent to the servant now that Jonathan had shot? David prostrated himself before Jonathan three times, displaying the same kind of courtesy he had shown in vv 1–3.

Jonathan sent David away in peace, as v 13 had promised he would. Their kisses expressed their love; their tears, their bitter sorrow. The deuteronomistic addition based their peace on the oath the two had sworn in the name of Yahweh (cf. vv 16–17). Yahweh was to protect not only the two principals, as in v 23; his protection would extend also to the descendants of both, as in vv 15–16. The word “forever” in v 42, as in v 15, means just what it seems to say.

### ***Explanation***

This fascinating and moving story plays an important function in the History of David’s Rise. We learn from it that David did not flee because of disloyalty or because of a desire for gain. Indeed, his innocence is repeatedly asserted in vv 1, 8–9, and 32. Saul, on the other hand, was driven by excessive fear and by a paranoid jealousy that would not even allow David to excuse himself from the king’s table to attend a family cultic function. Saul’s speech betrayed his failure. He called Jonathan a son of a rebellious woman, and he derided David three times as the son of Jesse. Saul’s intent and disdain climax in the exclamation: “You are a son of death!”

Jonathan, loyal to his father almost to a fault, was also close to David. He had brought David into a covenant with Yahweh, and Yahweh, therefore, would serve as a link between them as long as they would live. Jonathan, with David, developed a plan to keep David informed of his

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<sup>8</sup> Ralph W. Klein, [1 Samuel](#), vol. 10, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1983), 209.

father's intentions, and he responded to his father's name-calling with sharp questions: "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?"

David was properly respectful before the king's son; he depended on Jonathan's loyalty for his own safety. Yet his future career threatened to deny kingship to Jonathan and a dynasty to Saul. So it was not enough for Saul to get David out of his court; he must pursue him because of the threat he posed to Jonathan and the dynasty even after Saul would be gone. As David continues his flight, we know it is Yahweh who sends him safely on his way.

The deuteronomistic redactor left these themes and added to them. The reason why Saul's house lasted at all was because of David's exercise of steadfast love. David's model behavior (cf. 1 Kgs 15:5) merits emphasis. Through this theme the redactor was able to unite the pre-canonical documents we call the History of David's Rise and the Succession Narrative. In this final form of the text Jonathan recognized the coming kingship of David. He looked forward to a time when Yahweh would cut off all the enemies of David, such as Saul and the Philistines, so that David would be free for more peaceable pursuits. Jonathan prayed that Yahweh would be with David just as he had been with his father Saul. Yahweh was hailed not only as the link between David and Jonathan. He also stood as the guarantor of the relationship between David's house or descendants and those of Jonathan. Jonathan swore twice that he would keep David informed, and so safe from Saul's hand. The grounds for this oath lay in Jonathan's love. Yes, Saul's oldest son and presumptive heir loved David as himself.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ralph W. Klein, [1 Samuel](#), vol. 10, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1983), 209–210.