

# DAILY BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS

by

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Thirty-Fourth Week - Monday

## DAVID AND JONATHAN PART

*"The Jonathan said to David: 'Yahweh God of Israel is witness! When I have sounded out my father sometime tomorrow, or the third day, and indeed there is good toward David, and I do not send to you and tell you, may Yahweh do so and much more to Jonathan. But if it pleases my father to do you evil, then I will report it to you and send you away, that you may go in safety.' . . . Then Jonathan gave his weapons to his lad, and said to him, 'Go, carry them to the city.' As soon as the lad had gone, David arose from a place toward the south, fell on his face to the ground, and bowed down three times. And they kissed one another; and they wept together, but David more so. Then Jonathan said to David, 'Go in peace, since we have both sworn in the name of Yahweh, saying, "May Yahweh be between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants, forever."' So he arose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city" (1 Samuel 20:12,13; 40-42).*

David clearly saw that his life at Saul's court was ended and that it only remained for him to keep himself beyond the reach of Saul and patiently await the progress of events. In visiting Samuel at Ramah, Samuel probably counseled him with the same advice.

Nevertheless, David returned to Gibeah to see once more his beloved Jonathan, the friend and brother of his soul, and to obtain his sanction for the step he was about to take. The interview between these two generous and high-minded young men is deeply interesting. The goal of David was to convince his friend of the reality of the danger he was in and the necessity for his departure. Jonathan opposed this plan, partly from the love he bore to David and the pain he would feel in being separated for a long and indefinite period, and also because he was reluctant to judge harshly of his father. He could not bring himself to believe that after the oath which Saul had taken to make no attempt against David's life, he had any real intention to destroy him. Jonathan pressed the fact that he was in his father's confidence and would surely have known had any such intention existed.

The reader will do well to note the admirable delicacy of David's reply to this: *"Your father certainly knows that I have found favor in your eyes, and he has said, 'Do not let Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved.' But truly, as Yahweh lives and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death."* To avoid giving pain to him, David avoids implying or expressing that Jonathan's father had any mistrust of him and gives it quite another turn, as if Saul

concealed his designs upon David from his son only to spare his feelings.

Jonathan could not, however, be satisfied without further proof of his father's present hostility towards David. From hearing David's account of what transpired with Saul at Ramah (that the king had joined the prophets in singing the high praises of God), Jonathan believed that a more effectual change had been worked in him than David supposed. To satisfy him, David agreed to defer his flight. It was arranged that he should visit his family at Bethlehem and return in three days to his former place of hiding near the stone of Ezel. By a pre-arranged signal, Jonathan, uncertain whether he would be watched and thus making another meeting with David unwise, would then apprise him of Saul's reaction to his noticeable absence at the king's table.

The next day was the feast of the new moon, when the king was accustomed to entertain the high officers of his court. David, as Saul's son-law and a high military officer, had a seat at his table. Seeing his place empty, Saul made no remark, supposing that some accident prevented his attendance and that he would doubtless be present the following day, for two days were observed in honor of this feast. But still David was absent, and Saul casually asked Jonathan why the son of Jesse had not come. Jonathan answered that David had asked for, and obtained, his permission to attend a family celebration at Bethlehem.

On hearing this, the king could restrain himself no longer. Looking upon his son, Saul broke forth into violent and insulting abuse: *"You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness? For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, you shall not be established, nor your kingdom."* To any oriental nothing is so grievously insulting as a reproach cast upon a man's mother.

Jonathan seems to have already come to the conclusion that David indeed was the man chosen by God to reign. So now, in this trying moment, Jonathan ventured to speak for his friend, urging justly that a man was to be judged by his acts and intentions, and that those of David were laudable and pure. But Saul's furious response was to cast his javelin at his own son. But Saul missed his mark, and Jonathan, with no regard to the danger to himself, went out "in fierce anger," leaving his food untasted.

Early the next morning he went out with his bow into the field where David was hiding. According to their pre-arranged signal, Jonathan let loose his arrow in such a manner as to indicate that danger was in store. Then having sent the lad who fetched the arrows back to town, and with no one being in sight, the two friends met for what seemed to be a last farewell. David testified to the respect he had for Jonathan's high station by approaching him in the accustomed fashion of the orient., pausing and bowing at regulated intervals. But as they came nearer, everything but their heartfelt brotherhood was forgotten: "They kissed one another; and they wept together, but David more so." But time was precious and delay dangerous, so bidding each other a hasty farewell they separated. But a future day would come when they would meet one last time in the forest of Ziph.