



FEED MY SHEEP

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Issue #239

January 2019

Were David and Jonathan Homosexuals? *Part 11—The Covenants of the Bible*

At this point in this series, it will be helpful to review what we have learned so far, and as we review, we shall expand some of the previously-discussed concepts of covenants. We began by explaining the *importance* of the covenants. We discovered that unless we comprehend the covenants, we will not have the ability to make good sense of the Bible story and what it means for us today.

A major area of discussion was learning about the various *steps* which would have occurred when two Hebrew men of old made a covenant with each other. We learned that when the ceremony was completed, the two men called each other “friends.” We discovered, though, that the word “friend” implied so much more to them than the way we use the word so loosely today. For example, you go to a college football game with 80,000 other fans and you are sitting with a couple relatives or other people whom you have known for some time.

But then you also find yourself surrounded on both sides and in the rows above and below you with people whom you have never met before. But you are all cheering for your college team and you get to chatting with them during breaks; and by the end of the day, you go home and you tell your family that you made some new *friends* today.

It’s a very loose way that we define the word *friend*. Whereas, we learned in the last lecture that in the Hebrew culture—and many other ancient cultures as well—the word “friend” implied a much deeper bond between people.

We also examined the covenant made between Jacob and his father-in-law, Laban. Remember how Jacob

had fled with all his wives and material possessions away from Laban, and how the two of them ended up making a solemn covenant?

It is now necessary to briefly refresh in our minds those steps in covenant-making. Do you remember how we imagined that Frank and James were two Hebrew men of old who met to “cut” a covenant? As they did so, they exchanged some things. First, they exchanged their robes or coats. In those days, the robe, the outer garment, represented the person himself, his total personal identity. What the exchange signified was *the merging of their two separate identities into one*.

The second step was when Frank and James removed their belts and gave them to each other. That represented an exchange of *strength*. Because immediately after they gave each other their belts, Frank and James actually gave each other their weapons: their swords, their knives, their bows and arrows.

That meant that each pledged to the other all their ability, power and strength to protect the other from any and all enemies. It is important to remember that this type of covenant was a pledge to *last for life*, and often *beyond* that, meaning that it could be passed on to the offspring of the covenant-makers. It was that serious.

The next step in the ceremony was the shedding of blood and the pledge that accompanied it. Covenant means *cutting* and this was the actual cutting. This first cutting involved the sacrifice of one or more animals. They would cut the animals in half, then separate the halves so that there was sufficient space for both men to walk between the parted halves of the bloody animals.

This was a “walk through death,” as it were. Frank

and James, realizing that the halves of the dead animal represent each of them, they therefore make additional pledges to each other to the effect that “let me die a bloody death like this animal if I should ever break this covenant.”

Just as importantly, since the animal half which represents James is *dead*, it also represents the death of James, in the sense that James has died to his old identity, his old self; and James is now identifying with Frank, his covenant partner, in a *new* life.

Frank and James are not finished yet. The animal blood has already been shed, but now comes the shedding of personal blood. One purpose for this was to place a permanent mark on the body as a sign and seal of the covenant.

So they cut their hands or wrists, and then mingled the blood in the little ritual which—without the cutting—has come down to us today and we call it “shaking hands.” In the Bible it was called “striking hands.” The Bible says that *the life is in the blood*, (Leviticus 17:11), and therefore, the mixing of blood is the mixing or merging of two identities into one.

At this point in the ceremony, with witnesses still present, Frank and James now face each other for the exchanging of more of the terms and conditions of the covenant. They each in turn might say something to this effect:

“Frank, everything I own is yours: all my cattle, all my fields, all my orchards, all my vineyards. If you should ever need anything, it is our joint property. Just help yourself. And if I should die before you, all my children become yours to raise, and my wife is yours to care for and to provide for.”

The two becoming one means *everything* is shared, the good and the bad, the assets and the liabilities. Following that, the two covenant-makers then pronounced blessings and curses. Then came the big feast to celebrate this solemn covenant.

Usually the last thing done was to erect a monument or a marker. Its purpose was to serve as a reminder for many, many years to come both for themselves and for their heirs as concerning the seriousness and the permanence of the blood covenant. Now that the ceremony is all finished, Frank and James are known as friends.

I should emphasize that these covenants were often multi-generational. **This is very important.** It means that the yet unborn offspring were considered to be *heirs of those covenant promises*. That is to say,

the descendants of the covenant makers were considered to be the beneficiaries of the covenant which had been made by their ancestors because the future descendants were in their fathers. To further explain that in a Scriptural setting, look at...

Hebrews 7:5 And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:

6 But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.

7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.

8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he *receiveth them*, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.

10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.

The point of this passage for our purpose here are verses 9 and 10 where it demonstrates that even though the Levites, as a tribe, were five or more generations into the future from the time of Abraham, that it can truthfully be said that Levi paid tithes to Melchisedec because Levi was “in the loins,” a euphemism, meaning “in the semen of” or “in the reproductive power” of Abraham.

Future descendants of covenant makers can be bound by and be the beneficiaries of promises made hundreds—or thousands—of years before they were born! Do you now realize the power that can reside in a covenant?!!

We needed to review all that because in order to appreciate what is coming next, we need to have these features of covenant held firmly in our mind.

We have already looked at the covenants between Abraham and Abimelech, between Isaac and Abimelech, and between Jacob and Laban. The next one we shall examine is the covenant between David and Jonathan. You will want to be attentive to every detail of this story because this covenant is really about you.

Some of you who have been with us for many years will recall that we spent many months of lectures—actually a series of 54 lectures—on *The Char-*

acter of Saul and David. Obviously, it was a very in-depth study, but even so, while we did read over and expound on this particular passage at that time, we did *not* explore it from the perspective of covenants.

I think this story is going to amaze you, because now you have the background of how they made covenants. That will enable us to see clearly just what this was all about. These days it is almost necessary to make clear that one thing this was *not* about was David and Jonathan being homosexuals. You see, in recent decades, practicing homosexuals who claim to be Christians have been making attempts to justify their behavior by the Scriptures.

I trust I speak for all my readers when I say that we do not hate homosexuals. And it is our prayer that they would come to repentance. Some of them have claimed that the following verse, 1 Samuel 18:1, implies that David and Jonathan had an ongoing homosexual relationship. Let's scrutinize it so that we can discern that it teaches no such thing.

1 Samuel 18:1 And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

Those making that claim about this verse obviously know nothing of *covenants* because if they did, they would realize that this was speaking of covenant *friendship*, not a *physical* relationship. Moreover, we notice that the verse mentions that the *souls* of David and Jonathan were knit, were joined together, not their *bodies*. Souls or lives are joined together in covenant ceremonies, and that is exactly what happens next.

This scene happened right at the beginning of David's career. He had just killed Goliath and he had just been ordered to King Saul's court so the king could find out who this young giant-killer was. Well, he was just a teenager—probably about 17 years old—and he was from a peasant family of shepherds who lived near Bethlehem.

When David was finished presenting himself to the king, and as we see in verse 1, Crown Prince Jonathan immediately recognized a kindred soul in David. But King Saul's reaction to David was: "You're drafted, sonny boy!"

2 And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.

But at least as he drafted David, the king made him an officer rather than an enlisted man. Whether it

was on that very day or sometime afterward, we cannot say, but ...

3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

4 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.

Again, the fact that Jonathan stripped himself does not mean to nakedness. The robe was only the outer garment. This is *covenant-making* language, not a sexual thing by any stretch of the imagination! The girdle is, of course, the wide belt, from which were hung various weapons, and which symbolized a person's power and strength.

Now we do not know, whether at this particular time, David and Jonathan went through all the steps of the covenant ritual that *could* have been done. It just doesn't say. It was probably a more complete ceremony than is recorded. But whether they did or not, it appears that some of the details of their covenant were either worked out later, or—more likely in my view—they were reiterated and applied to the situation then at hand.

The situation was this. Once David was named as one of Saul's top commanders, he went forth and achieved great military success against the Philistines time after time. As we recall from our series on the character of Saul, King Saul had some very serious flaws. One was pride which often manifests as jealousy and envy.

I want to share with you one of the important differences between jealousy and envy. It is this. When a person is jealous of someone, they are *coveting* some possession or talent that the other person possesses.

A woman might have a jealous thought such as "Oh, Mary has that beautiful, new dressy outfit; I wish I had that!" Or a man might think, [pouting] "Gosh, my neighbor, Joe, just got that brand new fishing boat; I wish I had a boat like that."

In both cases, the heart attitude is that of resentment against the person who has what you want. In the case of King Saul, when there was a big parade to celebrate the victories of Commander David, the people were chanting over and over:

Saul has slain his *thousands*, but David has slain his ten thousands.

Saul has slain his thousands, but David has slain

his ten thousands.

Unfortunately, this really got under King Saul's skin. Because he was not able to rejoice with David and praise him for the victories that God had given through David, Saul got jealous. Jealous of David's military skill, to be sure; but more so, because he wanted to hear the praises of the people about *himself!*

Therefore, he got resentful and bore anger in his heart towards David. When jealousy is not checked, it can turn into its stronger brother, which is envy. Here is the difference. When you become envious, the resentment turns to anger, but it doesn't stop there. It grows from anger into hatred. And from there it turns to violence. So that the envious person doesn't just *resent* the other person. The envious person actually wants to *destroy* the work of the other person or the person himself.

In everyday, modern-day life, we can see myriad examples of this occurring. A factory worker resents his co-worker who always does such excellent work. His craftsmanship is so superior that he is continually getting praised and getting raises from the boss. If it becomes a situation of envy, the envious person will actually try to sabotage his co-worker's project in order to bring him down to his *own* level of incompetence.

In an office worker situation, an envious individual may start a whispering campaign to destroy the reputation of a co-worker of whom they are envious. Jealousy is [*pouting*] "Oh, he got a raise; I wish *I* had gotten a raise."

Envy is "Oh, he got a raise. I hate that jerk. I'm going to let the air out of his tires." Jealousy is sin in the heart. Envy is also sin in the heart, *plus* an overt or outward act of trying to destroy something or someone. Do you see the difference?

Later in chapter 18, King Saul's rage gets so out of control that he throws a spear at David. He continually sees David as his enemy from then on, and Saul is obsessed with killing David. Meanwhile, all David wanted to do was to serve his king to the best of his ability.

In chapter 19, Jonathan is able to talk to his father and persuade him at least temporarily that David has no evil intentions, and thus David was once again allowed to reside in safety in the presence of the king.

But that didn't last long. For soon afterwards, Saul tried to pin David to the wall with a javelin again. David escapes and we'll pick up the story again

in 1 Samuel, chapter 20 because here the story relates to the covenant again.

1 Samuel 20:1 And David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?

Jonathan tries to reassure David that surely he must be mistaken because Jonathan is sure that his father, the king, doesn't do anything without first letting the Crown Prince know about it.

But David tells Jonathan that he's fooling himself thinking that way. Because Saul knows that Jonathan has a very close relationship with David and so Saul is simply not going to tell him anymore that once again he plans to kill David. "I'm just a step or two ahead of death from your dad," David tells him.

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

In other words, because they were in blood covenant with each other, each owed the other all that he could do to protect the other's life, even to the point of sacrificing his own life. David is not asking *that* much, but he does come up with a plan.

(To be continued)

Note to readers: My 54-lecture series, *The Character of Saul and David* is available for **free** in both audio and printed format on my website. For reading or downloading the printed version, go to my website home page, click on Feed My Sheep; then click on the year 2002. Almost all the issues from #38, January 2002 through #123, February 2009 are part of that series.

To access the audio version, go to the home page and click on Media, then click on Podcasts, then scroll to near the bottom and click on "The Character of Saul and David Series." That will bring up descriptions of each of the 54 lectures with a link to begin listening.

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