

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

Covenant Research Study

COVENANT FRIENDSHIP IN THE TANAKH:

THE LOVE OF MEN FOR DAVID — SURPASSING THE LOVE OF WOMEN

Authority: Shmuel Aleph (1 Samuel) 18 • Shmuel Bet (2 Samuel) 1; 15; 23 • Melachim Aleph (1 Kings) 5

Three-Religion Audience: Judaism • Christianity • Islam

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HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT — TANAKH BOOK NAMES

Throughout this document, every book of the Tanakh is cited by its original Hebrew name first, followed immediately by the English name in parentheses. This is the standing citation standard of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution. The Hebrew names are the original names **Yahweh** gave these texts. They are used here alongside the English equivalents so that every reader — regardless of background — can follow the references accurately. This format is used consistently throughout — every scripture reference, every table, every section of this document. For example: **Bereishit (Genesis)**, **Shmuel Aleph (1 Samuel)**, **Rut (Ruth)**. The Tanakh books cited in this document are listed below.

Tanakh Books Cited in This Document:

Bereishit (Genesis) *abav (love) used for Jacob-Rachel; covenant narrative background*

Vayikra (Leviticus) *prohibition of male homosexual acts (18:22; 20:13); love the stranger as yourself (19:34)*

Bamidbar (Numbers) *one law for native and stranger (15:16) — covenant ground for Ittai's inclusion*

Devarim (Deuteronomy) *Yahweh's abav for Israel (7:8); Devarim 19:15 witness standard; covenant law*

Yehoshua (Joshua) *Archi territory — background on Hushai's origin (16:2)*

Shmuel Aleph (1 Samuel) *Jonathan-David covenant formation (18:1-4; 20:17; 20:42)*

Shmuel Bet (2 Samuel) *David's lament over Jonathan (1:17-27); Hushai (15-17); Ittai (15:18-22; 18:2); Barzillai (17:27-29; 19:31-39); the Three and Thirty (23:8-39)*

Melachim Aleph (1 Kings) *Hiram's covenant friendship with David (5:1); covenant brotherhood with Solomon (9:11-13); David's charge re Barzillai (2:7)*

Divrei HaYamim Aleph (1 Chronicles) *roster of David's Thirty (11); palace construction by Hiram (14:1)*

Mishlei (Proverbs) *abav in covenant friendship (17:9; 27:5; 27:17)*

Hoshea (Hosea) *Yahweh's abav for Israel (11:4) — covenant use of abav*

Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) *Yahweh's abav for Israel (31:3) — confirming abav's covenant range*

Rut (Ruth) *Ruth's covenant declaration (1:16-17) — structural parallel to Ittai's oath*

DOCTRINAL AUTHORITY — STANDING RULE OF MIQDASH BETHEL

The sole doctrinal authority of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution is the Tanakh — the Written Torah only. When this study references classical scholars, lexicographers, or historical commentators (BDB, HALOT, Gesenius, Matthew Henry, Dale Ralph Davis, Frank Moore Cross, or others), it does so strictly as *historical witnesses* — men who observed, recorded, or commented on the text from their own time and context. Their observations are cited where they corroborate what the Tanakh text itself already teaches through the semantics of the Hebrew language and the structure of covenant law. **Their opinions, rulings, and doctrinal positions carry no binding authority for this institution.** The Talmud, Church councils, and hadith are historical references only — never binding authority. Where a scholar's historical observation confirms the plain meaning of the text, that is noted. Where it does not, the Tanakh text alone governs.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15 — Evidentiary Standard

A single witness shall not testify against any person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established.

All conclusions in this document are established by a minimum of two independent witnesses drawn from the Tanakh text, Hebrew lexicography, and corroborated historical record.

INTRODUCTION: WHY THIS MATTERS TO ALL THREE TRADITIONS

One of the most striking declarations in all of scripture is the lament of a king over a fallen companion. In **Shmuel Bet (2 Samuel) 1:26**, David does not weep only for a warrior lost — he weeps for the irreplaceable covenant bond of a man who loved him with a love he declares surpassed the love of women. This is not erotic language. This is **covenant language** — and the Torah uses an entire network of Hebrew words to describe what that love actually means, how it was enacted, what it required, and why it stands as one of the defining models of covenant fidelity in the entire Tanakh record.

Modern readers have attempted to sexualize this relationship, importing categories foreign to the ancient Near Eastern world and directly refuted by the Torah's own legal standards. The covenant response to this distortion is not silence but **lexical and textual precision**. When the Hebrew words are examined under the Devarim 19:15 two-or-three-witness standard, the picture that emerges is one

of profound, life-risking, throne-sacrificing covenant fidelity between men — a form of love the Torah calls *ahav* (אַהַב), *hesed* (חֶסֶד), and *berit* (בְּרִית) — recorded with far greater theological weight than is commonly recognized.

This study examines five distinct covenant friendships involving King David: (1) **Yonatan (Jonathan)** — the pinnacle case; (2) **Hushai the Arkite** — the formal royal friend; (3) **Ittai the Gittite** — the Philistine who chose covenant loyalty; (4) **Hiram king of Tyre** — the international covenant friend; (5) **Barzillai the Gileadite** — the old man who gave everything. A sixth section examines David's **Thirty and Three** — the covenant brotherhood of arms.

PART I

THE COVENANT FRAMEWORK OF FRIENDSHIP IN THE TANAKH

I. The Hebrew Lexical Foundation

The Tanakh does not have a single word that maps neatly to the modern English concept of 'friendship.' Instead, it uses a constellation of terms that together define covenant relationship between human beings. Understanding these words is the prerequisite for reading every narrative that follows.

Hebrew Word	Strong's	Core Meaning	Covenant Dimension
אַהַב (ahav)	H157	Love; deep loyal affection	The love Yahweh has for Israel (Devarim 7:8); used for covenant friendship — not only romantic/erotic love
חֶסֶד (hesed)	H2617	Loving-kindness; covenant loyalty	The defining virtue of covenant relationship — faithful action within an obligatory bond; never mere sentiment
רֵעַ / רֵעָה (re'a / re'eh)	H7453 / H7463	Companion; fellow; royal friend	Re'eh = formal court title: 'Friend of the King'; re'a = neighbor/companion in covenant community
בְּרִית (berit)	H1285	Covenant; binding agreement	The formal structure through which all covenant relationships — including friendship — were established in the ANE

נֶפֶשׁ (nephesh)	H5315	Soul; life-breath; entire being	When nephesh is said to be 'bound' to another, it signals total covenant identification, not merely affection
נָעִם (na'am)	H5276	Pleasantness; delight; loveliness	The rare term David uses in Shmuel Bet 1:26 — speaks to the quality and beauty of Jonathan's covenant character
אָחִי (achi)	H251	My brother	Used between kings as covenant-equals; signals the mutual honor and standing of covenant friendship across political lines

As Frank Moore Cross observed in his foundational kinship studies (cited here as a historical witness to the plain reading of the text), *hesed* is rooted in kinship obligations. In ancient Israel, covenant friendship created a **kinship-by-covenant** that carried the same binding force as blood relationship. The ANE treaty structure underlying *berit* means that when a covenant was struck, it was a **binding obligation with defined terms, mutual loyalty, and life-or-death consequences for violation**.

PART II

YONATAN AND DAVID — THE PINNACLE COVENANT FRIENDSHIP

SHMUEL ALEPH (1 SAMUEL) 18–20 | SHMUEL BET (2 SAMUEL) 1:17–27

II-A. The Covenant-Making (Shmuel Aleph 18:1–4)

Shmuel Aleph (1 Samuel) 18:1–4 — And it was, when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. And Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt.

Every element of this passage carries legal and theological weight:

The Binding of Souls (Nephesh)

The phrase *"the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David"* uses the word *nephesh* (נֶפֶשׁ, H5315) and the verb *qashbar* (קָשַׁר, H7194) — to bind, tie. This is not a casual emotional connection. In the Tanakh, this binding language describes total covenant identification — the soul of Jonathan did not merely feel warmth for David; it was **legally and covenantally bound** to him.

The Exchange of Garments and Weapons — A Transfer of Royal Identity

When Jonathan stripped himself of his royal robe, his armor, his sword, his bow, and his belt, he was performing one of the most recognized covenant gestures in ANE royal protocol. The robe of a crown prince was his **badge of rank and right of succession**. By placing that robe on David, Jonathan acknowledged — before witnesses — that **Yahweh's** anointing on David superseded his own dynastic claim. This was a **political-covenant act with throne-level consequences**, performed freely out of love.

The Word Berit — Formal Covenant Language

The text explicitly states that *"Jonathan made a berit with David"* (Shmuel Aleph 18:3). The word *berit* (H1285) is the same term used for the covenant between **Yahweh** and Avraham (Bereishit 15), between **Yahweh** and Yisra'el at Sinai (Shemot 24), and for the Davidic covenant in Shmuel Bet 7. This is not a soft friendship language. It is the weightiest term in the entire Hebrew legal vocabulary.

II-B. The Covenant Under Pressure (Shmuel Aleph 20)

The depth of the covenant is tested in **Shmuel Aleph (1 Samuel) 20**, when Jonathan's own father Sha'ul seeks David's life. Jonathan places himself between his father's murderous intent and his covenant friend — risking his own life (**Shmuel Aleph 20:30–33**) and violating filial obligation to keep *besed* with David. This is the cost that made Jonathan's love extraordinary: not love that cost him nothing, but love that cost him his inheritance, his father's approval, and potentially his life.

Shmuel Aleph (1 Samuel) 20:17 — And Jonathan continued to make David swear by his love for him, for he loved him as his own soul.

Shmuel Aleph (1 Samuel) 20:42 — And Jonathan said to David: Go in peace. The two of us have sworn in the name of Yahweh, saying, Yahweh shall be between me and you, and between my offspring and your offspring, forever.

The covenant is sworn *b'shem Yahweh* — in the Name of **Yahweh** — and extended to offspring across generations. David later fulfills this oath by showing *besed* to Jonathan's crippled son

Mephibosheth (**Shmuel Bet 9**), restoring Sha'ul's land and giving him a permanent seat at the king's table. This is **covenant memory enacted** — obligation born not of sentiment but of sworn *berit*.

II-C. The Lament — Shmuel Bet (2 Samuel) 1:17–27

When Sha'ul and Yonatan fall on Mount Gilboa, David composes the **Qinah (Lament) of the Bow** — one of the most celebrated elegies in all ancient literature. The climactic declaration comes in verse 26:

Shmuel Bet (2 Samuel) 1:26 — I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; you have been very pleasant (na'am) to me; your love to me was wonderful (pala'), surpassing the love of women.

Hebrew Word	Strong's	Root Meaning	Covenant Significance
אָחִי (achi)	H251	My brother	Covenant-equal standing; used between kings in ANE treaties; Jonathan was David's covenant brother
נְעִמָּה (na'amta)	H5276	You were pleasant/lovely	A rare verb; not just emotional warmth — na'am describes the beauty of someone's covenant character
נִפְלְאוֹת (nifle'at)	H6382	Wonderful; extraordinary; beyond ordinary measure	Same root as pele — miracles; this love exceeded normal categories not because it was erotic but because it was covenant-absolute
מֵאַהֲבַת נָשִׁים (me'ahavat nashim)	H157 + H802	From/beyond the love of women	The comparison is to the love David received from women — heavily political, obligatory, and circumstantially motivated — vs. Jonathan's voluntary, unconditional, covenant-absolute love

What Does 'Surpassing the Love of Women' Actually Mean?

David's marriages were largely political and obligatory. Jonathan's love, by contrast, was **voluntary, costly, and covenant-absolute**. Jonathan had everything to lose — his throne, his inheritance, his father — and chose David anyway. This surpassed the highest degree of conjugal affection and constancy: not because it was erotic, but because it was **selfless, unconditional, and covenant-grounded in a way David's political marriages could never be**.

The Covenant Refutation of the Homosexuality Claim

The attempt to read this relationship as homosexual is both historically illiterate and Torah-refuted. First: the Torah explicitly prohibits male homosexual acts (**Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:22; 20:13**) — Torah **Yahweh** had already given at Sinai. Second: David had multiple wives and fell into grave sin over a woman (Bathsheba). Third: the word *ahav* is used without sexual connotation in covenant contexts throughout the Tanakh, including **Yahweh's** own ahav for Yisra'el (**Hoshea (Hosea) 11:4; Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 31:3**). Fourth: Jonathan was also married (**Shmuel Bet 9:3**). The comparison is a **fidelity comparison**, not a sexual one. Jonathan's covenant faithfulness exceeded what David experienced from the women in his life. Period.

PART III

HUSHAI THE ARKITE — RE'EH DAVID, THE ROYAL FRIEND

SHMUEL BET (2 SAMUEL) 15:32–37 | 16:16–19 | 17:5–14

Hushai the Arkite holds a title given to only one person in all of David's records: *Re'eh David* — "David's Friend". The Hebrew word *re'eh* (רֵעֵךְ, H7463) is not casual friendship language. In the ancient Near East, 'Friend of the King' was a **formal court title** — a designated role of intimate counsel and total trust, closer to the king than any political official.

Shmuel Bet (2 Samuel) 15:32–37 — And it was when David came to the top of the mountain, where he bowed himself to Elohim, that Hushai the Arkite came to meet him with his coat torn and earth upon his head. David said to him: If you pass on with me, then you shall be a burden to me. But if you return to the city and say to Absalom: I will be your servant, O king — then you can defeat Abithophel's counsel for me...

Hushai's mission was not a minor errand. Abithophel's counsel was regarded as the word of **Elohim** (**Shmuel Bet 16:23**). If his advice prevailed, David would be destroyed. Hushai's assignment was **life-or-death covenant service** at the risk of immediate exposure and execution.

Shmuel Bet (2 Samuel) 17:14 — And Absalom and all the men of Israel said: The counsel of Hushai the Arkite is better than the counsel of Abithophel. And Yahweh had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Abithophel, so that Yahweh might bring evil upon Absalom.

Hushai succeeds. He defeats Ahithophel's counsel — saving David's life, preserving the covenant dynasty, and fulfilling **Yahweh's** purpose against Absalom. This is covenant friendship operating at its highest level: **intelligent, sacrificial, and strategically deployed at total personal risk.**

PART IV

ITTAI THE GITTITE — THE FOREIGNER WHO CHOSE COVENANT

SHMUEL BET (2 SAMUEL) 15:18–22 | 18:2

One of the most overlooked covenant friendships in David's life belongs to a man who was not Israelite by birth: **Ittai the Gittite** — a Philistine from Gath commanding six hundred Gittite soldiers. When Absalom's revolt forces David to flee, David releases Ittai from all obligation:

Shmuel Bet (2 Samuel) 15:19–20 — Then the king said to Ittai the Gittite: Why should you also go with us? Return, and remain with the king, for you are a foreigner and also an exile; return to your own place. You came only yesterday, and shall I today make you wander about with us, while I go wherever I can? Return, and take your brothers back with you; and may Yahweh show you hesed and emeth.

Shmuel Bet (2 Samuel) 15:21 — But Ittai answered the king and said: As Yahweh lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely in whatever place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will your servant be.

This is the language of **covenant oath** — sworn in the Name of **Yahweh**, structured in the same pattern as Rut's declaration: "*where you go I will go, where you die I will die*" (**Rut (Ruth) 1:16–17**). A Moabitess chose covenant fidelity to Naomi. A Philistine chose covenant fidelity to David. **Both acts are recorded in the Tanakh as expressions of hesed that transcend ethnic and national boundaries.** David honored Ittai by giving him command of one-third of his army — equal to Joab and Abishai (**Shmuel Bet 18:2**). **Covenant fidelity trumps ethnic identity** — consistent with **Bamidbar (Numbers) 15:16**: one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you.

PART V

HIRAM KING OF TYRE — INTERNATIONAL COVENANT FRIENDSHIP

SHMUEL BET (2 SAMUEL) 5:11 | MELACHIM ALEPH (1 KINGS) 5:1 | 9:11-13

The record of David's international friendships is anchored by his relationship with **Hiram king of Tyre** — a Phoenician monarch who was not Israelite, did not worship **Yahweh**, and yet maintained a friendship with David that outlasted David's lifetime and continued through Solomon's reign.

Shmuel Bet (2 Samuel) 5:11 — And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, with cedar trees and carpenters and stonemasons; and they built a house for David.

*Melachim Aleph (1 Kings) 5:1 — Now Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon, when he heard that they had anointed him king in place of his father; for Hiram had always loved (*ahav*) David.*

The text uses the verb *ahav* (H157) for Hiram's relationship to David — the same word used for Jonathan's love, **Yahweh's** love for Israel, and covenant friendship throughout the Tanakh. The Hebrew is *ki ohev hayah Hiram le-David kol ha-yamim* — literally, "for a lover Hiram was to David all the days." This is *ahav* as covenant loyalty: a perpetual, life-spanning orientation of faithful alliance. Later, when Hiram corresponds with Solomon, he calls him "*achi*" — "my brother" (Melachim Aleph 9:13) — the covenant-equal language used between kings in ANE treaty texts.

PART VI

BARZILLAI THE GILEADITE — COVENANT PROVISION AT PERSONAL COST

SHMUEL BET (2 SAMUEL) 17:27-29 | 19:31-39

Among all of David's friends, **Barzillai the Gileadite** stands as perhaps the most humble and selfless. An 80-year-old man of great wealth from Rogelim, Barzillai supplies David's army with food and provisions during the most desperate moment of the Absalom crisis.

Shmuel Bet (2 Samuel) 17:27–29 — And it came to pass, when David came to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nahash from Rabbah of the Ammonites, and Machir the son of Ammiel from Lo-debar, and Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim brought beds and basins and earthen vessels, and wheat and barley and meal and parched grain and beans and lentils and parched seeds, and honey and curds and sheep and cheese of the herd, for David and for the people who were with him to eat; for they said: The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness.

This is *hesed* in its most elemental form: **seeing a need and meeting it**, without waiting to see which side would prevail. When David returns victorious and offers Barzillai a permanent place at the royal court, Barzillai refuses — his *hesed* was pure, given without calculation for reward. David honors this and promises to show *hesed* to his son Chimham. David's final charge to Solomon includes: "*show hesed to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite*" (Melachim Aleph (1 Kings) 2:7) — the covenant circle of loyalty extended to the next generation.

PART VII

THE THREE AND THE THIRTY — COVENANT BROTHERHOOD IN ARMS

SHMUEL BET (2 SAMUEL) 23:8–23 | DIVREI HAYAMIM ALEPH (1 CHRONICLES) II

Among all the covenant friendship stories in David's life, none captures **the depth of male covenant loyalty** more vividly than the account of Three of David's mighty men breaking through a Philistine garrison — **not for military strategy, but to fulfill a passing wish their king had expressed:**

Shmuel Bet (2 Samuel) 23:15–17 — And David longed and said: Oh, that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate! And the three mighty men broke through the army of the Philistines and drew water from the well of Bethlehem which was by the gate, and carried it and brought it to David. But he would not drink it, but poured it out to Yahweh. And he said: Far be it from me, O Yahweh, that I should do this. Is this not the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore he would not drink it. These things the three mighty men did.

David pours the water out before **Yahweh** as an offering — treating it not as water but as **blood**, the life-substance of men who loved him enough to risk death for a drink he did not even formally request.

He will not consume the life of his covenant brothers as a common thing. This is **ahav and hesed operating at the level of total self-giving** — and David's response honors it as a covenant sacrifice before **Yahweh** Himself. The catalog of David's Thirty in **Shmuel Bet 23** is a **covenant register of brotherhood** — men from Judah, Benjamin, the Transjordan, and non-Israelite nations, all bound to David by the covenant of shared danger and loyalty to **Yahweh's** anointed. Covenant loyalty is not ethnic. It is a choice.

PART VIII

THREE-RELIGION COVENANT AUDIT

JUDAISM | CHRISTIANITY | ISLAM

Covenant Principle	Judaism	Christianity	Islam
Covenant friendship (berit between men)	Central to rabbinic ethics; chevruta (paired Torah study) as modern expression of covenant intellectual friendship; Mishnah Avot: 'Acquire for yourself a companion (chaver)' — formal covenant study partner	NT upholds friendship: 'Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends' (Yochanan 15:13) — reflecting Jonathan's model. Paul's 'iron sharpens iron' echoes Mishlei 27:17	The Quran honors covenant loyalty between believing men (awliya — allies/protectors; Surah 9:71). Hadith records the Prophet's deep friendship with Abu Bakr — a bond described in covenant-loyalty terms parallel to the David-Jonathan model
Hesed — loyal-love beyond obligation	Chesed is one of the three pillars of Jewish ethics (Torah, avodah, chesed — Mishnah Avot 1:2). Covenant friendship is its human expression	Translated as 'mercy' or 'grace'; but the covenant dimension — faithfulness beyond circumstance — is preserved in NT friendship theology	Rahmah (mercy/compassion) in Arabic carries overlapping semantic range; covenant loyalty in Islamic brotherhood (ukhuwwah) parallels hesed in its communal binding function
'Love surpassing women' — meaning	No classical rabbinic source reads this as erotic; the comparison is fidelity vs. conditional, circumstantial love in a politically arranged world	Consistent Christian tradition reads this as the model for covenant spiritual brotherhood; the fidelity reading (not sexual) represents the historic mainstream	Islam holds male friendship as sacred and dignified; sexualization of this verse is rejected as a foreign Western imposition violating the plain covenant context
Covenant oath sworn in Yahweh's Name	Oaths sworn b'shem Yahweh are among the most binding legal acts in	The NT upholds oath fulfillment (Mattityahu 5:33–37); David's	Islam's legal tradition (fiqh) treats solemn oaths (yamin) as binding; the David-Jonathan

	Torah law (Vayikra 19:12; Bamidbar 30). Jonathan's oath was Torah-legally binding on David's descendants	fulfillment to Mephibosheth is cited as a model of covenant faithfulness	covenant would be recognized as a legally valid oath structure
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PART IX

COVENANT WITNESS — WHAT THE TANAKH IS ACTUALLY TEACHING

The Tanakh's record of David's covenant friendships is **theologically intentional** — placed in the narrative to demonstrate that **Yahweh's** covenant order produces a particular kind of man: one capable of total, life-risking, self-abandoning loyalty to another human being, grounded not in sentiment but in *berit*, not in obligation but in *ahav*, not in calculation but in *hesed*. The covenant witnesses are clear:

Witness	Covenant Act	What it Demonstrates	Torah Grounding
Jonathan / David	Throne surrendered; life risked; oath sworn b'shem Yahweh; perpetual covenant to offspring	Covenant love (ahav) is freely chosen, unconditional, self-abnegating, and surpasses politically-obligatory relational bonds	Berit H1285; ahav H157; hesed H2617; nephesh qashar H5315+H7194
Hushai the Arkite	Life-risking espionage mission; defeat of Israel's greatest counselor; intelligence relay at death's door	Covenant friendship is intelligent, strategic, and deployed at great personal cost for the covenant king's survival	Re'eh H7463 — formal royal title; hesed as active covenant service
Ittai the Gittite	Covenant oath sworn in Yahweh's Name; 600 soldiers committed; army command; life pledged in death or life	Covenant loyalty transcends ethnic identity; Bamidbar 15:16 — one law for native and stranger — is lived in Ittai's fidelity	Ahav as cross-ethnic covenant bond; echo of Rut's covenant declaration
Hiram of Tyre	Lifetime of material support; palace construction; cedars from Lebanon; political alliance sustained across two reigns	Yahweh's covenant king draws international resources into His purposes; ahav as political-covenant friendship between nations	Ahav H157: 'Hiram loved David all the days' — covenant loyalty language applied internationally

Barzillai the Gileadite	Food and supplies at great personal cost during crisis; refusal of royal reward; covenant to offspring	Hesed is given without calculation; covenant loyalty does not wait for a favorable outcome before committing	Hesed H2617 as practical provision; David's covenant promise extended to offspring (Melachim Aleph 2:7)
The Three Mighty Men	Broke through Philistine garrison for water; David poured it before Yahweh as covenant blood	Covenant brotherhood produces self-giving love exceeding military obligation; David honors it as sacrifice before Yahweh	Nephesh risked freely; David's response: 'Is this not the blood of men?' — the highest covenant honor language (Shmuel Bet 23:17)

Summary Covenant Declaration

The Tanakh's record of David's covenant friendships carries a single, irreducible message: **Yahweh's** covenant order produces men capable of Jonathan's oath, Hushai's courage, Ittai's crossing, Hiram's lifetime loyalty, Barzillai's provision, and the Three's midnight breach of a Philistine garrison. This is the Torah's vision of covenant manhood — **defined not by sentiment alone but by berit, ahav, and hesed enacted at full cost**. The love David received from these men was a different category of love: **covenant-grade loyalty that no circumstance, no threat, and no political calculation could dissolve**. And that is precisely why David declared it wonderful.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The Tanakh uses ahav (H157) for Jonathan's love for David, Yahweh's love for Israel, and Hiram's love for David. What does this tell us about the spectrum of covenant relationships the word covers — and what does this say about the modern tendency to reduce ahav to romantic or erotic love?
2. Jonathan voluntarily surrendered his right to the throne — which he knew would go to David. What does this level of covenant self-abnegation demand of a person? What modern relationships require this kind of sacrifice?
3. Both Ittai the Gittite and Rut the Moabitess were foreigners who made covenant declarations using nearly identical language. What does the Tanakh teach about covenant loyalty crossing ethnic and national lines?

4. David poured out the water his Three Mighty Men risked their lives to bring him, as an offering to Yahweh. What does this response reveal about how covenant love should be received — and the danger of consuming covenant loyalty as a personal benefit?

5. The formal title Re'eh David (David's Friend) was a court office. In modern covenant community life, should the role of 'covenant friend' — someone who speaks truth to leadership at personal cost — be formalized? What does Yonatan's and Hushai's example demand?

SCRIPTURE INDEX

Reference	Subject
Shmuel Aleph (1 Samuel) 18:1–4	Covenant-making; Jonathan's soul bound to David's; berit sworn; exchange of royal garments
Shmuel Aleph (1 Samuel) 20:17	Jonathan swears covenant love for David as his own soul
Shmuel Aleph (1 Samuel) 20:42	Covenant oath sworn b'shem Yahweh; extended to offspring forever
Shmuel Bet (2 Samuel) 1:17–27	David's qinah (lament) over Sha'ul and Yonatan; 'your love surpassing the love of women'
Shmuel Bet (2 Samuel) 9:1–13	David fulfills covenant to Jonathan by showing hesed to Mephibosheth
Shmuel Bet (2 Samuel) 15:19–22	Ittai the Gittite's covenant oath to David; 'in death or life, there your servant will be'
Shmuel Bet (2 Samuel) 15:32–37	Hushai the Arkite dispatched as covenant double agent against Absalom
Shmuel Bet (2 Samuel) 16:16–19	Hushai enters Absalom's council; title re'eh David confirmed in text
Shmuel Bet (2 Samuel) 17:14	Yahweh defeats Ahithophel's counsel through Hushai's intervention
Shmuel Bet (2 Samuel) 17:27–29	Barzillai the Gileadite provides food and supplies to David in crisis
Shmuel Bet (2 Samuel) 18:2	Ittai the Gittite given command of one-third of David's army, equal with Joab
Shmuel Bet (2 Samuel) 19:31–39	Barzillai refuses reward; David extends hesed to his son Chimham
Shmuel Bet (2 Samuel) 23:13–17	The Three break through Philistine garrison for water; David pours it out before Yahweh

Shmuel Bet (2 Samuel) 23:8–39	The roster of David's Thirty — covenant brotherhood in arms across ethnic lines
Shmuel Bet (2 Samuel) 5:11	Hiram king of Tyre sends cedar logs and craftsmen for David's palace
Melachim Aleph (1 Kings) 5:1	Hiram 'always loved (ahav) David' — perpetual covenant friendship language
Melachim Aleph (1 Kings) 9:11–13	Hiram and Solomon as covenant brothers (achi); continuation of David-era friendship
Melachim Aleph (1 Kings) 2:7	David charges Solomon to show hesed to the sons of Barzillai — forever
Vayikra (Leviticus) 18:22; 20:13	Torah prohibition of male homosexual acts — refuting modern misreading of Jonathan-David
Bamidbar (Numbers) 15:16	One law for native and stranger — the Torah ground for Ittai's inclusion in covenant community
Rut (Ruth) 1:16–17	Ruth's covenant declaration — structural parallel to Ittai's oath in Shmuel Bet 15:21
Hoshea (Hosea) 11:4	Yahweh's ahav for Israel — confirming ahav's non-erotic covenant range
Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 31:3	Yahweh's ahav for Israel — 'I have loved you with an everlasting love'

COVENANT AUTHORITY STATEMENT

*Authority: The Tanakh — The Written Torah Only. **Yahweh** (יהוה) and **Elohim** (אֱלֹהִים) alone. Nothing supersedes it. The Talmud, Church councils, and hadith are historical reference only — never binding authority. Scholars and commentators are cited as historical witnesses to what the text says — not as doctrinal authorities. Three-Religion Standard: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The Two and Three Witness Standard of Devarim 19:15 governs all Miqdash Bethel covenant research documents.*

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