

# The Sunday School Lesson.

SERIES FOR 1895.—FOURTH QUARTER.

## STUDIES IN JEWISH HISTORY.

David and Jonathan.

December 15, 1895.

### LESSON XI.

SAMUEL XX. 32-42.

#### INTRODUCTION.

David and Jonathan, in their example, show to us the possibility of human friendship.—Is there, indeed, "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother?" Is there, between man and man or woman and woman, an actual love, not selfish and not sexual, yet stronger than the bond of blood relationship,—such a "delight in love" as the poet describes:

"Two souls with but a single thought;  
Two hearts that beat as one."

It is common enough to doubt the existence of such friendship. Skepticism of unselfish friendship is expressed in many proverbs. The Italians say: "He who has florins will have friends." The Spaniards: "The dead and the absent have no friends." The Englishmen say: "Friends agree best at a distance." The French say, after Rochefoucauld: "We love everything on our own account." The Americans say: "Look out for Number One."—To this skepticism of the reality of friendship the idyllic story of David and Jonathan is perhaps the best answer to be found in the world's literature.

#### LESSON STORY.

1. Jonathan Intercedes for David.—vs. 32-34.

The scene is a feast in the royal palace at Gibeah; the second day of the three days' feast to celebrate the beginning of a lunar month. King Saul, now the luxury-lover, sits on his throne next to the wall, with a spear or javelin in his hand, the sign of his royalty. Men only are present. Next to the king, in the place of honor, sits Jonathan, the king's oldest son, the heir apparent. Next to him is a vacant seat. Next to the vacant seat sits Abner, the general of the army. Then, according to their rank, are ranged a large company of courtiers and army officers.

The one vacant place is the one notable thing at this feast. If it were not for that unoccupied space the feast itself would have long since gone into complete oblivion.

David, according to the royal custom, should have been in that place. As the husband of the king's daughter, his place was next to that of Jonathan.

Truly, remarkable things have happened to the son of Jesse since we last saw him, a year ago. His sudden popularity, caused by his victory over Goliath, awakened an insane envy in the heart of the king. In the expectation that he would perish in the attempt the king offered him his daughter as the price of the lives of a hundred Philistines; and David soon had slain two hundred of his country's enemies. The king's daughter was given to him; but this aroused the yet more virulent hatred of the king. Saul has in his rage attempted to take David's life; David fled to Samuel at Ramah. Saul pursued him, thirsting for his blood; but the spiritual atmosphere surrounding the aged prophet struck terror into his heart and turned his crazed cruelty into crazed repentance. Saul returned to Gibeah, with profession of friendship for David.

Meanwhile Jonathan had become David's sworn and fervent friend. The two were of kindred nature. Both are surpassingly valiant in warlike service of their country. Jonathan's soul was knit to David's soul, and he loved him as his own soul. Jonathan, generous himself, cannot, as yet, be convinced that his father is really nursing a murderous purpose toward David.

David, presumably in answer to a royal summons, returned to Gibeah to attend the royal feast. But he has convincing reasons for believing that Saul's professions of friendship are deceptive. He obtains a private interview with Jonathan, and his friend agrees with him that it is advisable for him, on the first day of the feast, to attend the festival in his own family at Bethlehem; Jonathan promises meanwhile to sound his father, and on the morning of the third day of the feast, by a preconcerted signal, inform David whether it is better for him to take part in the royal feast on its last day, or to hasten beyond the reach of the royal anger.

These facts enter into the explanation of that vacant place between Jonathan and Abner.

The first day of the festival passed and King Saul asked no question in regard to David's absence. He assumed, the feast being in a sense religious, that ceremonial uncleanness had prevented David's presence on the first day; and that, his purification accomplished, he would be present on the second day.

Now the second day has come, but no David appears. Saul asks Jonathan for an explanation of his friend's absence; for the king knows of the extraordinary friendship between Jonathan and David. And Jonathan tells him that David had sought his permission to participate in his home-feast in Bethlehem, and he, as one having royal authority for such a courtesy, had granted him the fraternal permission.

The king's anger at once blazed forth. He can govern neither his temper nor his speech. He charged even Jonathan with such a conspiracy as was never heard of,—a conspiracy to deprive himself of the throne, in behalf of this son of Jesse. Saul demanded of Jonathan that he shall at once bring David into the royal presence, that his life, which stands in the way of Jonathan's succession, may be cut off.

At this point the brave and generous Jonathan ventured to speak an appealing word for his friend. *Wherefore should he be put to death? What hath he done?*

The appeal was to Saul's sense of justice. Not one charge had ever been made, not a suspicion had been raised, against David. He had craved no favor; he had reluctantly accepted the honors thrust upon him; he had been the bravest of the brave in fighting his country's battles under the king. This the nation knew, this Saul knew.

But this reasonable appeal was to an unreasonable man; to a man now under control of the Furies. Saul's reply to Jonathan was such a violent reply as he had once made to David, when the youthful harper was trying with music to pacify the disordered spirits of the desponding king. *Saul cast his spear at him to smite him.*

What must the feasters now think of the king? Such a frenzy of evil temper as prompts a father to attempt to take the life of his own son, even while he is trying to clear that son's succession to the throne, is beneath the dignity of even a barbarian king.

Jonathan, in the horror and confusion which have come to the feast, fled from the banquet hall. Two seats were now vacant at the feast.

And Jonathan's keenest grief, we are told, was not for himself, but because of the shameful wrong done to his friend David.

2. David by a Strategy Warned of his Danger.—vs. 35-40.

It now remains for Jonathan to communicate with David. He waits till the morning, the time agreed upon. Jonathan had expected to tell his friend that his father's pretended favor toward him was real and escort him safely to his place at the table on this last day of the feast. He has instead a very different story to tell his friend.

Jonathan takes with him a lad, to carry his bow and arrows. He goes near to a certain rock or mound, named Ezel, not far away, where it has been agreed he is to find David. To some secret crevice in the rock, or hiding-place in the cairn, whichever it may be, David has come in the night.

What an eager listener for every sound was David in his chosen prison-house. Jonathan had agreed with David that, as his boy went before him to bring back his arrows, he would send an arrow on the hither side of the boy if it was safe for David to return; and on the farther side of the boy if it was advisable for him to flee. And he had agreed also, if David could not safely use his eyes to behold his manner of shooting the arrows to interpret the same in words which his hidden friend could not misapprehend.

And these were the ominous first words David heard his friend speak: *Is not the arrow beyond thee?*

The whole dreadful story was thus told. Jonathan had shot the arrow beyond the boy.

Jonathan then shot at a distance the three arrows agreed upon, saying at the end,—apparently to the boy but really to the eager ears of his endangered friend,—*Make speed, haste, stay not.* These words plainly tell David that soon the emissaries of the enraged king will be on his track.

Jonathan then, having completed what to the lad seemed but a customary exercise in archery, gave his bow and arrows, his "artillery," as it was then reckoned,—into the hands of the boy, and sent him with his burden back to the citadel.

3. The Parting of the Friends, vs. 41, 42.

Now that they are left alone the two friends are prompted by their intense affection to indulge in the dangerous luxury of a farewell. David comes from his hiding-place on the south side of Ezel, and going toward Jonathan falls on his face before him, and three times repeats the humble obeisance. This is the Oriental expression of reverence and gratitude. It is in this case no meaningless form. David sees before him such a friend as human nature can scarcely parallel. Jonathan has favored David against his father; nay, he had favored David against himself. He has recognized in his friend one to whom, if the will of Jehovah shall so decide, he will gladly yield his title to a throne.

The two men then wept, *wept with one another*, wept in each other's arms; and their weeping was intensified by the passionate kisses of unselfish affection. Here were the two bravest men of the kingdom in their parting hour weeping like children. The excess of David's sorrow is quaintly expressed in the words, *David exceeded*—that is, he passed beyond the bounds of self-control; to use similar modern idiomatic phrasing, he broke down. He had no courage or will left in him.

Jonathan soon spoke the words which recalled the friends to their danger. *Go in peace*, said the older friend. He then reminded David of their covenant of friendship before made; the covenant was now, in G-d's presence, renewed. *The Lord shall be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed, forever.*

Jonathan plainly believes in David's great future; he supplicates that David will, for Jonathan's sake, remember his friend's children when he comes into the place toward which Providence, by a hidden way is leading him. It is pleasant for us to anticipate the future of David, so far as to recall that, to the last, he was faithful to this vow of friendship to Jonathan's children.

The friends separated. David, an

exile to the wilds, went forth to many perils and desperate fortunes. Jonathan returned to his father's court to fulfill trying patriotic services, and nobly fulfil his mission as David's friend.

#### TEACHING POINTS.

INTRODUCTION.—Carefully read the 1st, 10th and 20th chapters of 1 Samuel; also 1 Sam. xxiii. 16-18; also David's beautiful elegy, 2 Sam. i. 17-27. "One feature of the friendship of Jonathan and David had no parallel in classic times; it was friendship between two men, of whom the younger was a most formidable rival of the elder."—Blakie. Jonathan is the ideal friend. Explain why the place of David at the royal feast was between the places of Jonathan and Abner. Explain why David's place was now empty. Jonathan had the moral and physical courage to speak calm and just words in behalf of his absent friend. Saul, with a jealousy that took from him his sanity, could not brook even from his son a word in David's favor. He tried in his anger to do a deed which, if he had accomplished it, would have made his dark future yet more dark. His unbecomingly rage took from Jonathan the last vestige of hope that David could ever find security in his father's presence.

(2) V. 35-40. David by a stratagem is warned of his danger. Strategy was advisable, because the royal castle and its vicinity were filled with spies. David had won the people's favor; but Saul still controlled the army.—The stratagem was adroit; the two friends were skilful in the diplomacy, as well as brave in the action, of martial warfare.—In the boy we have an example of one fulfilling a great purpose, of which he has himself not so much as a hint.

(3) V. 41-42. The parting of the friends. The intense parting scene from Jonathan and David is a specimen scene from Oriental life, both ancient and modern. It is also true to the human nature throughout the world.—Two strong men were for the time swayed by emotions of unselfish friendship stronger than their were.—They were faithful to their friendship to life's latest day.—To find a friend, after this pattern, one must seek a friend. There is, for every one who is desiring of such a friend, no benefactor, a friend to be found, who will do more service, and live more and stick faster, than an average blood-brother.

#### The Pleasures of Poverty.

When husband and wife are true hearted, there is no greater happiness than a few deprivations and hardships in the commencement of their married life. It is a great thing for each to realize that he or she is sacrificing something for the other. The wife came with empty hands to a husband who had no rich gifts to bestow; but while she is struggling and saving, and he is toiling and denying himself, the consciousness of doing it for the other's sake confers a happiness nothing can equal. It will be in more prosperous days alone, perhaps, that both will realize the pleasures of the poverty they endured in youth. In that grand new house there is nothing lacking that taste can devise or wealth can procure. Yet, amidst the splendors and delights, the hearts of both—the wife's oftentimes, without doubt—will turn with wistful affection to the little home of old times, poverty stricken and inconvenient as it was. The hardships and discomforts endured within its walls have passed away like mist before the sunshine, and memory only recalls the delights of contriving, managing and arranging. The fun enjoyed over amateur attempts at carpentering and surprises in cookery; the brief, sweet holiday stolen from weeks of toil, saved for so anxiously, and looked for so eagerly—these and a hundred other simple joys, are the pleasures of poverty, in fact, undreamt of by the rich and worldly.—*Christian Work.*

#### Work for Eight Hours.

Eight hours' work is enough for any man or woman. There may be, and no doubt is, difficulty in applying the system to several occupations; but in the majority of trades and professions the eight-hour system can be put into vogue with very great advantage to both employer and employed. All men who do eight hours' work per day for six days in the week do more than justify their existence. Taking it all in all, we may keep our minds on eight hours as a fair day's time for work. We may consider justly that a person who works hard and conscientiously for eight hours has little to be ashamed of, and that for health's sake he has done what is near to the right thing; if it takes an hour to get to and from work, two hours for meals, three hours for reading or recreation, and one hour for rising and going to bed, including in this the daily bath

which is so essential to health, he is in good form for good health. It matters little, then, what his occupation may be since this laying out of time is well laid out for mind and body.—*Bakers' Journal.*

#### Taking a Bath in Japan.

We made our host understand what we wanted, and soon all hands were busy bringing wooden pails of water into the yard. We noticed that with each pail arrived half a dozen inquisitive-looking natives, who had evidently scented some novelty in the air. At last the water was ready, and we were told that we could have our bath. "But what of all these people," we asked, pointing to the crowd of women and children assembled in the yard. "Oh, they've come to see," was the reply. Now Englishmen, as a rule, are modest beings, and I fancy that most men would feel a certain amount of bashfulness if called upon to stand up and bathe in the presence of fifty women and children, so M. whispered to me, "I'm going to bed dirty tonight unless those people clear out." I told him that he must not think of such base conduct, and reminded him of the story in the "Pink Wedding" of the gentleman who refused his bath in the presence of the moozmi attendant; how she went out and told her friends that the poor man was possessed of a caudal appendage; and how he had to flee the village to prevent maltreatment as an agent of the devil. My friend was persuaded, and we "stripped to the buff." As each garment came off the crowd closed in, and the women strove among themselves for the pleasure of pouring water down our backs.—*The Gentleman's Magazine.*

#### A BREATH OF FRESH AIR.

If kept in one room at any occupation whatsoever, but particularly when the employment is mental, a most reviving and restful practice is that of going into the pure atmosphere of an unused room, or out into a sunny corner of the piazza, and there, after first emptying the lungs of the foul air they contain, to take in two or three breaths of oxygen before going back, refreshed, to one's work. Care should be taken, however, not to inhale air that is too icy into the lungs.

How necessary a complete ventilation of the lungs really is may be more fully appreciated when it is better understood how very possible it is to contract malaria from the impurities of one's own body. The common belief that when one is surrounded by pure air one will be kept free from all such evils, will not hold good for those who use only the upper part of the lungs in breathing, and who never thoroughly rid these organs of foul air, which in time vitiate the blood and produces those mysterious malarial symptoms that the patient cannot account for.

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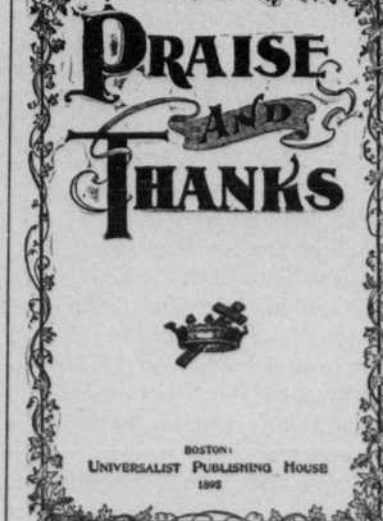
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