

## ***B'riyth* — Anatomy of a Blood Covenant**

*The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David and he loved him as his own soul; ...Then 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, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt (1 Sam 18:1-4).*

2 Sam 9:3-7 is the result of the covenant they made in 1 Sam 18:1-4. When they made a covenant, it reached to their children also. Shaul's relatives fled because they thought David was after them. 2 Sam 9:8 — Mephibosheth considered himself a *dead dog* in David's sight. But King David wasn't concerned about how bad or how good Mephibosheth was; his main concern was getting connected to a son of Jonathan, his blood-brother. He felt obligated because of the covenant he made with Jonathan, as he said in 2 Sam 9:7. Isn't that amazing? It is so honorable that people would keep a covenant.

It is clear in 1 Sam 18:1-4 that there was a common bond of love between David and Jonathan, a mutual respect. They made a decision to engage in a blood covenant. Some of the steps of that kind of covenant are mentioned in 1 Sam 18:3-4. There are several steps to making the kind of covenant the Scriptures talk about. Afterward, those unborn at the time they made the covenant are also included in it. This applies to us — when our Master died on the cross, we were included. *He died for all (2 Cor 5:14-15)*. We are His offspring, according to Isa 53:10.

As time went on after the covenant was made, both Jonathan and Saul died (1 Sam 31:12). The rest of Saul and Jonathan's family scattered, as they were made to think that King David was after them. Years went by until, one day, King David was reminded of his covenant with Jonathan, probably because he looked at his hand.

In blood covenants, they'd always make a little cut in their hand, right in the center, and they'd put their hands together, and that was a *blood covenant*. You'd still see the scar in your hand years later, and that would remind you of your covenant. It would

remind you of the blood — the life — that had mingled with that of another, symbolizing two lives becoming one.

So when David found out that Jonathan had a son named Mephibosheth, he sent for him. It didn't matter that he was lame in both of his feet. That is why Mephibosheth referred to himself as *a dead dog*. But King David was not concerned about that. What he was concerned about was the covenant he had made with his father, Jonathan. Then in 2 Sam 9:10-13, you can see that Mephibosheth began to sit at the king's table. David's servants took him in and cared for him. David said, "Mephibosheth shall eat at my table like one of the king's sons." Isn't that amazing? So that is the result of a covenant — *b'riyth*, as in the name we gave to David ben B'riyth of Gad. *B'riyth* means to cut a covenant by the shedding of blood.

1 Sam 18:4 shows the first of several steps involved in cutting a blood covenant in Israel. Our covenant means the same thing today, though we don't go through the ritual of it as David and Jonathan did.

### Step 1: The Robe

*And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David (1 Sam 18:4a)*

First, you'd take your robe off and give it the other. Then the other person would take his robe off, and give it you. Today we could relate it to our jackets — we'd take our jackets off, and I would have his jacket, and he would have mine. This represents our *selves*, that we have committed ourselves to each other.

### Step 2: The Belt

*And his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt... (1 Sam 18:4b)*

Next we would take our belts off, and exchange them. Your belt symbolizes your strength and power. Exchanging belts is saying, "Anyone who touches you, touches me."

In exchanging belts they are saying, “I will defend you.” Men wore weapons around their belt, which is even a common practice today. But our weapons are spiritual.

### Step 3: The Split Animals

After that has been done, they would kill an animal such as an ox or a calf. They would cut it in half, right down the center, and they would put the two parts opposite each other in order to form two walls of blood. Then they would walk between the two walls of blood in a figure-eight pattern, so that they would be able to look at each other continually. They stand facing each other, and say two things as they point to the two bloody sides of the wall:

- 1) *I die to all my rights and privileges, and I vow to be totally loyal to you.*
- 2) *If I should break the covenant promise, may God do to me what we have done to these animals.*

That is what a blood covenant actually means. Jer 34:18-20 is the same kind of covenant as our Father made with Abraham in Gen 15:9-21, when He said, “*I will give your descendants an enemy-free land, forever.*” But it hasn’t been fulfilled yet, obviously, since Israel has had continual wars. They were always having tribal wars, and so our Father had to send them off the land, and scatter them among the nations.

### Step 4: The Bonded Hands

In this step, they would cut themselves. *We have to cut ourselves.* You might wonder where the handshake comes from. It’s related to this, and so is the act of raising your right hand in court. It can be traced back to this step of making a blood covenant. People would take a sharp blade and give their palms a small slit, and while the blood flowed, they would clasp their hands together. The scars would always be there to remind them of that covenant, just as our Master’s scars remained even after His resurrection.

### Step 5: The Memorial Meal

The last step of the covenant finalizes the ceremony with a memorial meal. They would put a piece of bread in the other's mouth and give each other some wine, saying in effect, *"I give my body and blood to you."* That is what our Master meant when He said, *"This is My body and blood."* From then on, they would be known as blood brothers, or in the new Israel, as blood brothers and sisters. They would repeat the memorial meal from year to year.

It's clear from 1 Sam 18:1 that there was a common bond of love, a mutual respect between David and Jonathan when they made that covenant, which carried on even to their children. 1 Jn 5:1 — *"Whoever loves the father loves the child born of him."* If you love the father, you love his son, too. If I love Yochanan, then I'm going to love Takif. You don't love the father without loving the children of the father. You just can't do it. You have to remember the children even though they were unborn at the time when you made the covenant.

So David found out that Jonathan had a son whose name was Mephibosheth, who lived in the desert. He sent for him and he loved that boy, though he was grown then. *David didn't care what he looked like*, because he had made that covenant with Jonathan, and Mephibosheth was Jonathan's son.

It's good to know these things. We need to pass them on to our children, so that they can understand what a covenant is. Even though Jonathan's son thought of himself as *a dead dog* and looked terrible and lived out in the desert, still, David took him in. He took Mephibosheth in and *set him at his table*.

This is just like the covenant our Master made: no matter how good or bad we were, He died for us — *He died for all*.

**ha-êmeq** — Then it was really clear to the disciples that our Master was having a *covenant meal* with them. It wasn't something strange to them.

**Soreph Gamaliel** — There is symbolism like this even in modern weddings. They exchange pieces of cake, putting them in each other's mouths, and they exchange wine. Without realizing it, they are depicting the vow, *"I give my body and blood to you; my whole person is yours."*

**Neshef shel Zerubbabel** — It makes me understand now why our Master said to His disciples, *"You have to eat my body and drink my blood."* That's why so many people left when He said that. I always thought it was because they didn't want to eat flesh and drink blood, but it was because they didn't want to make that kind of commitment. *"That's too far... I don't want to go that far. It's too much."*

Just like the rich young ruler, who said, *"It's too much."*

**Yochanan Abraham** — That totally changes everything we learned in Christianity; we thought they left because it was a *bizarre thing* He was asking, as if they had never heard such a thing before. However, they knew *exactly* what He meant. It was in their culture.

Our Master died almost 2000 years ago. Look in 2 Cor 5:14-15. We were all included in the *blood covenant* He made; but of course it doesn't mean we were *automatically* included. *"He died for all, that those who LIVE would no longer live for themselves."* That's the covenant; and if we make that covenant, then we will no longer live for ourselves, but for Him who died and rose again on our behalf.

**Yochanan Abraham** — Being reminded of that before the breaking of bread would really make the breaking of bread more significant.

**David Zerubbabel** — And it would really make it clear why you are *eating and drinking judgment upon yourself*, if you do so in pretense. There you are: the split animals, the judgment you bring upon yourself.

**Soreph Gamaliel** — As many have found out.

## Keeping the Covenant

*For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. (2 Cor 5:14-15)*

If we do live for ourselves, we break the covenant. We live for *Him* only; and if we have received His Spirit, *we know* when we're not living for Him, when we're watching

the ballgame, or doing whatever else we love that's of the world (1 Jn 2:15). Of course, we have to die in the waters and be *born again* to be able to live that selfless life in the Body. A lot of people try to live here with their *old life*, because they've never given it up. But it's only when you've died and are born again that you can *walk in newness of life*. It is a *new life* we live; it's not just lip service. We live in obedience to the blood covenant we made when we walked through the split animals. And those who do that will do for our Father what Abraham's descendants *couldn't do*, or rather *didn't do*. That's why we're here on earth: to do for old Israel what they were obligated to do in order for our Father to bring that promise to them. People don't really understand that we're living on behalf of Old Israel.

*If you belong to Messiah, then you are Abraham's offspring. (Gal 3:29)*

So we are the seed of Abraham, and we are keeping that covenant. Only if there is a people who keep that covenant, will our Father *bring about what He promised Abraham*:

*For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of Yahweh, to do righteousness and justice, that Yahweh may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him. (Gen 18:19)*

Our Father passed through split animals, making a *self-cursing oath* (Gen 15:5,7,10,18). We now must do that. What if we don't do it? Our Father can't keep His promise. He is only able to keep His promise for a people who *no longer live for themselves*. Thus our Father will bring to Abraham and his descendants what He promised, but since his descendants never lived up to that, it is left for another people.

The first Edah was called "the Way" (Acts 9:2; 16:17; 18:25-26; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22) and it was spoken against everywhere (Acts 28:22). Our Master is *the way, the truth, and the life*, and the Edah is *the Way* — the way of Yahweh (Gen 18:19).

Acts 26:6-7 also talks about the promise our Father made to Abraham, and about *our twelve tribes* who serve night and day. What does "serve" mean?

**Neshef** — Serving means finding one's chief joy in doing the Master's will.

Yes, that's right. So we're to do that, serving night and day in expectation and hope — *“For the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers.”* We are bringing about the promise *for them* (Acts 26:7). Christianity is not doing that. They have *no idea*; they don't even have an inkling that this is what they are supposed to be doing.

*Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you [old Israel] and given to a nation who will produce the fruit of it. (Mt 21:43)*

Israel didn't produce the fruit; so He gave the kingdom to the first century church, but they didn't produce the fruit either. They also “dropped the ball,” so now we have it, and we've got to carry it “over the goal line.”

**Soreph Gamaliel** — It makes Lk 14:33 clearer, about giving up all one's possessions “for My sake and the gospel's sake” (Mk 10:29-30), that it is an essential step in making a covenant. Without that, there is no covenant. It's only a fantasy; and the religion that preaches that fantasy is Christianity.

**Gad** — When Jonathan made that covenant with David, Mephibosheth wasn't born yet, but you could see that his covenant was real because of what came out of Mephibosheth toward King David. He fell on his face and prostrated himself, saying essentially, “What is your servant to deserve such an honor.” He had total admiration, as if Jonathan himself was there, throwing himself down. It was the same heart. I wish that somehow we could communicate this to Jewish people. It would stir something in them.

It is our responsibility to proclaim this to both Christians *and* Jews because *He died for all*. The gospel was “*to the Jew first, then also to the Greek.*” But now it is to *the Christian first, and also the Jews*. Christianity today is like Judaism in the first century.

**ha-êmeq** — I liked how you started the story with the part where David and Jonathan fell in love, as that is the basis of a covenant — falling in love. That is the basis for doing something hard later. And that's why when our Master said, “*You have to eat My body and drink My blood,*” some people said, “*Oh, that's too much,*” but the disciples said, “*Where else can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We're in love with You.*”

To make a covenant with Him isn't *too much* for a disciple. The way the people get married now is with a “prenuptial agreement” anticipating their inevitable divorce. Don't even think of bringing your possessions into

the marriage, because you might need to break up, and so it's best just to keep things separate. But marriage is supposed to be an all-or-nothing covenant based on love, not someone forcing you to do anything. The covenant between Jonathan and David endured right on through to their children. It is so encouraging.

**Havah bat Zerubbabel** — I loved how it says in 1 Sam 18:1 that their souls were *knit together*. All those things they did were to remind them that their souls were knit together, and *that* was the covenant, and not the rituals. You see the remnants of those rituals in today's marriages, but you don't see the *souls knit together*. It has lost its meaning. There is a 50% chance that a couple will stick together and raise a family these days.

Ayal kept saying, "There are no back doors to our covenant. We never think of walking out the back door." It's a miracle that people can be saved and make a commitment like that. It is just *not* part of the culture anymore. Back then, when Yahshua said, "*You have no part in Me unless you eat My flesh and drink My blood,*" they knew right away what He was talking about. It is hard for people today to realize that our gospel is *life for life*, and that it is not just something you can try out for awhile, to see if it feels good for you.

I am thankful that when we do make a covenant in truth, with our Master Yahshua, then our soul does get knit together with everyone else in the covenant. I am thankful I can say that I love others *as my own soul*, and I don't want it to turn into some set of rules for those coming in: "*Do this, and this, and you can get baptized.*" It's not in that realm at all.

**Soreph Gamaliel** — We heard that saying, "If you have wings, fly." If you possess the Holy Spirit, bear the fruit of the Spirit. What if we don't fly? If you don't have the fruit, then don't talk about it. There is no real point in hearing about a covenant unless we're going to love the ones we live with, our brothers and sisters. Learning about *b'riyth* would merely be the most ear-tickling revelation if we don't simply love one another.

**David Zerubbabel** — This *b'riyth* teaching certainly adds more depth to what Paul said in 1 Cor 11:27. So then, what is eating and drinking in an *unworthy manner*? We certainly talk about having confessed our sins, and not being divided from anyone, but not so much about relating to our brothers and sisters as *blood-brothers*, about loyalty. To be guilty of profaning (making common) the body and blood of our Master, thus bringing *judgment on ourselves* (1 Cor 11:29), is to fail to *discern the Body*, that is, to fail to recognize our Master in all of our brothers and sisters who

entered into that blood covenant with us, and treat them as David treated Jonathan and his son Mephibosheth.

**Ishshah Chassidah** — 1 Sam 18:1,3 shows David's heart toward Jonathan. You see they had an emotional love. This made me think about how there are some in the Body whom I'm naturally close to, and have affectionate love for; but some people, I'm so unlike them, I have to really work at loving them. David must have had to get to know Mephibosheth. He drew him close and they became best of friends. I'm thankful for King David's example, because he did it with his whole heart. It is quite a statement to invite someone to always eat at your table.

**David Zerubbabel** — I just imagined him being at King David's table; what did they talk about? I would love to have heard it, and participated.

**Soreph Gamaliel** — The minchah and the breaking of bread is our opportunity to participate at that table. This is as close as we're going to get in this lifetime.