

**Congregation Beit Mashiach
Pastor Andrew Ketel
Shabbat Message
September 2, 2017**

Title: Covenantal Relationship – Part 1

Text: I Samuel 18:1-4

This past Shabbat the sermon was entitled, “The Face of Unity”, in which the five key elements upon which we build unity were explained. But a true biblical community is built upon even deeper aspects of relationship that flow out of those elements of unity and that is covenant. The core of any effective and thriving Congregation has come to understand how these elements of unity are based upon the wonder of covenant relationships. When we at CBM speak of our community membership, being a covenant relationship, I think most of us really do not understand its intended meaning. Often as we pass through this season of Teshuvah, we reflect upon our personal issues that we have with family members, friends and co-workers. But have you ever given consideration that during this season we should also take stock in the very depth of our relationships and commitment to the community of Adonai. Yes, we have been called to be a part of a community of faith, often when we come to that realization that our faith walk has stalled or is ineffective, upon reflection we may discover it is because we have failed to develop those crucial covenantal relationships.

Yes, covenantal relationships are deep commitments, can be viewed as similar to the covenant of marriage. If we would look at marriage in its biblical intent it is based upon a blood covenant. When we speak of a blood covenant that implies a bond is made that lasts for life. Yet, it goes even further as the Apostle Paul so clearly states in Ephesians, it is to serve (Eph. 5:25ff). Al Purvis in his book, “Covenant of Brothers” states that,

“anyone can make covenant relationships; it just requires a commitment to empowering others to succeed. Covenant simply does not work for people who aim to gain more than they will give, which is totally wrong understanding of the purpose of covenant. What we give in covenant is not just people, or money or other material things – we give success, destiny and even legacy.”

The Mishnah (Avot 5:19) teaches that affection based on an ulterior motive will end when the cause is gone, but pure, unselfish affection - like that of David and Jonathan – will endure. Rambam explains that friendship based on material self interest will last only as long as it remains profitable to the parties, but love based on Godly consideration will endure, because spirituality is eternal.

When we look at our text this morning we need to understand its backdrop, which was David’s defeat of Goliath. That Philistine that mocked the God of Israel and no one amongst the army of Israel were willing to withstand his challenge. Yet, David the mere shepherd boy was so incensed by Goliath’s challenge he took up his challenge more because of the insulting words towards his God than the confidence that he could defeat Goliath. David had the confidence that Adonai would give him the victory even when the odds were against him naturally. It was this faith and fearlessness that caught the eye of every Israelite and the royal family.

As David is brought before the royal family of Israel it was in that moment that Jonathan realized that he had met a kindred spirit. Yes, that kindred spirit which Anne Shirley of Green Gables was always looking for. Our translation (NASV) states that, “the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself.” Many modern theologians, who have an agenda, suggest that this was the beginning of a same sex relationship, but that is reading into these words. Actually, it was the beginning of a holy, pure relationship as that which Adonai has called all of us to enter into. The very words used in this passage should bring the mind of the reader to Leviticus 19:18 which states that, “...you shall love your neighbour as yourself...” It was a Godly ‘love’ that Jonathan was expressing because he saw within David a faith that mirrored his. They as young lads both shared the five elements of unity which was the bases upon which they entered into covenant together.

In contrast King Saul, also was taken by David, not so much because of love or covenant, but for what David could bring to the table to achieve the goals of Saul. Yet, when David succeeded in those goals and the people were taken up with his success, instead of rejoicing with the people King Saul fostered a spirit of envy. The reason for this envy was the threat that David presented to the King and his royal position. He right away was threaten by another’s success because it would take away from him and his standing (I Sam. 15:24). This envy became his obsession and it eventually drove King Saul down a path of destruction both for him and David.

Whereas when we look at the covenant that Jonathan and David entered into it also held the possibility of a costly price for both of them. Both of these young lads had been told that they were to be the next king of Israel and now they entered into covenant with their supposed rival. But Jonathan did not see David as a rival, but rather as someone who walked in the anointing of Adonai. He did not focus upon his personal position or role, but his focus was that Adonai’s purpose and plan would be realized. Both Jonathan and David cared more for the nation of Israel and the purposes of Adonai than they did for themselves. They did not care who got the credit, they just wanted to do their part to see Adonai’s Kingdom established.

When individuals entered into a Blood Covenant during biblical times there were nine distinct steps in the ritual of covenant making. Within our text this morning we see three of those steps clearly outlined, but without an understanding of the covenant ritual we would overlook their implied meaning. The first thing Jonathan does is to take his robe and gives it to the shepherd boy. Most men in the Ancient Near East had only one robe. This exchange of robes actually represented an exchange of identity. It symbolized that all he owned was now also available to his covenant partner. Their belongings, all that was accredited to his ‘name’ were in essence shared between the two parties. In other words, in this act Jonathan gave David the right to claim his throne, because he entered into covenant with him. A relationship on this level speaks of self-sacrifice, they were able to get over themselves and focus upon the larger picture, which is Adonai’s plan and purpose. In the same way when Yeshua came down to earth and took on the human form, speaks of blood covenant. Because the ultimate goal of His earthly ministry is that we eventually will put on Him, here on earth and fully in eternity. The second thing Jonathan does is to remove his armour, sword, bow and belt and gives them to David. The exchange of the belt and weapons symbolizes the ‘exchange’ of their strength and pledging all your support and protection to their covenant partner. This indicated that from this time on you would be allies, if someone attacked your covenant brother it was the same as if they attached you. In essence, this exchange was taking upon yourself the enemies of your partner in blood covenant. This level of commitment was demanding Jonathan to take sides later on between David and his father King Saul. Sometimes covenant bonds may bring conflict within your own

family, but as we witness with Jonathan he still honoured his father as much as he could within the bonds of his covenant relationship with David. Jonathan's love for Adonai leads him to be patient and kind with his father, this same heart allowed David to forgive King Saul. The third aspect within this text in relation to blood covenant is an exchange of names. We do not literally witness David and Jonathan exchange names but within the Hebrew text (I Sam. 18:1, 19:1) itself Jonathan is spelled with an additional 'Hey.' The Rabbis explain this spelling as this letter alludes to the sacred name of Adonai. A sanctity that is evoked by the unselfish friendship of these two friends. We have precedent when Abram and Sarai came into covenant with Adonai in Genesis 17 (vs. 3-5, 15). When covenant was cut Adonai and the patriarchs both parties took on new names. Abram changed to Abraham, Jacob changed to Israel, and Adonai became known as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob or the God of Israel. Now they are of the same household, *'family,'* even closer than blood relatives.