*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

July 26 - 31

David and Mephibosheth

**Monday, July 26 2 Samuel 9:1-5**

*“Show kindness for Jonathan’s sake”*

In the ancient Near East, the family of a king replaced by someone not from their family did not generally expect to receive kindness. In fact, new dynasties were routinely accompanied by bloodletting among the family of the old order as the new king solidified his power. This practice is precisely what makes David’s treatment of Mephibosheth so surprising.

These verses contain numerous links to Jonathan’s covenant with David (see 1 Samuel 20). Primary among them is the importance of showing “kindness” (*hesed*). This term has theological significance throughout the Old Testament, denoting the life-sustaining grace of God bestowed on humans and making it possible to have a loving relationship with him. More generally, “kindness” characterizes covenant relationships, whether between God and humans or simply among humans; therefore it can be translated in many ways: grace, loyalty, faithfulness, love, mercy, goodness. What makes *hesed* an act of “kindness” is often the fact that one member in the relationship is in a position to render help or aid to the other.

*I praise you, Lord, for your loving-kindness toward me. Amen.*

**Tuesday, July 27 2 Samuel 9:6-7**

*“His name was Mephibosheth”*

It can hardly be good news for Mephibosheth to be summoned to the royal palace. David brings him from obscurity in Lo Debar and identifies him as the son of Jonathan and grandson of Saul. In the critical verse of the story, David alleviates his visitor’s fears. Where Mephibosheth may have expected execution, he receives grace. The king will not only permit Mephibosheth to live, but he will show kindness to him for Jonathan’s sake.

That kindness takes the form of two blessings. (1) David will give him the property of Saul’s estate, making Mephibosheth a wealthy man instantly. He has apparently been dependent on the generosity of others, but now he becomes the holder of wealth-producing land. (2) David grants the privilege that was lost to Mephibosheth when Saul and Jonathan were killed, that is, the right to eat at the king’s table. The fact that this provision is granted for “always” probably indicates that this is a permanent “pension” for Mephibosheth – one that grants honor and respect.

*When I come before you, Lord, you treat me with kindness and bless me. Amen.*

**Wednesday, July 28 2 Samuel 9:8-13**

*“And Mephibosheth always ate at the king’s table”*

Commenting on this biblical passage, Charles Swindoll writes: “Picture what life would be like in the years to come at the supper table with David. The meal is fixed and the dinner bell rings and along come the members of the family and their guests. Amnon, clever and witty, comes to the table first. Then there’s Joab, one of the guests – muscular, masculine, attractive, his skin bronzed from the sun, walking tall and erect like an experience soldier. Next comes Absalom. Talk about handsome! From the crown of his head to the soles of his feet there is not a blemish on him. Then there is Tamar – beautiful, tender daughter of David. And, later on, one could add Solomon as well. He’s been in the study all day, but he finally slips away from his work and makes his way to the table.

But then they hear this clump, clump, clump, and here comes Mephibosheth, hobbling along. He smiles and humbly joins the others as he takes his place at the table as one of the king’s sons. And the tablecloth of grace covers his crippled feet. Oh, what a scene!”

*I am a member of your family, Lord, given a place at your table. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

July 26 - 31

David and Mephibosheth

**Thursday, July 29 2 Samuel 10:1-5**

*“The Ammonites reject David’s ambassadors”*

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The Ammonites inhabited the territory just across the Jordan River from Jerusalem (their capital Rabbah is modern Amman, capital of Jordan). David apparently does not expect war with the Ammonites. Most likely Nahash, the Ammonite king who has died and who was an old adversary of Saul, was David’s ally during the difficult days of Saul’s reign. It would have been in Nahash’s best interest to neutralize Saul by supporting a rival. David seeks to maintain friendly relations with the Ammonites after Nahash’s death.

Details on why the shaved beard and cut garments represented the ultimate insult are not entirely clear. The beard was apparently the pride and joy of an Israelite male, which was cut only for periods of mourning or as an act of humiliation. Since garments in the biblical world often reflected status, power, or identity, the added insult of cutting their garments at their hips exposes David’s men to further humiliation.

*A rejection of those who come in your name, Lord, is a rejection of you. Amen.*

**Friday, July 30 2 Samuel 10:6-14**

*“War with the Ammonites and Arameans”*

Hanun’s humiliation of David’s ambassadors is in effect a declaration of war. The Ammonite’s next step is to form an alliance with Aramea. It seems clear from these battle accounts that the real power is not the Ammonites but their allies to the north, the Arameans. Especially powerful is the kingdom of Zobah, which is the dominant political power of southern Syria during this time. The power of this empire under its king Hadadezer was growing as quickly as David’s power in the south. Armed conflict between the two seems unavoidable, with political supremacy of Syria-Palestine at stake.

The first battle described here takes place near the Ammonite capital of Rabbah. Once the Aramean army arrives, they force Joab to fight on two separate fronts. Joab divides his troops and encourages them to be strong and fight bravely, adding that God will do whatever seems best in his sight. To the disappointment of the Ammonites, their Aramean allies flee before Joab. The Israelite victory is probably tempered by losses, so that Joab is unable to lay siege to the Ammonite capital and must return to Jerusalem.

*The battle and the victory, Lord, belong to you. Amen.*

**Saturday, July 31 2 Samuel 10:15-19**

*“A second battle with the Arameans”*

The next battle is between Israel and the Arameans themselves and will determine the fate of all of Syria-Palestine. After acquiring reinforcements from beyond the Euphrates River, the Aramean king Hadadezer moves into Helam. The exact location of Helam is uncertain, though presumable it is a city or region north and east of Jerusalem, perhaps toward the city of Damascus in Syria. David leads the troops himself this time in what becomes a decisive victory, and the Aramean kings surrender to Israel.

Our account concludes with the concise, “So the Arameans were afraid to help the Ammonites anymore.” With their Aramean allies effectively neutralized, all that remains for David to control the area across the Jordan River is conquest of the Ammonites and their capital city of Rabbah (which eventually takes place in 12:26-31). In the meantime, the account of these Ammonite wars is suspended in order to narrate the sad events in the royal palace back in Jerusalem.

*When the king goes out in your name, Lord, he is victorious. Amen.*