

David and Jonathan, LeGrand Baker

Almost as a parallel to the story of Naomi and Ruth is the story of Ruth's grandson David and his devotion to Jonathan. Here the word "love" has sometimes been misrepresented, but J. A. Thompson explained,

Saul loved him greatly and he became his armour-bearer (1 Sam. xvi 21) It is arguable that the verb [to love in Hebrew] was carefully introduced at this point because of a certain ambiguity of meaning. It is the proper term *to* denote genuine affection between human beings, husband and wife, parent and child, friend and friend. But since the verb can also have political implications and since, as we shall argue, it is used in such a sense elsewhere in the narrative, we may suspect that already in 1 Samuel xvi 21 the narrator is preparing us for the later political use of the term. . . .

In 1 Samuel xviii 1-4 the narrator sets the stage for David's first major advance in his progress to the throne. Here the *love* of Jonathan for David is declared. The narrator uses the ambiguous word *love* because it denoted more than natural affection, however deep and genuine this may have been. Sensing the certainties of the future Jonathan was ready even then to acknowledge David's sovereignty over himself and over the nation. ...

In isolation these statements may be interpreted on a purely personal level but the bestowal of Jonathan's weapons on David (vs. 4), the success of David in discharging his responsibilities against Israel's enemies and the wide acceptance of David among the people who recognized his charismatic gifts (vv. 5-7) seem to carry deeper significance.¹

The Old Testament description of their mutual devotion contains these lines:

21 And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he :loved him greatly; and he became his armourbearer.

22 And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight.

23 And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him. (1 Samuel 16:21-23)

1 And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan :loved him as his own soul.

2 And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.

3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he :loved him as his own soul.

4 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle. (1 Samuel 18:1-4)

16 So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even require it at the hand of David's enemies.

17 And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he :loved him: for he :loved him as he :loved his own soul. (1 Samuel 20:16-17)

1J. A. Thompson, "The Significance of the Verb *:Love* in the David-Jonathan Narratives in 1 Samuel" in *Vetus Testamentum*, July 1974, v. 24, no. 3, p.335-36.

Upon hearing of his friend's death,

17 And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son: 25
How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine
high places. ...

26 I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me:
thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

27 How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished! 2 Samuel 1:17-27)

One finds similar statements among the brethren in modern times. The most classic of these is by Heber C. Kimball, but it, like the accounts of David's love for Jonathan, can be easily distorted if taken out of context. For that reason, I am giving you 4 other statements by Heber C. Kimball in order to provide a context that cannot be misunderstood.

My prayer is, O Lord help me to do thy will, and walk in the footsteps of my leader, light up my path, and help me to walk so that my feet may never slip, and to keep my tongue from speaking guile; that I may never be left to betray my brethren, who hold the Priesthood of the Son of God; but that I may always honor that Priesthood, magnify it, reverence it, and love it more than I do my life, or my wives and my children. If I do that, I know the Priesthood will honor me, and exalt me, and bring me back into the presence of God, and also those who listen to my counsel as I listen to the counsel of him whose right it is to dictate me. ...

Brethren of the Priesthood, let us rise up in the name of Israel's God, and dispense with everything that is not of God, and let us become one, even as the Father and the Son are one. If we take that course we shall triumph over hell, the grave, and over everything else that shall oppose our onward progress in earth, or in hell; there is nothing we need fear. I fear nothing only to grieve my Father who is in heaven, and my brethren who are upon the earth. Heber C. Kimball, April 2, 1854, *Journal of Discourses*, 2: 153.

Heber C. Kimball, August 2, 1857, *Journal of Discourses*, 5: 136.

No man on the earth loves women better than I do. I love a good woman, one that has a good spirit; I love that woman that will strive to make me happy, and I love that son that seeks to please his father and mother; for he will make a good husband. I love that daughter that seeks to please her father and mother, because she will make a good wife.

. I have no pride in clothing, in dress, or in any man, except he does the will of God; but I delight in walking humbly and faithfully before God, and setting a good example. When my wife pursues this course, I have pride in her—I adore her, as I would you, if you were all to do right, gentlemen, and no more. Why should I love a woman more than a man? They are no more to me than good men.

Heber C. Kimball, June 3, 1860, *Journal of Discourses*, 8: 85.)

Heber C. Kimball, June 19, 1862, *Journal of Discourses*, 9: 152.

Thou shalt love thy wife with all thy heart, and shall cleave unto her and none else; and he that looketh upon a woman to lust after her shall deny the faith, and shall not have the Spirit; and if he repents not, he shall be cast out.

Heber C. Kimball, July 19, 1863, *Journal of Discourses*, 10: 239 - 243.)

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Words of President Heber C. Kimball at the funeral of President Jedediah M. Grant, in the Tabernacle, Great Salt Lake City, December 4, 1856 (*Journal of Discourses*, 4: 135-138).

I am talking of what I know, and not of what I merely believe; and may the Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, rest upon you, my brethren and sisters, and upon our families and every good person. Brother Brigham is my brother, and brother Jedediah is my brother; I loved him, I love those men, God knows I do, better than I ever loved a woman; and I would not give a dime for a man that does not love them better than they love women. A man is a miserable being, if he lets a woman stand between him and his [priesthood] file leaders; he is a fool, and I have no regard for him; he is not fit for the Priesthood.

It is from a sermon by President Heber C. Kimball, delivered in the Tabernacle, February 8, 1857.

I am perfectly satisfied that my God is a cheerful, pleasant, lively, and good-natured Being.

Why? Because I am cheerful, pleasant, lively, and good-natured when I have His Spirit. That is one reason why I know; and another is-the Lord said, through Joseph Smith, "I delight in a glad heart and a cheerful countenance." That arises from the perfection of His attributes. He is a jovial, lively person, and a beautiful man. (*Journal of Discourses*, 4: 222.)