

From Lo-debar to The King's Table June 24, 2018

Does anyone recognize these children?



If for any reason they don't ring a bell,
you'll all know them by this picture.
Prince George and Princess Charlotte



Why do we know them?

We have a fascination with royalty,

Especially the child who stands in the place of heir to the throne,
which in this case would be Prince George,
who will be 5 years old this July 22nd.

He was born into exceptionalism.

Everything about his home life and upbringing have one destination in mind,
future king of England.

He is a child of great promise, and by this age,
he too is becoming aware of his exceptional destiny.

We are going to take a journey this morning to visit another little boy
who stood just where young Prince George stands today.

We are first introduced to this young child in 1 Chron 8:34 as Merib-baal,
which means contender of Baal.

Baal was the name of the God of the Canaanites,
and hopes were high that this child would contend with Baal and overcome.

But as our story unfolds, this young boy becomes known as Mephibosheth,
which means son of shame.

How does this boy, destined for royalty become the son of shame?

As you recall, Saul from the tribe of Benjamin was the first King of Israel,
but he had grown willful and God was no longer pleased with him
and so ordained that David from the tribe of Judah would succeed him.
Everything David did prospered, and he was wildly popular with the people.

Even Saul's son, Jonathan, loved Saul David saw the handwriting on the wall,
David, not himself, would be the next king of Israel.
This, of course, Saul saw as a threat to the throne and his royal line,
And so vows to have David killed.
As David has to flee, Jonathan makes a secret pact or covenant with David.
(1 Samuel 20:14-17)

May the Lord be with you as he has been with my father.
But show me unfailing kindness like the Lord's kindness as long as I live,
so that I may not be killed,
and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family—
not even when the Lord has cut off every one of David's enemies
from the face of the earth.”
So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying,
“May the Lord call David's enemies to account.”
And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him,
because he loved him as he loved himself.

War ensued between the house of Saul and the house of David,
And in the same battle, on the same day, Saul and Jonathan are killed.
There is a knock on the door royal estate
where a young boy is eagerly waiting for his father's return,
but instead a messenger brings news . . .

2 Samuel 4:4

[Jonathan's son] was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan
came from Jezreel; and his nurse took him up and fled. And it happened, as she
made haste to flee, that he fell and became lame. His name was Mephibosheth.

Perhaps fleeing from your home sounds strange to our 21st century ears.
For us, when one ruler (president, prime minister, king or governing party) steps down
and a new leader steps up,
the worst that happens is that the old administration loses their job.
But in those days, the old ruling family and their entourage were killed
to eliminate any future challenge to the throne.

And so the young boy and his nurse ran for their lives,
fleeing the assumed wrath of David.
He survived, but he became permanently handicapped.
He became Mephibosheth, son of shame.

Have you ever had a Mephibosheth moment?
Life turns in a moment of time.
A police officer shows up at your door in the middle of the night.
The doctor calls you to his office with the results of your biopsy.
The boss comes into your office with the pink slip.
You discover your spouse is not who you thought they were.
A car comes out of nowhere – and life is changed in the blink of an eye.

That's a Mephibosheth moment.
And when those Mephibosheth moments come, where do we go?
We go where Mephibosheth went.
We go to live in Lo-debar.



Lo means ‘no.’
Debar means pasture.
Put together, the name of the city to which Jonathan fled was = the place of no pasture
The side of the mountain where the grass is not greener.
It is the place of despair; the place of no hope; the place of rejection.

Have you ever had a Mephibosheth moment and become a fugitive in Lo-debar?

Mephibosheth lived in his humble home in Lo-debar for many years . . .

And then came another knock on the door
and another messenger brings news . . .
The king has called for you.

This is the day Mephibosheth has been dreading all these years.
The king has finally found him and now will exact his revenge
against Saul's descendants.

“I'm a dead dog.”

Yes, the king has finally found him, but not to exact his revenge.

2 Samuel 9

David asked, "Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

Now there was a servant of Saul's household named Ziba.

Ziba answered the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan; he is lame in both feet."

"Where is he?" the king asked.

Ziba answered, "He is at the house of Makir in Lo Debar."

So King David had him brought from Lo Debar.

When Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David,
he bowed down to pay him honor.

David said, "Mephibosheth!"

"At your service," he replied.

The next words out of David's mouth will seal his fate.

"Don't be afraid," David said to him,

"for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan.
I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul,
and you will always eat at my table."

Mephibosheth bowed down and said,

"What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?"

Then the king summoned Ziba, Saul's steward, and said to him,

"I have given your master's grandson everything that belonged to Saul and his family.
You and your sons and your servants are to farm the land for him and bring in the crops,
so that your master's grandson may be provided for.

And Mephibosheth, grandson of your master, will always eat at my table."

(Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants.)

Then Ziba said to the king,

"Your servant will do whatever my lord the king commands his servant to do."

So Mephibosheth ate at David's table like one of the king's sons.

Wow! Talk about a reversal of fortunes.

From Lo-debar to the King's table.

Mephibosheth can hardly get his mind around what has just happened.

In David's short pronouncement, Mephibosheth has received 5 things.

- Freedom from fear
Mephibosheth had been gripped by fear and lived in fear since he was 5 years old.
- Loving Kindness (far better than situational kindness; kindness because you . . .)
 - Hesed
 - Sometimes translated loving kindness, great mercy, steadfast love
 - A kindness that originates in the giver, not just a response to the receiver.
- Restoration of belonging
- Abundant provision beyond his wildest dreams
- Sonship; permanent belonging.
That's a Wow!

Just sit with that story for a moment.

Place yourself in the story.

Let God's Spirit speak to you.

What do you learn about yourself and about God in this story?

- God knows how to find me in Lo-debar.
 - So don't feel sorry for me that I'm in this obscure place of despair.
God's knows exactly where I am and will come knocking.
- God's greatest moments of revelation may come while I am in Lo-debar.
 - So there is no room to feel sorry for myself.
 - Perhaps Lo-debar is exactly where I need to be to receive my greatest blessings.
- God will come knocking because of a covenant of love made before I was born.
 - Mephibosheth wasn't sitting back just waiting for someone to discover how great he was, how skilled he was, how much he had to offer.
 - He wasn't thinking, I deserve a seat at the king's table by virtue of my:
 - skill, family, tenure, dedication, intellect
 - He doesn't say, "It's about time someone recognized how valuable I was!"
 - He was amazed that he had a place at the table at all.
 - He was stupefied by the *hesed* of God?
 - Nor did David come knocking because he suddenly realized how valuable Mephibosheth was; "Wow! That's just the person I need."

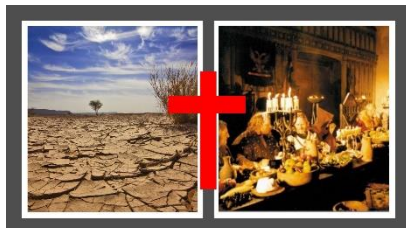
- David (God) came knocking because of a covenant of love made before he was born.
- Imagine you're Mephibosheth sitting at the King's table.
 - In walks the handsome, bejeweled Prince Absalom.
 - In walks the decorated military commander, Joab
 - In walks the high priest, Abiathar, in priestly regalia.
 - And there you sit among all these winners,
 You, lame Mephibosheth, the loser, from Lo-debar.
 - The irony, or course is that all these winners will come to an ignoble end, and Mephibosheth will outlive them all.
- The Devil says to you, "You're inferior."
 You can walk away with your head down with an inferiority complex,
 Or you can say, "You're right, I'm inferior, but I'm at the table!"
- My handicap, which seems so shameful and disqualifying for me,
 may actually be what make room for me at the table.
 - A person who is lame presents no threat to the king's sons or military leaders.
 - They would suspect him of no political intrigue, no threat to their power.
 - His handicap became an asset
- God can flip your situation in an instance – either way.
 - When you're on the top of the world, don't boast.
 - When you're at the bottom of the heap, don't despair.
 - God creates the one as well as the other.
- God is not just able to restore all things, he takes great pleasure in doing it.

The story of Mephibosheth is THE story of the universe.

It is the eternal story.

It is the story of God that was made most perfectly manifest in his son Jesus.

The story of Mephibosheth is the story of every man who desires to find life
 and find a seat at the table with Our Father.



The extravagant blessings bestowed on Mephibosheth are those Our Father
 has bestowed upon us because of his covenant of love through his son, Jesus.

Freedom from fear

Fear not, for I am with you;

Be not dismayed, for I am your God.

I will strengthen you,

Yes, I will help you,

I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.’ (Isaiah 41:10)

Loving kindness (which is far better than situational kindness; kindness because you . . .)

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Restoration of belonging

I will restore to you the years that the swarming [a]locust has eaten. (Joel 2:25)

Abundant provision beyond his wildest dreams

And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:9)

Sonship; permanent belonging.

Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us,

that we should be called children of God. And that is what we are! (1 John 3:1)

There is no shortcut.

You can’t by-pass this story.

We all have to come to realize that we live in Lo-debar,

and the only way out is the *hesed*, the loving-kindness of the King.

God may be doing a Mephibosheth moment in your life.

He may be yanking your chain, reminding you of your spiritual poverty,

Reminding you that lo-debar is your home of origin,

But then in his great love is inviting you to the table.

Will you accept that invitation today?