



SIEBENQUELL

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**In Praise of Friendship:**  
**Do I want to be your friend?**

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»Are you my friend?« - How much yearning already rings in this question out of the mouth of a young child? And how happy does a child return from playing and radiantly announces: »Linda is my friend!« Planted deep within us is this yearning for a person who understands us and love us, who stands by us even when other reject us or leave us alone, whom we can fully trust and whose heart is close to ours. To have such a person at our side is a great gift.

In the first book of Samuel the Bible tells us of an extraordinary friendship, the friendship between David and Jonathan. The young David had slain the Philistine and thereafter King Saul took him into his house. Then »the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.« (1 Sam 18, 1) More precisely, it is said that Jonathan's heart was woven, indeed, knitted with the heart of David. And Jonathan, the king's son, made a covenant with David, the son of a shepherd, »because he loved him as his own soul. Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that he was wearing, and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt.« (V. 4)

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It is worthwhile to take a closer look at what is so tersely described here in order to understand and sense what happened. The robe gave warmth and protection and even a mattress to sleep on during the nights. Jonathan gives this warning garment to David. The armor of that time was primarily a protection for the heart. The sword and the bow served as protection. The sword was employed when the enemy was close at hand and the bow when enemy was approaching from afar, to keep them at bay. The belt, which kept the robe bound together, protected the wearer's dignity. By handing it over, Jonathan reassures his friend, that nothing should leave him exposed.

Everything that protects and armours a king's son, he hands over to his friend. In this manner he weaves their lives together as well. It is not the question »Do you want to be my friend?« that plays a role here, but the »I am your friend.« This promise, strengthened here in the making of the covenant with clear gestures, will be filled with life in the further course of the story and it will be held in fidelity. When later on, the king, who had grown jealous of the successful young warrior David, sets out to kill him, Jonathan, his son, courageously intervenes to help his friend and save his life: After making sure that David hides himself, he openly confronts his father and show the blinded king the reality, that David had only done good for Israel, that he had placed his life on the line, that there was no reason whatsoever to oppose him. And he changes his father's mind.

Repeatedly Jonathan shows himself to be the one for whom the friendship with David is a deep matter of the heart and the one who does everything to protect and preserve the life of his friend, which is so interwoven with his own.

And David? He answers the question »Am I your friend?« with a resounding „YES“ beyond death itself. He sings, »I am your friend with all that belongs to you.« in his great dirge, after Saul and Jonathan perish in the battle against the Philistines. He loudly mourns Saul, the father of his friend, even though he often made his life difficult. And he mourns his beloved Jonathan and calls on the sons of Judah to learn his mourning song and pass it on- never shall that, which David mourns here, be lost.

When God gives us the gift of a deep friendship, then the question is addressed to us: »Do I want to be your friend?« Am I willing to allow my life to woven with the life of another and to answer with a YES to this blessing of friendship?

May we be blessed with good friends and recognize the treasures which reside in our friends.

May we strengthen and deepen the bonds in the giving and the receiving.

May the interweaving of our souls never leave us alone.

**Rosemarie Monnerjahn**

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