

# *Eglah – Sneak Peek*

*David's Wives – Part 6a*

By Mesu Andrews

## Note to Readers

The story you're about to read imagines Eglah's story, the last of David's six wives mentioned in 2 Samuel 3:4 and 1 Chronicles 3:3, who bore him a son during his seven-year reign in Hebron. We've met David's five other wives in previous stories. Ahinoam and Abigail married the fugitive David while living in the wilderness and were with him on the run from the maniacal King Saul. The other three wives—Princess Maakah; Haggith, the priest's daughter; and Abital, Asahel's widow—married Judah's newly anointed king at Hebron and dwelt in relative peace during their husband's seven-year conflict with the House of Saul. (See Author's Notes from previous stories to discover which details are Truth, fact, or fiction!).

Scripture never mentions Abital, Eglah, or their sons (Shephatiah and Ithream) except in genealogical lists (2 Sam. 3:4-5; 1 Chron. 3:3). I found nothing in Jewish history to give me clues about their identity, which meant I was free to imagine their backstory as I chose. If you haven't read Parts 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 about David's wives, Ahinoam, Abigail, Maakah, Haggith, and Abital, the Truth of Scripture in 1 Samuel 25:41 through 2 Samuel 3:1-5 will help with the context of the story you're about to read.

I pray that somewhere in the hopes, fears, and prayers of David's women—Ahinoam, Abigail, Maakah, Haggith, Abital, and Eglah—you'll hear the gentle whisper of Yahweh's Spirit speaking to YOUR heart too. Know this for certain, dear one: the God of David ben Jesse still speaks to men and women who chase after His heart.

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\*\*In today's FictionFix, I've included a section of Abital's story (from last month) as the Prologue to help smooth the introduction to Eglah's character.

## Prologue

*“Asahel refused to give up the pursuit; so Abner thrust the butt of his spear into Asahel’s stomach, and the spear came out through his back. He fell there and died on the spot. And every man stopped when he came to the place where Asahel had fallen and died.”*

## 2 Samuel 2:23

### Abital

Eglah knelt beside me, offering another cup. “It’s honeyed water. The way Zeb likes it.”

*The way Zeb likes it.* The words pierced me. Raya wouldn’t know that my boy liked a little cinnamon in his honeyed water. Only Eglah and I knew exactly what made my son happy. I sat up and took the cup from my son’s maid, taking a sip while glancing between her and Haggith. Surely, the king’s newest wife could find a way to allow Eglah to care for my son.

I held Haggith’s gaze. “Zeb should be with Eglah, not Raya.”

“We can talk about that later, but Zeb needs to see *you*, Abi.”

“I can’t.”

“He’s your son.”

“He’s *Asahel’s* son. Asahel chose me, but his family didn’t. Vered and Raya will find ways to humiliate me that will, in time, turn Zeb against me.” I looked away, resolute in my decision. “I’d rather give Zeb to them now than let them turn him against me.”

“Maybe I’ve misjudged you.” Haggith’s brows drew together. “Perhaps you don’t love Zeb at all.”

“How dare you! I love him more than my own life!”

“Then prove it,” she said, shoving the loaf of bread back into my hand. “Do what you must to care for him even if it means sacrificing your grief for *his* life.”

I stared at this friend, frustrated but forced to admit I’d come to trust her more in two weeks than I’d trusted [my sisters-in-law] Vered and Raya in five years. “Joab and Abishai never approved of me, Haggith. They’ll be more willing to treat Zeb as their own if I distance myself.”

She didn’t argue. Instead, her shoulders straightened, and she inhaled a deep breath. Something in her countenance filled the space around my withered heart with dread.

“You must marry again,” she said. “It’s the harsh reality of being a woman.”

“No. I’ve already decided to go back to Bethlehem. I’ll serve one of the wealthy farmers and earn a roof over my head. I simply need to ensure Zeb’s future before—” My throat closed before I said the words. How could I leave him? Though Asahel’s first wife, Dalit, had given Zeb breath, he was as intricately woven into my life as my beating heart.

“You’re not leaving,” Haggith declared. “Zeb has been staying with me, not Raya.”

Relief surged through me, lifting a weight from my chest so I could breathe again. “Oh, Haggith, thank you!” I hugged her, sloshing more water on us, but this time we both chuckled. I glanced up at Eglah and back at my friend. “You must take Eglah with you to help with Zeb. She’ll provide the consistency he needs—”

“Eglah will come with you, Abi . . .” She hesitated, red splotches forming on her neck and cheeks. “King David will adopt Zeb and make you his wife.”

I was mortified. “That kind of jesting is in poor taste, Haggith.”

“I’m not jesting.” David’s fourth wife leaned close, keeping her voice low. “I’ve seen the way Vered and Raya treat you—as have Ahinoam, Abigail, and Maakah—and we’ve all agreed you must come under David’s protection.”

“No!” Heart racing, I scooted away and shot a panicked glance at Eglah. “Did you know about this?”

Before she could answer, Haggith drew my attention with her hand on my arm. “I told Eglah yesterday. We’re going to clean you up so David can speak with you personally about the arrangement.”

“There will be no arrangement!”

Eglah gripped my arm, intense and pleading. “Where will *I* go if you beg on the streets of Bethlehem? Do you know what happens to Ammonite women who have no master in Israel?”

“I’m sure someone in this camp would take you—”

“Look at me, Abi.” Haggith turned my chin, forcing me to face her. “I saw only a glimpse of the love you and Asahel shared. Don’t taint his memory by discarding the future his love provided.”

“I would taint his memory by marrying his dohd.” I covered my face, feeling warmth creeping into my cheeks. “I don’t want to become a man’s burden—or his *fifth* wife, Haggith.”

“If you’ll excuse us, please.” David’s voice startled me. He strode confidently through the main room in a sackcloth robe, his hair and face covered with dust. “I’ll speak with Abital about our marriage.”

Mortified at my appearance, odor, and despair, I covered myself with the filthy blanket again. “No. All of you, leave.” I heard shuffling and then whispers. Curiosity forced me to peek from my blanket. Eglah had retreated to the main room, but Haggith stood on tiptoes, whispering something to David before joining the maid. The dividing curtain was left open, but I was still uncomfortable with David ben Jesse in the small space where my husband and I once slept.

“Why would you marry me? We don’t even like each other.” I focused on my trembling hands.

He bent to one knee before me. Too close. “I think you know that’s not true. You’ll be the only one of my wives who saw me weep when Abba turned me away from family celebrations. You’ll be the only wife who knew me as a shepherd.” He tilted my chin up with one finger. “You’ll be the only one of my wives I won’t ask to lie with me.”

I covered a sob and looked away, shielding myself from his tenderness. “You’re a king, you imbecile. Your wives must bear children.”

A generous silence sobered me. Had I offended him or convinced him? I glanced up and found his gaze waiting for me.

“Abigail is pregnant. Ahinoam has already given me a son. I’ve married two other young women who, if Yahweh grants it, will strengthen my household, Abital. Let me honor Asahel by raising his son and providing for the girl who’s been a part of my life for as long as I remember.”

Shaking my head, I couldn’t believe the shepherd boy made king would marry *me*.

## Chapter One

*“The war between the house of Saul and the house of David lasted a long time.*

*David grew stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker.”*

### 2 Samuel 3:1

#### Two Years Later

#### Hebron

#### Eglah

I held my breath in the darkness, listening hard to decipher the whispers of my mistress and her husband, King David. They giggled like children and shushed each other. My heart squeezed in my chest at the tenderness they shared. How I wished for a man like the shepherd-king to hold me on cold nights like this. A pang of guilt shot through me. The mistress had lost her heart’s true love two years ago. She deserved to be happy—even if their marriage was no more than an abiding friendship of giggles in the night and tender daytime glances.

Their whispers grew softer, more serious. “Fought in the Arabah . . . back to Mahanaim . . . Abner’s men . . . many killed.” Though the report sounded like victory for the House of David, the king’s tone held no rejoicing.

“Abner has given you no choice, David.”

“Shh! Keep your voice down, Abi.”

Their whispers became undecipherable over Zeb’s soft snoring. His warm little body lay peacefully beside me. Seven years old now—nearly eight—he’d begin training as a shield bearer in only four years. I turned on my side and pulled him into the curve of my frame, cuddling the little boy who would too quickly leave me. What would become of me when he no longer needed a nursemaid, and Abital could easily complete her own household tasks?

“No, David! Go to one of your other wives!”

“Ima?” Zeb stirred at his ima’s protest.

“Shh, little man,” I whispered. “All is well.” Rubbing his back, I softly hummed a shepherd’s tune, aching for both the king and my mistress. Zeb resumed his slow, steady breathing, and I lay as quiet as a stone.

“I only want to hold you, Abi. Nothing else.”

“You say that, but I know you, David ben Je—”

“I vow it.”

I closed my eyes, listening so hard, I felt dizzy.

Abital sniffed. Were they angry tears? Sad? Afraid? I’d been afraid the first time a man took me in the Temple of Molech. A sigh. More sounds of weeping. King David’s quiet hushing. Intimate whispers I couldn’t hear, but I knew in the deepest part of me that Abital lay in his arms—*finally*.

A sense of joy and anticipation washed over me. No matter what happened to me, my dearest friend was on her way to healing in the arms of a man more loving and kind than any I’d ever imagined. I was only fourteen when the Amalekites raided my Ammonite village, but I’d suffered the savagery of men’s lust and abuse two years before when my abu sold me to the temple. When David’s army rescued their women and took them back to Ziklag, they saved me from more than the Amalekites. When Abital and Asahel chose me as Zeb’s nursemaid, their kindness proved Yahweh could care for one as soiled as me.

*Yahweh, the One true God of heaven and earth, lead Mistress and King David to a true union.* No two people deserved it more. My heart sped at a laughable thought. If what King David said was true—that Yahweh saw everyone and knew every heart—did he know my



deepest longing? *Yahweh, though I know I don't deserve anything from You, still I ask—since Your great mercy rescued me from those vile Amalekites, could You also find me a husband even half as kind as King David?* The prayer made me smile as silence tugged on my heavy eyelids. Sleep was a welcome friend that would hurry the morning.