

Michal

David's Wives – Part 7a

By Mesu Andrews

Note to Readers

It's always bittersweet to end a series or turn the final page of a beloved book. I've learned so much during the past year while researching and writing *David's Wives*. Perhaps one of the most exciting things was connecting David's lineage to the story of Jesus's provision of salvation as I'd heard it presented to me from Genesis 3:15.

Wait? Surely, I meant John 3:16, right? Who shares the Gospel of Jesus from the Old Testament? Well, I came to a personal *belief* in Jesus Christ for two reasons: 1) I saw the person's changed life, and 2) he showed me the Crimson Thread of Jesus's sacrifice woven throughout the *whole* Bible. Jesus was already on His Father's mind in Genesis 3:15—God's promised "Serpent Crusher" foretold in the serpent's curse after he deceived Eve:

*[God said to the serpent,]
"And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
[her offspring] will **crush your head**,
and you will strike his heel."*

Genesis 3:15 (*emphasis* added)

Every word of the Old Testament is a march toward God's restoration of the fellowship destroyed by sin in the Garden of Eden. Every woman after Eve—and then only the faithful women of the Covenant bearers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—longed to become the mother of the *Promised Deliverer*. Messiah. Christ. To restore the world to its rightful condition. It's why the old stories were preserved through *song* (an oral tradition before written records existed) by Adam, then Seth, then Noah, then Abraham, Moses, and so on.

Hundreds of years before David sat on the Tribe of Judah's throne, the patriarch Jacob (renamed Israel after wrestling all night with God Himself—Gen. 32:24-28) prophesied over his twelve sons. He said of his fourth son, Judah:

“The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his.”

Genesis 49:10

David was the first fulfillment of Jacob's/Israel's prophecy, the first of Judah's tribe to hold the scepter of Israel. God promised David that the scepter would never leave his descendants' hands.

[God said to David,] *“Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.”*

2 Samuel 7:16

Wouldn't it be fabulous if everyone—both in David's day and ours—read or heard God's Word, understood it completely, believed it wholeheartedly, and lived it out perfectly with no difference of opinion?

I think that's called *heaven!* Only Jesus—the Serpent Crusher, the One who fulfilled that Garden promise—the son of a young virgin in Nazareth is the complete fulfillment of *every* promise God ever made.

Until we see Him face-to-face, we live in a broken world with imperfect understanding, beliefs, lives, and opinions—ours and others. David faced the same with every addition to his household. Misunderstandings abounded. Motivations were as tricky as political agendas of today. Tensions increased with David's power, and relationships suffered with every step toward greatness.

As you read today's final story of *David's Wives*, please remember—it's creative *fiction*.
Though based on well-researched ancient facts, you'll find the Truth about today's events in 2
Samuel 3-5; 1 Chronicles 11-12.

Prologue

*“During the war between the house of Saul and the house of David,
Abner had been strengthening his own position in the house of Saul.*

Now Saul had had a concubine named Rizpah daughter of Aiah.

And Ish-Bosheth said to Abner, ‘Why did you sleep with my father’s concubine?’

Abner was very angry because of what Ish-Bosheth said.

So he answered, ‘Am I a dog’s head—on Judah’s side?’

This very day I am loyal to the house of your father Saul and to his family and friends.

I haven’t handed you over to David.

Yet now you accuse me of an offense involving this woman!

May God deal with Abner, be it ever so severely,

if I do not do for David what the Lord promised him on oath

and transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul

and establish David’s throne over Israel and Judah from Dan to Beersheba.’

Ish-Bosheth did not dare to say another word to Abner, because he was afraid of him.

Then Abner sent messengers on his behalf to say to David,

‘Whose land is it? Make an agreement with me,

and I will help you bring all Israel over to you.’

‘Good,’ said David. ‘I will make an agreement with you.

*But I demand one thing of you: Do not come into my presence unless you bring Michal daughter
of Saul when you come to see me.’*

Then David sent messengers to Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, demanding,

‘Give me my wife Michal, whom I betrothed to myself

for the price of a hundred Philistine foreskins.'

So Ish-Bosheth gave orders and had her taken away from her husband Paltiel son of Laish.

Her husband, however, went with her, weeping behind her all the way to Bahurim.

Then Abner said to him, 'Go back home!' So he went back."

2 Samuel 3:6–16

Chapter One

*“Then David sent messengers to Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, demanding,
‘Give me my wife Michal, whom I betrothed to myself
for the price of a hundred Philistine foreskins.’”*

2 Samuel 3:14

7th Year of David’s Reign

Hebron, Judah

David

Fourteen years had passed since I’d seen the woman riding toward me on the small white donkey. Michal, Saul’s daughter, Jonathan’s sister—she looked old. Gray tendrils streaked the renegade curls that peeked from the edges of her head covering as they always had. Her cheeks were rounder, her body fuller with the maturity of age. She was thirty-six, a year younger than me, but the dark shadows beneath her eyes bespoke a harder life than a king’s daughter should have lived.

Israel’s general rode beside her on a black stallion. Abner ben Ner looked as if he’d rather spear me than make me Israel’s king.

“We should have let the t’ruah blast call our men to arms,” Joab hissed. He’d been furious when I’d cancelled the first shofar’s nine, short blasts with the *shevarim*—three, medium-length signals—seldom heard.

“The shevarim brought more than warriors, Joab. I want Michal to see women and children when she arrives in her new home, not just soldiers with weapons.” Returning my gaze to her, I lifted my hand in greeting.

She raised her chin, eyes boring into mine with startling hostility. My breath caught at a terrifying thought. *What if she'd borne Paltiel children, and he'd kept them when Abner took her?* I leaned to my right, whispering to Joab. "Did she and Paltiel have children?"

"No," he snapped.

I was tired of his pouting. "Abner brought only a hundred men." Another thought occurred to me, one that would explain my nephew's unparalleled rancor toward Israel's general. "You're afraid I'll make Abner my general."

Joab's eyes remained forward, his sour expression unchanged. "You can't trust him, David."

"It's my distrust for Abner that prompted me to send a message directly to Ish-Bosheth. When our spies discovered the *reason* Abner offered to help me gain Israel's throne, I realized Saul's only living son could be in grave danger."

Joab's head turned slowly. "Why should you care if Ish-Bosheth's life is in danger? He stole your throne."

"He's Jonathan's brother—and Michal's. I have a responsibility to them and to Israel to gain the throne as peacefully as possible, which is the reason I demanded Michal's return directly from her brother. The fact that he sent her *with Abner* is him in essence renouncing his throne, Joab. Why can't you acknowledge Yahweh's hand in all this and rejoice with me?"

Between my nephew's grumbling and my first wife's glare, it was painfully apparent I would celebrate my victory alone.

"Is that her?" Eglah's voice captured my attention. My beautiful Ammonite wife hurried toward me, greeted my donkey with a scratch behind its ears, and looped her arm in mine. "She doesn't look happy," she whispered, appraising our guests. "Nor does General Abner."

“I forced Abner’s hand by sending my demand for Michal to Ish-Bosheth directly. The general had vowed to gain favor from *all* of Israel’s tribes, but that was months ago. I don’t yet know the reason for Michal’s sour disposition.”

She grinned at me and removed her arm from mine. “I suspect you’ll find out shortly what troubles your first wife.” Eglah stepped away, putting a pace between us.

My sixth wife seldom shared her wisdom unless asked, so I slid off my donkey and slipped my arm around her waist. “Tell me then.” I nestled my lips against her ear. “Why would a woman save my life from her abba’s assassins fourteen years ago but look at me now as if she’d raise a dagger against me herself?”

Eglah nudged me away. “If Michal loved you then, as you believe she did, she’ll feel threatened by our affection. I suspect she’s done whatever was necessary to survive these fourteen years, David, including changing her feelings for you. She likely never expected to see you again.” Her lovely eyes held me without judgment. “Give her time to know you as *King* David. I suspect you’ve both changed.”

I wanted to wrap her in my arms or brush her feather-soft cheek. But she was right. Any sign of affection could be hurtful to my first wife—yet newest addition.

Abner reined his horse to a halt five paces away. “Patience has never been your strength, my lord.” He grabbed the bridle of Michal’s donkey and turned a disgusted glare at Joab. “The t’ruah’s call to arms was your command, no doubt.”

“And was quickly remedied by the shevarim and this *peaceful* gathering,” I said before Joab could incite trouble. Lifting my arms to direct Abner’s attention to the crowded hillsides, I hoped to break the tension. “You see more than the Tribe of Judah gathered here, General.

Faithful Israelites from every tribe moved to Hebron months ago, pledging their allegiance to King David, Yahweh's anointed."

"Yet Benjamin's tribe—*my* tribe, the tribe of Saul's ancestors and descendants—still doesn't fully support you," he said. "Without Benjamin's tribe, which lies like a womb inside Judah's borders, your reign can only give birth to illegitimate children. I need more time to woo them, David."

"It's *King* David," Joab growled. "And you want more time to betray him."

"Would I bring Michal into your camp with only a hundred soldiers if—"

"Of course. You've come to spy!" Joab reached for his dagger, and Abner's men advanced.

The Mighty Men surrounded me like a shackle, swords drawn.

"Stop!" I shouted. "All of you, sheath your weapons. Now!" Shoving my way past my mountainous faithful, I reached Abner and Michal again—and saw my wife's eyes moist with fear.

She looked away, then bowed her head.

She needs peace. Yahweh's inner directive was like a shofar's blast. There had been enough bloodshed between the House of Saul and the House of David.

I stepped to Michal's side and spoke to her quietly. "Would you like to remain on the donkey and ride to your tent, or would you rather walk with me?"

She raised her head slowly, cheeks now tear-streaked. "I'd rather die than be with you."

Shocked. Grieved. Humiliated. My emotions swirled into barely-controlled rage that I aimed at Abner. "Leave, General. Leave now."

"But we need to discuss—"

“We have nothing to discuss. My spies discovered the reason you betrayed Ish-Bosheth. How do I trust a man who sleeps with his master’s concubine?”

Abner’s eyes narrowed. “Rizpah and I loved each other before Saul took her to his bed. I never touched her while she belonged to King Saul. She and I *married* in secret two years ago. Rizpah has nothing to do with Israel’s throne.”

I wanted to believe him, but Abner had been as loyal to Saul’s household as Joab was to mine. So, unless Abner *proved* his loyalty, I would regard him as ruthless and deceptive. “Sleep with whomever you wish, General. Until you bring the elders of Israel and the leaders of Benjamin to me, pledging their allegiance, we have nothing to discuss.” I took the reins of Michal’s donkey from him.

“I’ve met with—”

Turning my back, I extended my other hand to Eglah and led Princess Michal away. Eglah fell in step beside me after a quick glance at the hostile wife on the donkey behind us. She whispered, “Are you sure she has no dagger to hurl at your back?”

I chuckled. “Ahinoam is my only warrior wife.”

“So you think.” She grinned and slid aside her outer cloak, revealing a sheath and dagger on a decorative belt.

Without thinking, I pulled her close and kissed her forehead. Realizing my insensitivity, I glimpsed Michal’s reaction over my shoulder. She hurriedly averted her gaze, wiping more tears. Eglah’s insight had been valuable. *I suspect she did whatever was necessary to survive these fourteen years.* What had Michal endured with the soldier, Paltiel? I’d known him only as King Saul’s bodyguard. He was cruel to prisoners, nearly twice my size, and as fierce in battle as a wild beast. Bile rose in my throat at the thought of Michal in his arms.

I glanced at her again, lingering this time to examine her face, her hands, anything that might indicate Paltiel's brutality. She bulged her eyes, indignant at my perusal, and very different—as Eglah had warned—than the shy, young princess I'd first met.

Saul's youngest daughter had been lovely—not stunning like Abigail, Maakah, or Eglah—but Michal's beauty emanated from the love in her eyes. Only Ima had loved me all my life. My friendship with the king's son, Jonathan, had been a gift from Yahweh. Unexplainable. Indescribable—even through my psalms—but our friendship had been a love empowered by the Creator, different than any other on earth. On the day I claimed Michal as my bride—offering to King Saul the hundred Philistine foreskins as my pauper's bride price—Jonathan escorted his sister to the throne room.

Michal fainted when I dumped the foreskins at Saul's feet. He laughed so hard he cried, but I knelt beside my bride, fanning her. The moment she revived, she wrapped her arms around my neck and kissed me, surprising everyone—especially me.

“You're far away,” Eglah whispered, bringing me back, “but you've got a pleasing smile.” We were climbing the hill to our camp. I'd been lost in thought for the whole trek.

“She kissed me first.” I said it quietly, not wishing to make Michal angrier. “And she was my first kiss.”

“But she wasn't your last,” Eglah said with an impish grin.

I laughed, alerting those safely hidden that we'd returned. “Abba!” Four little boys came squealing toward me from Abigail's tent, where the other wives waited.

“You have six wives and soon to be five children who love you very much.” Eglah placed her hand on her belly. “And I've been meaning to tell you . . . you'll soon have *six* children.”

“Oh, my love!” I dropped the reins and pulled Eglah into my arms.

My sons encircled me, all speaking at once. “Is the war over now, Abba?”

“Did you kill Israel’s general?”

“Is General Joab going to kill the other general?”

“No one is going to kill anyone,” I said, releasing Eglah with a silent apology. We would celebrate her news later. Kneeling before my four rambunctious boys, I gathered them together.

“There will be no more fighting among Israel’s tribes, boys, and General Joab must learn to fight *with* General Abner.”

Adonijah, the youngest, tugged at my sleeve. “Who’s the sad lady on the donkey?”

I turned my attention to Michal. Her cheeks had lost all color, and she stared at my sons as if they were an army of Philistines. I couldn’t ask her to face my other wives yet. “She’s my wife,” I said to the boys. “And she’s going to live in my tent until she gets to know everyone a little better.”