

“Michal – Daughter of a King”

1 Samuel 14:49; 18:20; 18:27-29; 19:11-17; 1 Samuel 25:44; 2 Samuel 3:13-16; 6:16; 6:20; 6:23

Of all the women in the Bible we have studied thus far, today’s lesson on Michal, daughter of Saul and wife of David, may leave a not too pleasant taste in one’s mouth. While she possessed some redeeming qualities, as we will see; unfortunately, she did not share the same humility, love and heart for God that David did.

The bible introduces us to Michal in **1 Samuel 14:49**: *“The sons of Saul were Jonathan, Jishui, and Malchishua. And the names of his two daughters were these: the name of the firstborn Merab, and the name of the younger Michal.”* As the daughter of a king, brought up in a palace, she was exposed to all the privileges and advantages of royalty. Of course, this also meant that when she came of age, her marriage would be arranged by her father, which was customary at the time. Because her father just happened to be the king, however, this made the hand of her and her sister that much more valuable.

Arranged marriages did not afford the consideration of whatever feelings the bride and groom might have had; however, in the case of David and Michal, she had fallen in love with him long before she was given in marriage to him. It’s interesting to note that it was actually her older sister Merab who had first been promised to David as his reward for killing the Philistine giant Goliath. *“Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel; and it shall be that the man who kills him the king will enrich with great riches, will give him his daughter, and give his father’s house exemption from taxes in Israel.”* 1 Samuel 17:25 This was what was promised to the one who would rid Israel of this terrifying Philistine champion! That man would, of course, prove to be David.

We know that after David’s defeat of Goliath, this put him in favor with the whole nation of Israel, King Saul notwithstanding. He was a national hero, and immediately Saul treated him as such and even set him over his army. It is not clear whether or not Saul recognized David as the same musician who had been summoned to his court on those occasions when Saul was plagued by a distressing spirit. David would play his harp, and the evil spirit would leave Saul. And yet, here was this same young man, having demonstrated his confidence in the Lord by standing up to slay an adversary that had caused Saul and his whole army to cower in fear. As he continued to be victorious against the enemies of Israel, David’s popularity with the people grew, and a familiar song began to circulate with the words, *“Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.”* There was no doubt that the nation of Israel had become captivated by the handsome young poet, musician and courageous warrior. And this was the person with whom Michal became enamored. Who wouldn’t have? What was there not to love?

As David’s popularity grew, Saul began to despise him. Filled with jealousy and the fear that the people would come to prefer David as king over him, Saul devised a plan to get rid of him. He had not followed through with his promise to give his daughter Merab to David for killing Goliath. However, when he was told that Michal was in love with David, Saul maliciously sought to have David killed by sending him into battle against the Philistines. **1 Samuel 18:20**: *“Now Michal, Saul’s daughter, loved David. And they told Saul, and the thing pleased him. So Saul said, ‘I will give her to him, that she may be a snare to him, and that The hand of the Philistines may be against him.’ Therefore, Saul said to David a second time, ‘You shall be my son-in-law today.’”* This was not a sincere desire for David to become part of his family, Saul was really hoping that David would become a dead hero. We know that David wrote many of the psalms while he was on the run, and this excerpt from Psalm 55 expresses his thoughts about Saul: *“The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords.”* Psalm 55:21

Contrary to other cultures, in the Jewish culture, it was customary for a dowry to be paid by the groom’s family. It was called a “mohar”. In essence, it was like purchasing the bride. Using this custom to his advantage, King Saul directed his servants to tell David that rather than a dowry, he wanted David to lead his army in battle against the Philistines and bring back 100 of their foreskins as payment for Michal. His intention was that David would probably be slain in battle. David agreed to the terms and wound up bringing back not 100, but 200

foreskins, much to the dismay of Saul! *“Then Saul gave him Michal his daughter as a wife. Thus Saul saw and knew that the Lord was with David, and that Michal, Saul’s daughter, loved him; and Saul was still more afraid of David. So Saul became David’s enemy continually.”* **1 Samuel 18:27-29**

Not much more is said in the Bible at this point about David and Michal’s relationship. We would like to think that they enjoyed a honeymoon period and that they were happy, but we do not know for sure. Isn’t it interesting that while the Bible makes it clear that Michal loved David, there is nothing said about David feeling the same way about her, which is sad. And though we cannot be sure whether he loved her or not, an event takes place in Chapter 19 of 1 Samuel, which makes it abundantly clear how much Michal really loved him.

King Saul was consumed with hatred for David and would not rest until he was dead. God had other plans for David, however, and would continue to preserve David’s life, despite Saul’s attempts to have him killed. Sending David into battle against the Philistines had backfired, and even throwing his own spear at him in a rage also missed. So Saul conspires to have his servants stake out his home at night and kill him when he leaves in the morning. Somehow, Michal finds out about her father’s plans and devises her own plan to save David. She knew that she would be betraying her father by protecting her husband, and that she could possibly lose her own life. Here is the account from **1 Samuel 19:11-19**:

“Saul also sent messengers to David’s house to watch him and to kill him in the morning. And Michal, David’s wife, told him, saying, ‘If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed.’ So Michal let David down through a window. And he went and fled and escaped. And Michal took an image and laid it in the bed, put a cover of goats’ hair for his head and covered it with clothes. So when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, ‘He is sick.’ Then Saul sent the messengers back to see David, saying, ‘Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may kill him.’ And when the messengers had come in, there was the image in the bed, with a cover of goats’ hair for his head. Then Saul said to Michal, ‘Why have you deceived me like this, and sent my enemy away, so that he has escaped?’ And Michal answered Saul, ‘He said to me, ‘Let me go! Why should I kill you?’”

Upon reading this account, several things stand out. First, the fact that Michal chose to betray her own father and even risked her own life to save David demonstrates how much she cared for him. She could have easily been accused of treason and put to death. Secondly, the fact that she had idol images in their home shows that she was not submitted to the same God that David worshipped. And thirdly, here was God’s divine intervention once again in preserving David’s life, this time by using Saul’s own daughter.

The next few years find David running and hiding from Saul, who continues to seek his life. Meanwhile back at home, there was Michal, alone and abandoned by the husband she had loved. Not only had she protected him with her life, but she had also sacrificed her own happiness that he might flee and be safe. David’s escape was also a goodbye; she must have known that they would be separated. We know that it was during this time that David was fleeing here and there, that he acquired two more wives: Abigail, who had been the wife of the evil Nabal (from our Lesson 7) and another woman, Ahinoam of Jezreel. (1 Samuel 25:42-43) The Bible does not say whether Michal knew about these other wives or not, but given David’s fame, there is every reason to think that she probably did. As a woman, she must have experienced feelings of loss and betrayal. And then we are told in **1 Samuel 25:44**, *“But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David’s wife, to Palti, the son of Laish, who was from Gallim.”* Knowing how much Saul hated David, is it any wonder that he would choose to just call off David’s marriage to his daughter and give her in marriage to another man? We can only imagine what this did to Michal. Not only was she abandoned by her husband, but now she was being treated as property to be passed around at the will of her father. Poor, sad, Michal!

We do not hear anything more about her until the book of 2 Samuel. By this time, Saul was dead, and David was ready to finally claim his rightful place as heir to Saul’s throne and unite the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. After Saul’s death, it was Abner, the commander of Saul’s army, who was in power over the house of Saul. He sent word to David that he wanted to make a covenant with him and unite the house of Saul with the house of David. David’s response was that he was willing to do this on one condition. *“And David said, ‘Good, I will make a covenant with you. But one thing I require of you: you shall not see my face unless you first bring Michal, Saul’s*

daughter, when you come to see my face.’ So David sent messengers to Ishbosheth, Saul’s son, saying, ‘Give me my wife Michal, whom I betrothed to myself for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines. And Ishbosheth sent and took her from her husband, from Paltiel the son of Laish. Then her husband went along with her to Bahurim, weeping behind her. So Abner said to him, ‘Go, return!’ And he returned.” **2 Samuel 3:13-16**

What a pitiful scene. Michal, without any consideration of how she felt, was forced from the home she had established with her second husband, and is now once again being bartered around for political reasons. We do not know what David’s personal feelings towards her were at this point, but we do know that by now he had acquired four more wives, besides Abigail and Ahinoam. (2 Samuel 3:2-5) David knew that the Lord had anointed him to be King of Israel, there was no doubt of that in his mind. It may be, however, that he felt this injustice perpetrated by Saul against him in removing the daughter he had promised him, and for which he had paid dearly, was something that had to be made right if he was to have the confidence of the people. One thing we can probably assume is that whatever love Michal may have still had for David, that was gone now, and she really began to despise him!

The last account of Michal is in the 6th chapter of **2 Samuel**. After David had been established as King of Israel, it was his desire to return the Ark of the Covenant to ancient Jerusalem, which he had renamed The City of David. This was no easy feat, and it came at the cost of many hard lessons learned by David along the way, even including the loss of life. Nevertheless, the day came when David accompanied the Ark as it was carried into the city on the shoulders of four priests. David unabashedly danced *“with all his might”* before the Lord clad only in a linen ephod. There were shouts of joy and the sound of trumpets as the Ark entered the city. *“Now as the ark of the Lord came into the City of David, Michal, Saul’s daughter, looked through a window and saw King David leaping and whirling before the Lord, and she despised him in her heart.”* **2 Samuel 6:16**

Not only did Michal not share David’s passion for worshipping the Lord as he had openly demonstrated, but she seized the opportunity to lash out and berate him. *“Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, ‘How glorious was the king of Israel today, uncovering himself today in the eyes of the maids of his servants, as one of the base fellows shamelessly uncovers himself.’”* **2 Samuel 6:20**. All the years of pent-up unhappiness and bitterness flowed out of Michal’s mouth at that moment. Hers had been a life of disappointment (her marriage to David had not turned out well), a life of loss (having mourned the deaths of her father and brothers) and a life of sadness (torn away from a husband who really loved her). Most of all, though, it had been a life of greater loss; having never known the God of David who loved her unconditionally and the only One who could have saved her from a life of misery. After David rebuked her for her harsh, acidic words, we read in **2 Samuel 6:23**, *“Therefore, Michal the daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.”* What a sad epitaph for Michal ... that she is mostly remembered for this public display of pride and arrogance.

Lessons to be learned from the life of Michal:

- Michal missed the boat when it came to a relationship with the Lord. Deuteronomy 6:5 says, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”* It may be that she was looking for love in all the wrong places.
- Michal may have thought that marrying David, her hero and the darling golden boy of all of Israel, was her key to happiness, but only having love for God can allow us to find true happiness. *“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”* Matthew 6:33
- Psalm 37:4 says, *“Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.”* If Michal had pursued righteousness instead of haughtiness, forgiveness instead of vengeance, joy instead of bitterness, who knows if the Lord would have granted her a happier outcome.
- For all of the honor and wealth she had been born into, Michal was full of pride. We know that God does not like pride. Psalm 101:5 says, *“The one who has a haughty look and a proud heart, him I will not endure.”* Proverbs 16:18: *“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”*

“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” James 4:6 & 1 Peter 5:5

