

EVERYONE LOVES DAVID

18 After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. **2** From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return home to his family. **3** And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. **4** Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.

5 Whatever mission Saul sent him on, David was so successful that Saul gave him a high rank in the army. This pleased all the troops, and Saul's officers as well.

6 When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with timbrels and lyres. **7** As they danced, they sang:

"Saul has slain his thousands,
and David his tens of thousands."

8 Saul was very angry; this refrain displeased him greatly. "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?" **9** And from that time on Saul kept a close eye on David.

10 The next day an evil^[a] spirit from God came forcefully on Saul. He was prophesying in his house, while David was playing the lyre, as he usually did. Saul had a spear in his hand **11** and he hurled it, saying to himself, "I'll pin David to the wall." But David eluded him twice.

12 Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with David but had departed from Saul. **13** So he sent David away from him and gave him command over a thousand men, and David led the troops in their campaigns. **14** In everything he did he had great success, because the LORD was with him. **15** When Saul saw how successful he was, he was afraid of him. **16** But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he led them in their campaigns.

17 Saul said to David, "Here is my older daughter Merab. I will give her to you in marriage; only serve me bravely and fight the battles of the LORD." For Saul said to himself, "I will not raise a hand against him. Let the Philistines do that!"

¹⁸ But David said to Saul, “Who am I, and what is my family or my clan in Israel, that I should become the king’s son-in-law?” ¹⁹ So^[b] when the time came for Merab, Saul’s daughter, to be given to David, she was given in marriage to Adriel of Meholah.

²⁰ Now Saul’s daughter Michal was in love with David, and when they told Saul about it, he was pleased. ²¹ “I will give her to him,” he thought, “so that she may be a snare to him and so that the hand of the Philistines may be against him.” So Saul said to David, “Now you have a second opportunity to become my son-in-law.”

²² Then Saul ordered his attendants: “Speak to David privately and say, ‘Look, the king likes you, and his attendants all love you; now become his son-in-law.’”

²³ They repeated these words to David. But David said, “Do you think it is a small matter to become the king’s son-in-law? I’m only a poor man and little known.”

²⁴ When Saul’s servants told him what David had said, ²⁵ Saul replied, “Say to David, ‘The king wants no other price for the bride than a hundred Philistine foreskins, to take revenge on his enemies.’” Saul’s plan was to have David fall by the hands of the Philistines.

²⁶ When the attendants told David these things, he was pleased to become the king’s son-in-law. So before the allotted time elapsed, ²⁷ David took his men with him and went out and killed two hundred Philistines and brought back their foreskins. They counted out the full number to the king so that David might become the king’s son-in-law. Then Saul gave him his daughter Michal in marriage.

²⁸ When Saul realized that the LORD was with David and that his daughter Michal loved David, ²⁹ Saul became still more afraid of him, and he remained his enemy the rest of his days.

³⁰ The Philistine commanders continued to go out to battle, and as often as they did, David met with more success than the rest of Saul’s officers, and his name became well known.

Saul Tries to Kill David

19 Saul told his son Jonathan and all the attendants to kill David. But Jonathan had taken a great liking to David ² and warned him, “My father Saul is looking for a chance to kill you. Be on your guard tomorrow morning; go into hiding and stay

there. ³ I will go out and stand with my father in the field where you are. I'll speak to him about you and will tell you what I find out."

⁴ Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, "Let not the king do wrong to his servant David; he has not wronged you, and what he has done has benefited you greatly. ⁵ He took his life in his hands when he killed the Philistine. The LORD won a great victory for all Israel, and you saw it and were glad. Why then would you do wrong to an innocent man like David by killing him for no reason?"

⁶ Saul listened to Jonathan and took this oath: "As surely as the LORD lives, David will not be put to death."

⁷ So Jonathan called David and told him the whole conversation. He brought him to Saul, and David was with Saul as before.

⁸ Once more war broke out, and David went out and fought the Philistines. He struck them with such force that they fled before him.

⁹ But an evil^[a] spirit from the LORD came on Saul as he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand. While David was playing the lyre, ¹⁰ Saul tried to pin him to the wall with his spear, but David eluded him as Saul drove the spear into the wall. That night David made good his escape.

¹¹ Saul sent men to David's house to watch it and to kill him in the morning. But Michal, David's wife, warned him, "If you don't run for your life tonight, tomorrow you'll be killed." ¹² So Michal let David down through a window, and he fled and escaped. ¹³ Then Michal took an idol and laid it on the bed, covering it with a garment and putting some goats' hair at the head.

¹⁴ When Saul sent the men to capture David, Michal said, "He is ill."

¹⁵ Then Saul sent the men back to see David and told them, "Bring him up to me in his bed so that I may kill him." ¹⁶ But when the men entered, there was the idol in the bed, and at the head was some goats' hair.

¹⁷ Saul said to Michal, "Why did you deceive me like this and send my enemy away so that he escaped?"

Michal told him, "He said to me, 'Let me get away. Why should I kill you?'"

¹⁸ When David had fled and made his escape, he went to Samuel at Ramah and told him all that Saul had done to him. Then he and Samuel went to Naioth and stayed there. ¹⁹ Word came to Saul: "David is in Naioth at Ramah"; ²⁰ so he sent men to capture him. But when they saw a group of prophets prophesying, with

Samuel standing there as their leader, the Spirit of God came on Saul's men, and they also prophesied. ²¹ Saul was told about it, and he sent more men, and they prophesied too. Saul sent men a third time, and they also prophesied. ²² Finally, he himself left for Ramah and went to the great cistern at Seku. And he asked, "Where are Samuel and David?"

"Over in Naioth at Ramah," they said.

²³ So Saul went to Naioth at Ramah. But the Spirit of God came even on him, and he walked along prophesying until he came to Naioth. ²⁴ He stripped off his garments, and he too prophesied in Samuel's presence. He lay naked all that day and all that night. This is why people say, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

MICHAL – MIDRASH AND AGGADAH

Michal, daughter of Saul, married David. In love with David, Michal proved her loyalty to her husband over her father when she saved David from her father's attack on his life. In the Midrash, Michal is praised for her loyalty to her husband and her rejection of her father's authority. When Michal later disrespected David publicly, she was punished with a prophecy that to her dying day she would have no children. The Aggadah recounts that Michal had a son on the day she died. When her sister Merab died, Michal raised her five children as her own.

Michal's Marriage to David

Michal was Saul's younger daughter, who fell in love with David and married him for one hundred Philistine foreskins. According to the Bible, [Merab](#), Saul's older daughter, was to have married David, but she was given in matrimony to Adriel the Meholathite, while David married Michal. Despite the Biblical account, some Rabbis assert that David married both of Saul's daughters. The Rabbis ask how David could have married two sisters, an act that is prohibited by the [halakhah](#), and answer that David first married Merab, and married Michal after her

death (T [Sotah](#) [ed. Lieberman] 11:18). A different Rabbinic position, however, denies that David married Merab (BT [Sanhedrin 19b](#)).

The Rabbis present Michal as a beautiful woman, who was lusted after by all who saw her (BT [Megillah](#) 15a). They claim that she was David's favorite wife and was therefore called "Eglah" (calf), because she was as beloved to him as a calf. Eglah, the name of one of David's wives, is mentioned in [II Sam. 3:5](#). The identification between these two wives of David—Eglah and Michal—resulted from the desire of the Rabbis to limit the number of David's wives. The Torah ([Deut. 17:17](#)) mandates that the king "shall not have many wives"; the maximum number permitted to a king under this rule, according to the Rabbis, is eighteen. [II Sam. 3:2–5](#) records that David had six wives when he was in Hebron: Ahinoam of Jezreel, Abigail wife of Nabil the Carmelite, [Maacah](#) daughter of Talmai, Haggith, Abital, and Eglah.

Afterwards, the prophet Nathan tells him ([II Sam. 12:8](#)): "I would give you twice as much over," which the Rabbis understand to mean that the number of wives that David already had would be tripled: from six to eighteen. Since Michal was not included in the list of his first six wives but was already married to him before this statement by the prophet, the Rabbis identified Eglah with Michal. They interpreted "Eglah" as an appellation, rather than a proper name, and gave it various meanings; for additional understandings of this appellation, see below (BT [Sanhedrin 21a](#)).

Loyalty to David

The Book of Samuel relates that Michal and Jonathan loved David and protected him from their father's evil designs. Expanding on this, the [Midrash](#) states that Michal saved David from danger within the house, and Jonathan, from external danger, and applies to them the verse ([Eccl. 4:9](#)): "Two are better than one" ([Midrash Tehillim 59:1](#)). Expanding on the Biblical account ([I Sam. 19:11–17](#)) of how Michal aided David to flee when her father sought to kill him, the Rabbis tell of

Michal's wise actions in saving her husband's life and the intelligent manner in which she withstood her father's rage. To avoid Saul's guards, who were stationed at the entrance to the house to prevent David from escaping, she let David down from the window. When Saul's agents came up, she pretended that David was ill and placed a household idol and a net of goat's hair in his bed, as if her husband were still lying there (vv. 13–16). The midrash states that when Saul learned of this, he was angry with his daughter and demanded of her: "Why did you deceive me and let my enemy escape?" Michal replied: "You are the one who married me to this brigand! David stood over me with a sword to kill me, and said to me: 'If you don't help me to escape, I will kill you.' I was scared. I was afraid of him, and I helped him to escape." Michal thereby alluded to her father that he was the one who had arranged her marriage to David in return for the military victory over the Philistines, and one should not expect a soldier to change his disposition. For her actions in this episode, Michal was given the appellation of Eglah: like a calf that does not accept a yoke on its neck, Michal did not accept her father's authority, but stood by her husband (*Midrash Tehillim* 59:4). The "Woman of Valor" poem (*Prov.* 31:10–31) praises her for saving David from death and devotes to her the verse (v. 23): "Her husband is prominent in the gates." (*Midrash Eshet Hayil* 31:23).

The Rabbis emphasize that even when Michal was given to another, she remained faithful to David. *I Sam.* 25:44 records that during one of the times that David fled from Saul, the latter gave Michal to Palti[el] son of Laish. According to the Rabbis, Saul did so upon the evil counsel of Doeg the Edomite. Doeg told Saul that since David had rebelled against the king, he deserved to die, and indeed, was already considered to be a dead man: his life was free for the taking, as was his wife. Saul accordingly gave his daughter, who was already married, to Palti (*Gen. Rabbah* 32:1). The Rabbis maintain that although Michal and Paltiel lived together as a married couple, they did not engage in intercourse.

He was given the name Paltiel (*palat-el*) because God (*El*) attests of him that he was saved (*niflat*) from sin, and did not touch David's wife (*Lev. Rabbah* 23:10). Paltiel placed his sword between them and said: "Whoever engages in this [intercourse] shall be stabbed by this sword." Paltiel overcame his sexual urge to such an extent that he was regarded as a woman, and not a man, as is learned from the verse ([II Sam. 3:16](#)): "*Ishah* [that could be understood either as "her husband" or "a woman"] walked with her"—he became for her as a woman. The "Woman of Valor" poem alludes to this conduct by Paltiel ([Prov. 31:29](#)): "[Many women have done well,] but you surpass them all" (BT [Sanhedrin 19b–20a](#)). Saul, in striking contrast, made light of the sexual prohibitions, and gave a married woman to another; accordingly, he was punished by the loss of his kingship (*Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*, chap. 29).