

Michal- Daughter of Saul Unrequited Love

Pronunciation:

In our culture, Michael is generally considered to be a masculine name and is pronounced as (My-Kuhl). Our Michal is the feminine form of the masculine name Michael. It shares the same meaning as the masculine form. In Hebrew, Michal is pronounced (Me-Hall) and the masculine form is pronounced as (Me-hall-el). For the sake of our lesson, I will only give the Hebrew pronunciation here and will pronounce her name as (My-Kuhl) throughout the remainder of the lesson.

Meaning:

Michal- “Who is Like God” or “What is God like”
The meaning of the name expresses an inquiry after the nature of God

Family Information:

Michal was the youngest of the two daughters of King Saul and Ahinoam. She was the sister of Jonathan, a close friend of David. (1 Samuel 14:49)

Where in the Bible:

The story of Michal is found in 1 Samuel chapters 18-19, and 25 as well as in 2 Samuel chapters 3,6. The events of 2 Samuel 6 are also recorded in 1 Chronicles chapter 15. Psalm 59 was written by David when Saul’s messengers came to take him. Additionally, there is a reference to Michal in 2 Sam 21, which requires explanation, if time allows we will address that at the end.

It is a sad story of love, loss, and bitterness. The events we have are fragmented at best. As with many obscure bible stories where minimal details are provided, we must piece together what we can and try to fill in the gaps where possible. The culture, customs of the people, geography, related texts, and like events can aid our understanding.

We will begin with what we know about Michal’s life. Saul and David figure in as prominent characters in her story yet as much as possible I will try to approach this lesson from the perspective of Michal herself.

I. The Struggle between Saul and David

1 Samuel 15:28 And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, *that is better than thou*.

- A. Though Saul had some success early in his reign as King, it became evident that he was not a man who truly regarded God's will. On multiple occasions, he took matters into his own hands and did as he saw fit rather than following the commandments of God. As a result, the Kingdom was to be taken from him.

1 Samuel 18:7-9 And the women answered *one another* as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. **8** And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed *but* thousands: and *what* can he have more but the kingdom? **9** And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.

- B. Knowing that another had been chosen to replace him, Saul grew paranoid and foolishly supposed that he might be able to thwart God's plan by killing this chosen one.

1 Samuel 18:12 And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul.

- C. Jealousy gripped Saul, as he perceived that the Lord was with David now, as he had once been with him.

1 Samuel 18:20-21 And Michal Saul's daughter loved David: and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him. **21** And Saul said, I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him. Wherefore Saul said to David, Thou shalt this day be my son in law in *the one of the twain*.

- D. This led to as many as 11 attempts by Saul on David's life, either actively or passively by placing him in harm's way. It is for this reason that Michal comes into the story.

II. Saul's Failures as a Father; 1 Samuel 18:17-21, 1 Samuel 25:44

A father is the first man a young woman will love.

Colossians 3:21 Fathers, provoke not your children *to anger*, lest they be discouraged (broken in spirit).

A. A Godly Father Knows the Lord

1. Was Saul saved? Though we may not have a definitive answer, in the end, he did not live his life like a man who knew God and as a result was likely little help to Michal in spiritual matters.

1 John 3:15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

B. A Godly Father Loves and Honors the Lord

1. Saul was impatient and harsh. He was extremely envious of David. He sought his own honor and behaved very wickedly. Sadly, this was the example of a father that Michal grew up with.

1 Corinthians 13:4-6 Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, **5** Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; **6** Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

C. A Godly Father sets an Example for his Children

1. Saul became paranoid, obsessed, deceitful, and compulsive in his behavior. He was not a man of integrity and this undoubtedly had an impact on Michal.

Proverbs 20:7 The just *man* walketh in his integrity: his children *are* blessed after him.

D. A Godly Father lays up for His Children

1. Saul used the people around him for his own benefit. Michal's love for David was only viewed as an opportunity to help him defeat his enemy. He was manipulative and used Michal as a pawn in his political match with David on more than one occasion. The second occasion occurred during the time that David was on the run. In an effort once again to injure David or to provoke him, Saul married Michal off to another man, Phalti.

2 Corinthians 12:14 Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

E. A Godly Father guides His children into Truth

3 John 1:4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

1. Sadly, Saul was so self-centered and self-serving it seems unlikely that he provided any guidance to Michal at all.

What impact might this have had on Michal? Perhaps she felt unlovable, abandoned, insignificant. If this was God's king, how would this have contributed to what Michal thought of this God?

1 Samuel 19:10-18

III. David's Shortcomings in His Marriage with Michal; 2 Samuel 3:14-16

Genesis 3:16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire *shall be* to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

If a father is the first man a young woman loves, her husband is the next. It is also probable that the expectation of love that her father failed to give her was multiplied and transferred to David. David was a man after God's own heart. Yet, this does not mean he was without fault. We want to be careful not to fault David where the scripture does not but we must also remember that this is a historical book. It gives us the facts of what happened and does not always provide commentary on God's take on the situation. The following are some potential ways in which David erred in his marriage with Michal.

A. A Godly Husband Knows the Lord

1 Samuel 19:13 And Michal took an image, and laid *it* in the bed, and put a pillow of goats' *hair* for his bolster, and covered *it* with a cloth.

1. There is no doubt that David was a saved man. Yet there is some doubt as to how influential he was in the spiritual life of Michal. This is indicated by the image used by Michal in their home to hide David's escape.

This was not an innocent decoration, it was a "teraphim". Which is everywhere else used in the scripture to refer to an idol, or is in some way associated with the practice of idolatry. A thing strictly forbidden (Ex. 20:3-5). Why was this in David's home?

Most likely it belonged to Michal, yet does this excuse David? Here are some possibilities for how or why it was there.

- a. Perhaps, David did not know it was there, Michal kept it hidden from him. Even so, it is the responsibility of the head of the household to guard what comes into the home.
- b. Perhaps David knew it was there but allowed it to keep the peace. This of course would be even worse and would indicate a lack of genuine love by David for his new wife. When we truly love those around us we must love them enough to correct them when they are under the influence of wicked purposes that threaten their spiritual well-being.
- c. Perhaps they had only recently been married and Michal brought this with her from her father's house and David had not yet had to address it. If this was the case then David married one who worshiped idols.

Regardless of the reason for the idol being in their home, it was an indication of potential issues that were ahead for the marriage of David and Michal. It reveals that they did not share the same beliefs or even God in their religion, which in time can create many issues.

B. A Godly Husband has one wife, has eyes only for his wife, and is committed to her

1 Corinthians 7:1-3 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: *It is good for a man not to touch a woman.* **2** Nevertheless, *to avoid fornication,* let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. **3** Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

Genesis 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

1. After running for his life, the scripture tells us that David took additional wives. The subject of polygamy in the Old Testament can be challenging for us to understand. The first man to take two wives was the Lamech of the ungodly line of Cain, this we may expect. However, the challenge comes in the fact that Godly men such as Abraham and David had more than one wife. Additionally, we do not see God outrightly condemn the practice in the way we may expect. Does this mean it was good? Certainly not. As one writer said, "Just because a thing is described in the bible, does not mean it is prescribed by God". The Lord taught us that we can judge a tree by its fruit. Polygamy produced many issues in nearly every instance we see in the scripture. It created problems for the man, problems among the children, and created very painful experiences for the women. Michal was David's first wife but sadly, not his only.

C. He puts her needs above his own and will give of himself for her benefit

2 Samuel 3:14-16 And David sent messengers to Ishbosheth Saul's son, saying, Deliver *me* my wife Michal, which I espoused to me for an hundred foreskins of the Philistines. **15** And Ishbosheth sent, and took her from *her* husband, *even* from Phaltiel the son of Laish. **16** And her husband went with her along weeping behind her to Bahurim. Then said Abner unto him, Go, return. And he returned.

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

1. After Saul's death, the power struggle between the House of David and the House of Saul continued. To assert his power, David requires Abner to return Michal, his wife, to him. As we recall, Saul had given Michal to another man, Phalti. The context of this seems to indicate that David's recalling of Michal was a political power move that benefited him. Sadly, Phalti seems to be the one man in her story that genuinely loves Michal as we are told that while she was being taken from him, he followed behind weeping after her.

D. He loves and cherishes her, recognizing her as a blessing from God

Ephesians 5:28-29 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. **29** For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

1. By the time we finally see David prepared to bless his family, the heart of Michal had become overrun with bitterness. As he went out to bless her, she met him with scorn.

IV. A Heart Sick Michal

We are not told exactly how all of these things affected Michal. Yet, we may be able to get a glimpse into the pain she felt by considering this passage in Proverbs.

Proverbs 13:12 Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but *when* the desire cometh, *it is* a tree of life.

1. As every daughter would, Michal had a hope that her father would love her and take care of her. Instead, he used and manipulated and this hope was never met.
2. Michal loved David. She helped him escape the attempt on his life by her father. Then he was gone. It is reasonable to suppose that she had a hope that David would

return for her, send for her, or make some inquiry into her well-being. We are not told that this happened. David took new wives and this hope was not met.

3. Michal had a desire to be loved. The only man in her life that we are told loved her was a man she should have never been married to, Phalti. Despite the unlawful arrangement of this marriage by Saul, her desire to be loved had finally come. Then this was taken from her forcefully.

If we apply the wisdom of this verse to the case of Michal, we find a truly heart-sick woman who had been used more than loved.

V. A Comparison of Leah and Michal; 2 Samuel 6:13-23

Now all of these things have been said, not to excuse Michal, but to give us perspective into this woman's life. The failures of those around us have a huge impact on us. For young women, this is especially true of the important men in our lives. However, our response to these things is our responsibility. Michal did not fare well with this. Fortunately, we have an example of another woman in the scripture who faced similar circumstances and yet finished well. By contrasting the two, we can see where Michal went wrong.

1. Both women were deceptively used by their fathers in their marriages
2. Both women did not receive the love they desired from their husbands
3. It appears that in Michal, this began to create a root of bitterness

Proverbs 15:13 A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.

4. Leah, sought the love of her husband, but in time learned to trust in God to provide her what her husband would not, as is seen in the naming of her sons

Genesis 29:31-35 And when the LORD saw that Leah *was* hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel *was* barren. **32** And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said, Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me. **33** And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Because the LORD hath heard that I *was* hated, he hath therefore given me this *son* also: and she called his name Simeon. **34** And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have born him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi. **35** And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I praise the LORD: therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing.

5. There is no indication that Michal knew God or placed her desires in Him, and the root of bitterness grew
6. Both women experienced unrequited love, from their fathers and husbands. Leah learned to look to God for the love that the men in her life withheld from her, and she found peace. Michal never looked to God as her source of ultimate love, and she found bitterness and ultimately barrenness.

Christ is our greatest example of how to respond to unrequited love. No one has ever been more worthy of love than Christ. He came to save us from our sins. Yet, “he came unto his own, and his own received him not”. He was betrayed by one who walked with him, he was denied by one in his inner circle, he was falsely accused and yet opened not his mouth. He was innocent, yet sentenced to death by the cross, and as they nailed him to his tree, He cried out, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do”

The Final Reference to Michal

2 Samuel 21:8 But the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bare unto Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite:

We know that Michal was barren and had no children. Two possibilities may explain this verse. First, as taught by Gill, it could indicate that Michal’s older sister died and Michal was left with the task of caring for her children, seeing that Adriel was the husband of Merab and not Michal. The problem with this position is that the Hebrew phrase for “she brought up” is generally translated as “to bear, or bring forth”, although in three instances it is translated as “midwife”

The second possibility is that it was an issue from the manuscript that was used in the translation of this passage, Michal’s name being used where it should have been translated as Merab.