

## David and Michal

THE FOCUS OF THIS endeavor as a whole is to investigate the fortunes of King Saul's progeny during David's reign. My goal is to ascertain, if possible, the factors that account for the great ills that visited the Saulides after the demise of their father, and especially to determine if there had been any Davidic complicity in any of these misfortunes. In the previous chapter, the analysis of the civil war years, reached a few tentative conclusions. First, with respect to the murder of Abner by Joab, David, by his actions and especially his inactions, was at the least blameworthy, but textual circumstantial evidence would actually implicate David in the murder. Second, regarding Ishbosheth's murder, however, the study produced no implicating evidence against David. Rather, the text shows that the murderous Rimmon brothers were driven more by greed and ambition (which was rife among all the men mentioned in the concluding section of the HDR) than by anything else. Nevertheless, the conditions that created a suitable environment for this reckless opportunism were brought about, in the first place, by the civil war that David and his forces instigated against Saul's kingdom (the aim of which, of course, was to vanquish the Saulide dynasty), and secondarily by the murder of Abner in David's capital.

The relationship between David and Michal, the daughter of Saul, is the concern of the present chapter. I will be examining this relationship first within the HDR—considering Michal's love for David and her overall investment in their relationship vis-à-vis her flagrant exploitation by the men who were closest to her, namely, Saul and David (in 1 Sam 18:17–19:1–17; 25:39–44; 2 Sam 3:12–16). Secondly, I will examine her fate in the early days of David's ascendancy, giving consideration to her estrangement in David's palace (2 Sam 6). Lastly, we will study the

gruesome murder of her five sons and two half-brothers in the context of a religious sacrifice (2 Sam 21:1–14).

A glance at the passages we will be studying in this chapter, as listed above, shows that we do not have “a story of Michal” *per se*. Her tragic destiny, nevertheless, is fatefully intertwined with the fortunes of David. Thus, her name surfaces at critical points in David's life story. It is only by gleaning through the story of David that we are able to pick bits and pieces of the hard life which was dealt to Michal.

### MICHAL IN THE HISTORY OF DAVID'S RISE

This section of the chapter is the most extensive, spanning three chapters in 1 Samuel and one in 2 Samuel. To make the discussion more manageable I have divided this section into three subheadings, namely, Michal: David's Lover, Trap, or Savior? (1 Sam 18:17–19:17); David as Michal's Loss (1 Sam 25:39–44); and Michal as David's Victory Trophy (2 Sam 3:12–16).

#### *Michal: David's Lover, Trap, Or Savior? (1 Sam 18:17–19:17)*

1 SAMUEL 18:17–19:17

#### Chapter 18

17 <sup>1</sup>Then Saul said to David, “Behold my elder daughter, Merab; I will give her to you for a wife. Only be a valiant man for me and fight Yahweh's battles.” Now Saul had said, “Let not my hand be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him.” But David replied, “Who am I? And who are my kinsfolk,<sup>2</sup> my

1. Just like the beginning of this chapter or even slightly earlier (1 Sam 17:55–18:5, 10–11), verses 17–19 are not found in some ancient translations like LXX<sup>BWOL</sup>. McCarter considers LXX<sup>B</sup> the most direct witness to the Old Greek in 1 Samuel, and he concludes that the absence of these verses in LXX<sup>B</sup> mean that they were not found in the Old Greek and by implication they were also absent in the Hebrew *Vorlage* behind the LXX. He acknowledges, however, that many critics have followed Wellhausen to suppose that the LXX was a later editorial shortening of the primitive text for harmonistic purposes of economy, story balance, and elimination of contradictory elements in the text. He nevertheless is not persuaded by such arguments (McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 306–7).

2. Driver notes that the word  $\text{יָבָא}$  is rare in the Hebrew (hence the appositional explanatory gloss, “my father's clan,”  $\text{יָבָא תַּרְבּוּמ}$ ), and thus explains it from an Arabic cognate word. He believes that the word denotes “a group of families united by blood-ties, moving and acting together, and forming a unity smaller than the tribe, but larger than that of a single family” (Driver, *Samuel*, 153).

father's clan, that I should become the king's son-in-law?" 19 So when it was time to give Merab, Saul's daughter, to David, she was given to Adriel the Meholathite as wife.

20 Now Michal,<sup>3</sup> Saul's daughter, loved David; and they told Saul, and the thing was right in his eyes.<sup>4</sup> 21 And Saul had said, "Let me give her to him, and let her be a trap<sup>5</sup> to him, and let the hand of the Philistines be against him." 22 So Saul said to David, "This second time be my son-in-law today." 23 Then Saul commanded his servants,<sup>7</sup> "Speak to David secretly saying, 'Behold! The king delights in you, so do all his servants. Now therefore, become the king's son-in-law.'" 24 And the servants of Saul spoke these words in David's hearing. David replied, "Is it a light *matter* in your eyes to be son-in-law to the king? For I am a poor man and lightly esteemed." 25 Saul's servants reported to him saying, "According to these words has David spoken." 26 And Saul replied, "Thus shall you say to David, 'The king has no delight for dowry save a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies.'" Now Saul had thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. 26 Then Saul's servants told David these words; and it was right in David's eyes<sup>8</sup> to become the king's son-in-law.

3. Smith observes that Michal's name appears in the LXX as *Melcol* and in the Syriac version as *laykl m*. "It is possible therefore that the form is contracted (or mutilated) from *laykm*" (Smith, *Samuel*, 174). This is significant because it goes to indicate the religious sentiments of Saul as he gives theophoric names to his children.

4. This phrase *ymy[b rvy* ("right in the eyes of") or its synonym *ymy[b bwj* ("good in the eyes of") is often used to indicate a personal preference and has the connotation of choosing one's way rather than God's way (cf. Deut 12:8; Judg 17:6; 21:25; Prov 21:2). The same expression is used later in 1 Sam 29:6, 9 and 2 Sam 3:19, 36 (cf. Num 24:1; Prov 3:4; Mal 2:17, where the reference is directly to what is pleasing to God). The emphasis is on the personal delight that a person takes in another person or thing.

5. Most modern translations use "snare" for the Hebrew *vqwm* (cf. ESV, NASB, KJV, and NIV). I have elected to use "trap" instead, following the nuance put forward by Driver. He points out that a snare has the idea of a noose whereas the basic idea in *vqwm* is that of "a trigger trap with a bait laid upon it . . . Hence it is often used metaphorically of that which allures a person to destruction, as here, Ex 23:33; Dt 7:16" (Driver, *Samuel*, 153).

6. The entire sentence is lacking in LXX<sup>OLW</sup> manuscripts.

7. Though the MT *Ketiv* has the singular (*wdb*], "his servant"), its *Qere*, along with many medieval manuscripts and the ancient versions, has the plural form. Besides, the imperative verbal form has the plural masculine form, and subsequent references to this referent are all in the plural form (cf. vv. 23, 24, 26); hence we translate it here also as plural.

8. See my comments in footnote 4 above.

So while the appointed days were not yet fulfilled,<sup>9</sup> 27 David arose and went, he and his troops, and smote the Philistines, two hundred men.<sup>10</sup> David brought their foreskins: They stacked<sup>11</sup> them for the king, in order *for David* to become the king's son-in-law; and Saul gave to him Michal, his daughter, for a wife. 28 Saul saw and realized that Yahweh was with David and that Michal, Saul's daughter,<sup>12</sup> loved him. 29 Saul continued still to be afraid of David; so Saul was David's enemy perpetually.

30 Now the lords of the Philistines marched forth *for battle*; whenever they marched forth, David succeeded more than all of Saul's servants; and his name was highly esteemed.

## Chapter 19

1 Saul told Jonathan his son and all his servants to kill David. Now Jonathan Saul's son delighted exceedingly in David. 2 Jonathan told David, saying, "Saul, my father, is seeking to kill you. Now therefore, be on your guard in the morning. Sit in a secret place and hide. 3 I will go forth, and stand by my father's hand in the field where you are and I will speak to my father concerning you; and I will see the outcome and report it to you.

9. LXX<sup>BOI</sup> manuscripts do not contain this clause.

10. Many ancient translations (LXX, Syraic, Targumim, and Latin) have 100 here instead of 200. This seems to be more harmonistic in view of 1 Sam 18:25; and 2 Sam 3:14. Josephus, because of his context in the Roman world, where circumcision was considered a barbaric act, had changed this dowry to 600 heads of the Philistines (Josephus, *A.J.* 6.10.2–3 [201–3]).

11. The verb used here, *-וּמָלְאוּ* ("they filled them"; piel, waw-consecutive, masculine plural with masculine plural pronominal suffix), is plural in meaning, though its focus obviously is David, in whose behalf the action was being executed. I understand this to mean that David's lieutenants carried out the stacking of the foreskins before Saul for David. This is very similar to other such odd services David's retainers carried out for him with regard to the matters of both the Amalekite and the Rimmon brothers (2 Sam 1:15; 4:12). In this verse this difficult construction aims to vividly paint for the reader the grotesque picture of David's retainers counting the Philistine foreskins and stacking them up before Saul. This is what the modern English translations miss in their attempt to smooth out the difficult phrase by adding a different verb of their own (for "to give") and changing the original verb into a noun (cf. "they gave them in full number to the king," NASB; "which were given in full number to the king," KJV; "presented the full number to the king," NIV; the ESV even goes so far afield as to render it in the passive voice, when the piel stem has a very strong active voice, "which were given in full number to the king").

12. LXX manuscripts have *kai paj Israhl* ("and all Israel"), while LXX<sup>L</sup> largely agrees with the MT.

4 So Jonathan spoke well to his father about David. He said, "Let not the king sin against his servant, against David, for he has not sinned against you; indeed, his work *has been* exceedingly beneficial to you. 5 He hazarded his life, and smote the Philistine, and Yahweh wrought a great deliverance for all Israel. You saw it and celebrated. Why, then, will you sin against innocent blood? 6 Saul hearkened to the voice of Jonathan. So Saul swore, "By the Living Yahweh he will not be killed."<sup>13</sup> 7 Then Jonathan called David, and Jonathan told him all these words. And Jonathan brought David to Saul; and he was before him as previously.<sup>14</sup>

8 The war persisted, so David marched forth and fought against the Philistines; and he smote them with a great slaughter, and they fled before him. 9 Now the evil spirit of Yahweh was upon Saul while he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand and David was making music with his<sup>15</sup> hand. 10 Then Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear; however, David broke away from Saul's presence. The spear struck the wall, but David fled and escaped that<sup>16</sup> night.

11 Now Saul sent messengers to David's house to guard him and to kill him by the morning. Nevertheless, Michal told David saying, "If you do not escape with your soul this night, tomorrow you will be killed." 12 Then Michal lowered David through a window;<sup>17</sup> and he walked away; he fled; and he escaped. 13 Then Michal took an idol, and placed it on<sup>18</sup> the bed, while she placed a quilt of goat's hair at its head, she covered it with a garment. 14 Saul sent messengers to take David away; but she said, "He is sick."

13. The MT has a hofal stem (תמלל), which possesses a passive twist to the causative element of the stem, while two medieval manuscripts have qal stem. The difference ultimately does not have much implication for meaning.

14. Driver notes that in this verse alone, Jonathan's name is mentioned three times. This, he suggests, "shows the desire of the author (or perhaps the desire of a scribe) to call especial attention to Jonathan's nobility of character" (Driver, *Samuel*, 177).

15. Here we are following the overwhelming witnesses that include this possessive pronominal element. Examples include many medieval Hebrew manuscripts that have ודב ("his hand"), many LXX medieval manuscripts that have ταις χερσιν αυτου ("his hand"), and the Syriac version that also has the third person pronominal suffix.

16. The MT has אה; the normal form is that contained in many medieval manuscripts, i.e., אהה.

17. The MT has a determinative ה prefix; however, in English it is better to translate it as non-determinative, since we do not have an antecedent reference to the window.

18. The Targumic rendition ל [ ("on," or "upon") is here preferred to the MT's לא (which lit. means "to," or "toward").

15 Saul sent messengers to see David saying, "Bring him upon the bed to me, that he might be killed." 16 The messengers arrived: and behold—an idol upon the bed with the quilt of goat's hair upon its head! 17 The Saul said to Michal, "Why have you thus deceived me, and sent away my enemy, and he has escaped?" Michal replied Saul, "He had said to me, 'Send me away. Why should I kill you?'" 18 But David fled and escaped and came to Samuel, to Ramah; and he reported to him everything which Saul had done to him. And he went, he and Samuel, and dwelt in Naioth.<sup>19</sup>

The interactions between David on the one hand and Saul and his house on the other are enmeshed in complexes of maneuverings that display intriguing and unfathomable binary operations of power and perfidy, appeal and peril, altruism and ambiguity. First Samuel 17–19 manifests these trends in a multiplicity of ways and levels. For example, David's altruism in confronting the Philistine giant who had defied the armies of Yahweh Sabaoth is hailed by all who are familiar with the narrative (1 Sam 17:36–37, 45–47). Yet the keen reader does not fail to notice the ambiguity ensconced in the text with David's repeated question as to what will be done to the person who defeats the giant (1 Sam 17:25–30). Similarly, we are told that Saul and his entire household were enamored by David's appeal (1 Sam 16:22; 18:1, 3, 5, 16, 20, 22; 20:17). Yet there was a lurking peril for both David and Saul: for David because Saul would attempt to entrap him through the former's involvement with the latter's house (1 Sam 18:10, 21; 19:10), while David's rise to prominence within Saul's house spelled doom for that house (1 Sam 20:31; 2 Sam 6:21). The Samuel narrative is so replete with intrigues, power plays and treachery that I forbear recounting them here (refer to chapter three above for some aspect of this).

This entire intertwined web of relations is skillfully woven around our passage (1 Sam 18:17–19:18) in an interesting chiasm that begins at the end of chapter 17 and goes into chapter 20 (see the chiastic structure below). Each item in the first part of the chiastic structure finds its direct counterpart (often the opposite, or the intensified form of the same phenomenon) in the second part of the chiasm.<sup>20</sup>

19. We are following the *Qere* (twymb) rather than the *Ketiv* (tyymb); cf. 1 Sam 20:1.

20. Notice that all the actions recorded in the first half of the chiastic structure receive some form of intensification in the second. These are demonstrated as follows: (1) while the interaction of Jonathan with David in A is brief, that reported in A' is elaborate; (2) whereas the praise singing of the women celebrating the victory over the

- A Saul and a lieutenant seek after David while Jonathan bonds with David (17:55–18:4)
  - B Women's action stirs up jealous rage in Saul against David (18:6–9)
    - C Saul attempts to kill David but David escapes (18:9–11)
      - D Saul dreads David for Yahweh is with him (18:12–15)
        - E Saul's subjects love David (18:16)
          - F Saul promises Merab to David but gives her to another man (18:17–19)
            - F' Michal loves David but Saul sees it as an opportunity to entrap David (18:20–21)
              - E' Saul's servants love David (18:22, cf. 18:5)
                - D' Saul dreads David for Yahweh is with him (18:28–29)
                  - C' Saul attempts to kill David but David escapes (19:1–10)
                    - B' A woman's action saves David from Saul's jealous rage (19:11–18)
                      - A' Saul and lieutenants seek for David while Jonathan bonds with David (19:19–20:23)

The outer boundaries of the chiasm consist of the interaction between Saul and his retainers on the one hand and David and Jonathan on the other. Saul and his lieutenant (Abner) seek David to honor him; secondly, Saul and his unnamed servants seek David to kill him (A, A').

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Philistines aroused passionate hatred in Saul enough for him to seek to kill David (B), it was Saul's own daughter's (i.e., a woman's) witty action that delivered David from certain death (B'); (3) in C Saul covertly (in the secrecy of his palace) makes one attempt to kill David, however in C' there are three more public murder attempts on David's life from all of which he escapes largely with the help of Saul's children; (4) in D Saul's fear of David stems from Yahweh's presence with David, whereas in D' Saul's fear of David is exacerbated by his daughter's (Michal's) love for David in addition to Yahweh's presence with the latter; (5) in E Saul's subjects (Israel and Judah at large) love David, however, in E' it is Saul himself who acknowledges the love of his inner caucus for David; and (6) lastly, in F Saul promised Merab to David, but no one knows where Merab's loyalties would have been, whether with her father or with her husband had she married David, but the indication that Michal loved David (F') clearly showed where her allegiance would be.

However, in both instances the narrator skips over David's interaction with those seeking him (even in first instance where David was found and brought to Saul there is no account of their interaction). Yet there is a detailed account of his bonding with Jonathan, and in both cases that bonding works to David's advantage. In the next layer, after the outer boundaries, we find, first of all, the women's celebratory praise song stirs up Saul's jealous rage against David and spurs him to seek to kill David, while in its counterpart in the second half of the chiasm Michal's wits and scheming delivered David from certain death (B, and B'). In the next concentric layers Saul makes several attempts to kill David, but on each occasion David escapes unscathed (C, and C'). Saul's unsuccessful attempts on David's life are either succeeded (D) or preceded (D') by his dread of David. Before we reach the core of the chiasm, we find disclosures of the love that Saul's subordinates (both Israel at large—Judah inclusive—and Saul's immediate retinue of staff) had for David (E, and E'). Walter Brueggemann notes that the word "love" as used in this chapter has a special rhetorical import beyond just a personal attachment; it also includes the idea of public commitment.<sup>21</sup> What is interesting about this is that no such affection has been reported as having been shown toward Saul. Thus, the text possibly insinuates that the divided loyalty of both Saul's subjects and his court officials was becoming apparent to even Saul himself.

At the hub of the chiasm, the three pairs of complexes operative in the narrative come together in the persons of Saul, Merab, Michal, and David (F, and F'). We can characterize Merab as an agent (no word, thought, or action of hers is recorded); we are not told what she felt about either David or Adriel. She was a woman of her times who moved at the behest of her man (whether it was her father or husband). Michal, on the other hand, is more than an agent. Perhaps we can say she is a flat character, as there is no full development of her complex personality at this point, indeed, in the whole narrative. She is shown to have lived ahead of her times: she is portrayed as one woman who would not fold her arms and let others determine her fate. Thus, she tried, albeit in futility, to take her destiny into her own hands; as the story of David unfolds, she is shown to be racing against the ineluctable, which makes her story tragic. Yet her bane (and indeed, that of the house of Saul) was the love

21. Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 140. For a different perspective on this see Miscall, *Old Testament Narrative*, 84.

she (and her brother Jonathan) had and demonstrated for David, on which account she who was meant to be a trap for David became his escape route.

The report that Michal loved David (1 Sam 18:20) is very remarkable, as she is the only woman in the entire Hebrew Bible of whom it is said that she loved a man.<sup>22</sup> The tragic twist in the narrative is the reaction of the two key men in her life, each of them viewing her love as an opportunity to advance his political ends. The interplay of this game of wits between Saul and David is crafted in an interesting chiasm in this unit that has Michal's love for David (the only constant in the equation) at the outer frames of the chiastic structure (A and A').<sup>23</sup> The next concentric layer contains the opposing perspectives of Saul (B) and David (B'), with each viewing the matter at hand as being to his own advantage. Thus, for each of them, it is reported that the matter was right in his eyes. Enclosing the inner core of the chiasm is Saul's determined purpose to have David die at the hand of the Philistines (C, and C'). The inner core itself consists of the maneuvering messages the duo sent back and forth to each other (D).

- A Michal's love for David reported (18:20a)
- B The thing was right in Saul's eyes (18:20b)
- C Saul contrived to have David die at the Philistines' hands (18:21)
- D Saul's servants convey messages back and forth between Saul and David (18:22–25a)
- C' Saul contrived to have David die at the Philistines' hands (18:25b)
- B' The thing was right in David's eyes (18:26–27)
- A' Michal's love for David reported (18:28)

22. See Sakenfeld, *Just Wives?*, 79.

23. David Toshio Tsumura, while observing how Michal's love for David forms an inclusio around this text, writes, "Once again, Saul's strategy has backfired. Instead of killing David, his attempt has given David honor in the eyes of all the people as the king's son-in-law (as in 22:14), has given him someone who will protect him against Saul (19:11–17), and has strengthened his claim as Saul's successor (2 Sam 3:13–16)" (Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 488).

Saul, we are told, saw Michal's love for David as an opportunity to set up a trap for David.<sup>24</sup> David, on the other hand, took it as a chance to elevate his social and political standing to the coveted status of the king's son-in-law.<sup>25</sup> The absence of the mention of any reciprocal love David had for Michal sets in bold relief his underhanded dealings with Saul's house and political motivation for getting into the marriage. This implication helps to unveil how David took advantage of a sincere and unsuspecting Saulide within Saul's lifetime and reign.<sup>26</sup> The author's word

24. In his discussion of what the trap would have meant Bergen suggests, "As Saul envisioned it, David would be facing a double threat: 'the hand of the Philistines' (v. 21) and Michal herself, who would be a 'snare to him.' Michal could be a snare in two ways: first she could motivate David to place his life at extreme risk in battle with the Philistines; second, she could corrupt David spiritually" (Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 204). While his first suggestion of what the trap was is on target, nothing could be farther from the truth than his second suggestion. Even the narrator, with his anti-Saul stance, does not portray Saul as a religious pervert (cf. 1 Sam 13:8–12; 20:24–26; 28:6–9; 2 Sam 21:2). To the contrary, Saul is shown to be a Yahwistic loyalist. It is even less likely that Saul would have seen himself or anyone in his house as a religiously perverse instrument for the spiritual corruption of anyone in Israel.

From my explanation of the Hebrew term for trap (ׁוּקְמָה) in footnote 6 above, it is apparent that Bergen's error comes from his rendering it as "snare." When understood properly as trap, then the accent falls on Michal being a bait that allures David into his death either at hands of the Philistines, or, as events will show in Saul's attempted vigil to slay David, at the hands of Saul's retainers (in the worst-case scenario). From the account of the narrative it is clear that David was living within the precincts of Saul's property—perhaps it may have been part of the conditions for his marrying Michal.

25. The deafening silence of the narrator on David's love for Michal speaks volumes to the political motivation of his marriage to her. Friedmann comments, "The biblical text does not say that David loved Michal but that the offer originated with Saul and that considerable persuasion was needed until David agreed. Equally clearly, David was not forced into the marriage. His standing enabled him to refuse Merab, though he was willing to marry Michal. The text indicates that he saw advantage in marrying into the king's family, rather than any love for his bride-to-be" (Friedmann, *To Kill and Take Possession*, 275). While agreeing with Friedmann that David's marriage to Michal was a grasping after political advantage, I fail to see the narrator as making any statement about considerable persuasion dealt to David to get into the marriage. Rather, by relating how messages were sent back and forth between Saul and David, the narrator lays bare before the reader the shrewd scheming between these two men.

26. Lawton paints a lucid picture of David's duplicitous dealings with Saul's house by drawing attention to the parallels between the David-Merab-Michal narrative and that of Jacob-Leah-Rachel in Genesis. He writes, "The story parallels in some ways the other biblical account of an elder and a younger sister offered in marriage, the story of Leah and Rachel in Genesis 29. Why the parallel? Why should the 'author' want the reader to think about Jacob, Leah, and Rachel? Is there, in fact, a parallel? After all, Jacob loves Rachel. But that is the point. Aware of the parallel, the reader expects to learn

choice and pragmatic use of repetition unveils David's machinations. On this note, David's pretended reluctance on account of his unworthiness to be the king's son-in-law (לֹאֶתְּחַת, 1 Sam 18:23a) contrasts sharply with the alacrity with which he met the king's demanded bloody bride-price in order to be the king's son-in-law (לֹאֶתְּחַתְּי, 1 Sam 18:27). The author also employs contrasting viewpoints in his portrait of David's character. Compare David's pretentious claim to being lightly esteemed (1 Sam 18:23b) with the renown and high esteem he enjoyed both in Israel and beyond (1 Sam 18:5–7, 30; 21:11). Such a depiction can be read as illustrative of either David's humility or his dissimulation.

The love that all who were around Saul (his servants, his crown prince, and his daughter) seemed to have had for David made Saul and his whole house so transparent to David that it is hard to imagine that David did not have access to the most secret council in the palace. Thus Saul's intention to allure David into marriage with one of his daughters as a trap for his elimination may not have been a secret to David. This may have informed his refusal to marry Merab; seeing that she was a woman of her times, it would have been a lot easier for her father to have influence over her and so get David killed. Since he also obviously loved the opportunity to ascend to the position of the king's son-in-law, he still cherished the idea of marrying a Saulide. Michal's assertion of independence coupled with her naïve love for David made it more palatable for David to accede to marrying her than Merab. Her love and independent disposition made it possible and easy for her to switch her loyalty from her father to her husband. This created the possibility for David to have his cake and eat it too (become the king's son-in-law and yet not be killed).

Thus, Michal, whom her father had hoped would be the occasion for David's fall, became the channel of his escape. This again relates to her passion for independence, a desire to take her destiny in her hands: she would not sit idly by and lose her husband through the murderous schemes of her father. Yet fate was not on her side: dead or alive, David was a loss to her anyway. Michal's role in David's escape is better appreciated when seen in the context of the Saul's attempts on David's life on four occasions in 1 Sam 18–19. Saul increasingly intensified

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that David 'loves' Michal. And yet that is what the reader does not hear . . . Mentioning Merab sets up a parallel which underscores what David lacks in his relationship with Michal: love." (Lawton, "1 Samuel 18: David, Merab and Michal," 423–25).

his efforts with each attempt, while David's chances of escape became progressively narrower. In 1 Sam 18:10–11, Saul tried to strike David with his spear but missed. As a follow up on this first attempt he then met with his kitchen cabinet, in David's absence, to plot David's demise. But Saul's son Jonathan came to the rescue of David through persuasive rhetoric (1 Sam 19:1–6). The third attempt on David's life, like the first, is an incident in which Saul, though acting alone, was in a position of advantage (with spear in hand) and David in a position of weakness (playing a musical instrument: the text stresses that David was making music with his hand, 1 Sam 19:9). In addition, it appears as if while the first incident happened in the daytime, the third happened at night (with all the difficulties that would come with a night flight) (1 Sam 19:9–10). In the fourth attempt, like the second, Saul acts in concert with others (excluding Jonathan from the plot this time around; cf. 1 Sam 20:1–2), but this time, rather than merely deliberate, he takes the decisive action to first post a sentinel at David's house to prevent his escape (1 Sam 19:11). David was hemmed in; there was no way of escape.

Thus far the ploy of the trap has worked. Then love threw a wrench into Saul's works. Michal's swift action checkmated Saul's move (1 Sam 19:11–17). When she received intelligence concerning the advance of Saul retainers, she promptly swung into action. Warning David of the impending danger (v. 11), she let him out through a window (v. 12), devised a decoy to allow David time to escape (v.13–16), and when her ruse was discovered, she instantly invents a cover-up (v. 17).<sup>27</sup> As one reads the story, one cannot miss being struck by the sense of irony and ambiguity engrained therein. Michal loved David, but her love is never reciprocated. At David's escape Michal spoke to David, but we hear no word from David. As the story progresses, David would have time to confer with Jonathan on two separate occasions (1 Sam 20:1–42; 23:16–18), but would not seek Michal out.<sup>28</sup> Michal was very disposable to David,

27. David Jobling suspects that the plausibility of Michal's concocted Davidic threat might have arisen from David's lackluster relationship with Michal even when they were together. He writes, "When she invents David's threat to kill her (v. 17) she obviously does so to get herself out of a jam. Nonetheless, Saul accepts the idea as plausible. If David had gone about the court behaving like an ecstatic newlywed would Saul have been prepared to believe that David would threaten Michal's life under any circumstances? The story Michal invents has to be one that she thinks Saul will find believable, and this is the story she chooses" (Jobling, *1 Samuel*, 152).

28. My inference from all this is that if David had wanted Michal, he would have

unfortunately. While David had gained the title of the king's son-in-law and with that closer access to the throne, he was now a loss to Michal, who had fought losing him to death.

At this juncture we make some observations on matters of literary interest in this section of the narrative. The first relates to the pragmatic use of repetition (with respect to the words “escape,” *j l m*, and “send,” *x l v*). “Escape” is used by the narrator (1 Sam 19:10, 12), Michal (1 Sam 19:11), and Saul (1 Sam 19:17), and each time with the increasing sense of finality. Observe that the first time David escaped from Saul's spear the author only uses the word “fled,” *Swh* (1 Sam 18:11)—he fled only from Saul's presence. There is no finality in his escape or separation from Saul. However, in 1 Sam 19:10, the narrator uses both “fled” (*Swh*, a synonym of *xrb*) and “escape” (*j l m*) with no such limiting phrase as “from Saul's presence.” This means the increasing distance and the finality of separation are being made more palpable. In Michal's warning to David she again used the word “escape” (v. 11) and the accompanying risk of death if escape is not embarked upon requires us to see this as the major point of severance with the palace and hence the expectation that David should have arranged to get Michal out as well. After David was hurled out of the window, the narrator piles up verbs: “walked” off, “fled,” and “escaped.” This invokes vivid imageries of David scurrying away from the palace wall on tiptoe, then sprinting away when he has gained some good yardage, and finally being lost in the night's darkness and the shadows of the woody hills of Israel's hill country. Lastly, the despondency of Saul's question (v. 17) drives home the finality of David's escape.

In all this, the emphasis falls squarely on Michal's role in David's escape. We observe how the narrator's double use of *j l m* in the narration (vv. 10 and 12) forms an *inclusio* around both Michal's use of the same word in her speech to David and her role in letting him down through the window. If we consider its first use in this scene by the narrator (v. 10) and the last use in Saul's speech (v. 17), we again see both uses forming an *inclusio* around Michal's flurry of activities to secure David's safe passage out of the tight corner into which he had been boxed. Herein lies the reason for the befuddlement and wonder as to why David would expurgate from his life and memory someone who had risked so much for him as soon as he was out in safe quarters.

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sent people to ferret her out of the palace, or even Jonathan would have arranged safe passage for her.