



*A heartwarming story about the resilience of true love,
inspired by a Biblical account of greatness, courage
and foretold prophecy*

DAUGHTER
OF THE
KING

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Daughter of the King

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FOREWORD

Daughter of the King tells the Biblical story of King Saul's youngest daughter, Princess Michal. The authors added imaginary conversations and supporting characters, including Tirzah and Sarah.

Names have various spellings in books of the King James Bible. Phaltiel, for instance, is alternately spelled Phalti. David and Abigail's son's name is translated as Daniel in one place and Chileab in another. To avoid confusion, we chose one spelling or name per character and used it consistently.

The Bible does not state whether Bathsheba was a Hittite or a Hebrew woman who married a foreigner. For the purposes of this novel, we theorized she was Hittite, as was her husband Uriah.

King Saul did not live in Jerusalem. We invoked literary license to relocate his house near the City of David.

Was Jonathan close to David's age or much older? We do not know the answer, but considered the two as contemporaries in the book.

For believers, it is a serious undertaking to write a story based on the Holy Bible. We hope and pray we have done our work in an acceptable manner. Scripture is truth. *Daughter of the King* is fiction.

This is how we think it might have happened.

CHAPTER ONE

“BUT SAUL HAD GIVEN MICHAL HIS DAUGHTER, DAVID’S WIFE, TO PHALTI[EL] THE SON OF LAISH, WHICH WAS OF GALLIM.” I SAMUEL 25:44

“You’re not taking my wife anywhere!” Phaltiel bellowed. He struggled to break free from the soldiers who restrained him.

“Then we will take your widow.” The soldier tossed an unconcerned glance in Phaltiel’s direction. “It makes no difference to me.” He turned to the woman standing nearby. “You will come with us.”

“I shall make preparations for a journey of how many days?” Michal struggled to keep her voice calm. The daughter of the king must not show fear.

“We cannot waste time with preparations.” Captain Osh sat straight and tall on his horse. “We will leave as soon as—”

“There must be some mistake,” Phaltiel’s chief steward interrupted. “King Saul himself gave his daughter to my lord Phaltiel.”

“King Saul no longer reigns.” Osh glared at the steward. “He is as dead as you and I will be if we fail to deliver the woman Michal soon.”

Michal addressed her handmaid. “Come, Tirzah, we will gather a few things quickly.” She felt the stares of soldiers all the way across the courtyard and braced

herself for the thrust of a spear in her back.

“We have endured two days of hard riding, Phaltiel.” The authoritative ring of the Captain’s voice filled the courtyard. “Feed my men and see to our animals.”

Michal breathed deeply to maintain her composure. Was it true her father, King Saul, was dead? Was it possible her dear brother, Jonathan, was now king of Israel? Was there a rebellion? A foreign invasion? Were soldiers, like those in the courtyard, even now rounding up her sister, Merab, and her family? She knew an insurgent ruler could never risk her or her sister’s royal blood flowing into the veins of a legitimate heir.

Michal forced down her fear as she walked toward the women’s living area. She prayed for courage as she concentrated on keeping her steps steady on the tamped earth of the courtyard.

The clapping of the chief steward’s hands broke the tension. Servants grabbed water jars to fill the stone drinking trough for the military animals. Others stoked the kitchen fire and made preparations for the soldiers’ meal. Lord Phaltiel’s senior wife, Bida, stood watching the activity. Such excitement rarely intruded upon the mundane life of Gallim.

Michal quickened her steps to push through the crowd of Phaltiel’s wives, children, and servants streaming into the courtyard. Once indoors, she fought to focus on which of her few possessions she should take.

“Tirzah, fetch the coat. I’ll carry it under my cloak. Look through my old robes in Bida’s chest, and choose one which clearly identifies me as the king’s married daughter. I’ll take one additional change of clothing

and my sewing box." She looked around her. "There's nothing else in this house I ever want to see again. You can keep everything else."

Tirzah's eyes widened in horror. "You would not leave me behind?"

Michal clasped her servant's slender hand. "There's no reason to drag you into whatever awaits me. If my father is truly dead, these men may well be delivering me to an enemy. Maybe even the Philistines."

"Better to suffer with you than to stay in this Godless house alone." Tirzah's tears spilled onto her cheeks. "Please, my lady, I beg you on my mother's bones, let me go with you."

Michal wavered. Tirzah had been her companion since the two of them were children. "All right. You may come with us. The Captain said it was a two-day ride to wherever they came from. Of course, that may not be true. Try to get us some food to take along. Some dates and goat cheese would be best." Tirzah brightened and brushed away her tears as Michal continued. "Anything you can learn from the soldiers or the other women may be useful. We need to know who has taken King Saul's place and where we are going."

"Yes, my lady. I will do as you say."

Michal straightened. "While you do your duty, I will do mine."

With everyone else outside—their attention fastened on the soldiers in the courtyard—Michal swept quickly through the women's rooms. She gathered the many idols and teraphims, the superstitious god figurines that sat everywhere.

As a girl, she participated in religious activities

meant to convince the king's subjects of the royal family's devotion to the Living God. She went mindlessly through the motions of the familiar rituals, paying no attention to their deeper meaning. The devout faith of her husband David made her more thoughtful. Yet it was only when she was thrust into a life of misery that Michal was forced to trust the one God of Israel.

Her family, alienated. Her husband, bargained away years ago. Michal stiffened her resolve against such sorrowful thoughts lest they overtake her. She would concentrate on being grateful the soldiers did not murder her in the sight of Phaltiel and his hateful wives.

Perhaps the soldiers would kill her as soon as they were a little distance from Phaltiel's compound. Or someone could creep near in tonight's darkness and dispatch her and poor Tirzah in their sleep.

Michal shivered at the thought of other possibilities. The prospect of torture frightened her. A quick death would be an answer to prayer. Some conqueror might be planning a public execution of King Saul's family. Even the ultimate humiliation of a forced marriage to an uncircumcised heathen could await her. She gathered her courage to bear whatever she must.

In the beginning of her exile, Michal feared some stranger would bring the information King Saul had successfully tracked down and murdered her beloved husband David. When did she hear the news? Their tenth month in Phaltiel's household, a slave trader stopped to obtain water for his pack animals. From the traveler, Michal's handmaid Sarah heard that David and his loyal followers still hid in wilderness areas,

protecting isolated farms from thieves and marauders. Sarah reported to Michal how the man laughed, showing his fine white teeth, when recounting King Saul's irrational fear of his own son-in-law.

Years passed with no new information. Then one day Tirzah was cleaning the hearth in the kitchen when the women from a band of wandering wool merchants came to warm themselves. Hearing familiar words, Tirzah realized the travelers were Judeans. Their country was now being ruled by David, they said. Everyone was prospering under his progressive benevolence. Yes, their king was that same legendary David who, armed only with a slingshot, had in his youth fought and killed the Philistine giant Goliath.

Michal was overjoyed to learn her husband had so far evaded the dark furies of her father, King Saul. She gave thanks that her personal sacrifice to save David was not in vain. Was it possible that he still survived to this day? If so, she was certain some other woman occupied her place in his warm embrace by now.

A startling thought invaded Michal's consciousness as she prepared to go with the soldiers. Perhaps protocol would demand the presence of King David of Judea at a festival given by the new ruler of Israel. Was it possible she might glimpse her adored husband's face once more before her life ended? She must not break down before David's eyes if some heathen ordered her torn to pieces by a wild animal.

Michal took the worthless gods she collected and dumped them on her bed. The crude clay pieces shattered easily when she smacked them against each other. So much for Shapash. One slender figurine snapped in two when she laid it across her knee and applied her full strength to its head and feet. She took

her sharpest knife and defaced the other two pieces of wood. The pagans of this house would soon see how powerless their stupid idols were.

The anger Michal held inside for years boiled over as she took particular delight in carving away the ugly features of Bida's favorite idol, Baal. Bida, Phaltiel's first wife, was a thin-haired woman who constantly criticized the other wives, shrewdly playing one against another to maintain her own advantage. Bida was particularly mean to Michal, often referring to her contemptuously as 'Her Royal Lowness'.

Michal thought back to the day she first came to this place in Gallim, as the fifth wife of Lord Phaltiel. Bida met her at the door of the women's quarters with crossed arms, spewing hostility from tiny eyes set almost comically wide apart in the expanse of her broad face. Michal was hungry, thirsty, and exhausted from her journey. Phaltiel had already given her a taste of his beastly nature. She hoped to find some compassion among his women.

"What do you know about growing olives and pressing oil?" Bida demanded without a single word of welcome or greeting. "That is what we do here."

Michal kept her response humble, to show proper deference to the head wife. "I'm sorry, but I know nothing of those things. Perhaps you will be kind enough to teach me."

Bida rolled her eyes toward the women of the household, who stood in a semi-circle around and behind her. "Just what we have been wishing for," she said, "a wife who does not know how to work. No doubt, since you are the daughter of a king, you are accustomed to a life of leisure." The women smirked and giggled. Michal sensed they were less amused

than fearful of displeasing Bida. "And I see you have brought along two personal maids," Bida taunted. "They must make things easy for you."

The smell of flour cakes sweetened with honey made Michal aware of her gnawing hunger, but she could go without food. Thirst was another matter. Her dry mouth and parched throat begged for water. "We will do our best to contribute to the continued wealth of this household. I'm sure you will find some useful work Sarah, Tirzah, and I can do."

"You can count on it," Bida snorted. After a pause, she said bitterly, "I understand you have married our lord Phaltiel even though you have never been divorced by your husband who is yet alive."

Michal drew herself to her full height and stared down at Bida for a long moment. Finally she spoke. "I have obeyed the command of my father the king in becoming our lord Phaltiel's wife." *Enough of this foolish game.* "Thank you for your gracious welcome," she continued. "I shall not soon forget it." She looked into the faces of the other women. One by one they dropped their eyes.

Bida took everything of any value from Michal's possessions. She kept the most desirable items for herself, and distributed the remainder among the other wives and servants who happened to be in her favor at the moment. Even though Bida could not possibly have wedged her ample torso into the loosest of Michal's robes and tunics, she kept all of them in her private storage trunk. Sarah and Tirzah were allowed to keep their worst clothing, anything stained, patched, or threadbare, which they shared with their mistress. Phaltiel's women showed no interest in Michal's fabric working tools. Bida handled them warily, but did not

ask what they were.

“Royal attendants wear such as this?” Bida tossed a shabby wool coat at Sarah. “Lord Phaltiel’s slaves wouldn’t dress themselves in this rag.”

Sarah stared at the floor and meekly tucked her bottom lip under the top one. She rearranged the coat, neatly folding the patched side underneath the ripped back.

The thought of Sarah threatened to summon emotions Michal could not allow herself to release right now. Sarah had been her wet nurse, taking the newborn princess to her breast along with her own two-week old daughter, Tirzah.

How Michal wished she could slip out of the compound one last time, walk through the terraced rows of olive trees, and sit on the big rock that overlooked the spot where Sarah and the others were buried. Phaltiel was responsible, she thought, him and his nasty drunken brawls.

It did not take Michal long to realize Phaltiel was ruled by the fruit of the vine. Tirzah at first tried to water down his cup when serving him, but Phaltiel loudly demanded stronger wine. Sarah then suggested topping off his goblet at every opportunity. On a good night, their lord and master would drink himself into a stupor before he could summon an unfortunate wife or two to his bed.

CHAPTER TWO

“AND ISHBOSHETH SENT, AND TOOK HER FROM HER HUSBAND, EVEN FROM PHALTIEL THE SON OF LAISH.” II SAMUEL 3:15

The most dangerous times in Phaltiel’s household occurred when the annual harvest of ripe olives was finished. Huge vats were filled to the brim with newly-pressed olive oil in Phaltiel’s storehouses. With the hard work done for another year, the celebration began. Generous amounts of new wine were ladled into bowls and consumed at a three-day drunken festival honoring pagan harvest gods. The chief steward conspired to get Phaltiel hopelessly drunk as soon as he could, with his master’s full cooperation. Alternately weeping and belligerent, Phaltiel would glut himself on drink and sex. As soon as their master lay passed out on a convenient bed or the floor, the men of the household ran amok.

Michal’s old handmaid, Sarah, lay dead in the courtyard the morning after one of these wild new wine orgies, her head crushed against a heavy rock. A foul humor hung over the compound after three days of unbridled intoxication and debauchery. No one, other than Michal and Tirzah, took notice of Sarah’s death.

“The old woman drank too much wine and lost her footing in the darkness of the courtyard,” was the chief steward’s light dismissal.

“Yes,” Phaltiel agreed thickly, his hands on the sides of his head. “My greedy servant gorged herself on my new wine and could not keep herself aright.” Everyone knew Sarah never touched wine. However, no one dared dispute Phaltiel’s pronouncement, particularly on a morning when he complained that the slightest noise made his temples throb.

Michal helped the brokenhearted Tirzah attend to Sarah’s burial. Although there was no incense to burn, they dressed the body in the best robe they could spare and used aromatic leaves in place of proper spices and balms. The two women were the only members of the household to observe the seven days of mourning. Tirzah wept at the thought of wild animals disturbing her mother’s body. To keep that from happening, they struggled with a large, flat stone, finally rolling it across the mouth of a protective cave.

The little burial cave was an accidental discovery made during the years Michal was responsible for laundry. Initially the dark, cool place was her secret sanctuary. One year she hid food, water, and dirty clothes in the cave before the new wine festival. She and her maids slipped away separately to hide in the cave until the worst of the bacchanalia was over.

The next morning they noisily splashed about, doing the laundry by treading on it in the ankle-deep stream. Afterward, they casually carried the wet garments and stretched them out on large rocks in the courtyard. They pretended to be returning from an early start with domestic chores, and the ruse worked.

Sarah’s body rested alone in her cave for three

years. Then a fever swept through Phaltiel's compound and Tirzah's frail little girl Zora died. Last year, the tiniest bundle of all came to keep old Sarah company. Tirzah's infant son was born dead after a day and night of difficult labor.

Following Bida's lead, the other wives taunted Tirzah about her stillborn baby and Michal for her failure to become pregnant. If only she would bow down to the pagan gods, the women avowed, Tirzah could have had healthy children. They assured Michal that worshiping Astarte, the goddess of earth and fertility, would certainly remove her curse of unfruitfulness. Tirzah and Michal refused to follow the blasphemous advice. Michal held her head high, attempting not to respond to the women's snide remarks.

When directly challenged, she would merely say, "We worship only the one true God. He has not yet chosen to bless me with sons." She was convinced of the general truth of her statement. Still, she could not understand how the broad expanse of the Living God's divine plan could be affected by whether or not she conceived a child. Regardless of how much she despised Phaltiel, Michal longed to become a mother. Occasionally, she managed to be alone long enough to shed a few solitary tears. The daughter of the king did not cry with self-pity in the presence of other women.

As Michal continued destroying the idols, she envisioned the uproar that would occur when the desecration of the household gods was discovered. How surprised Bida would be to find that the always meek Michal committed such an outrage.

What should she do with the bronze Astarte in her hand? She'd succeeded in making superficial scratches

in the figure, but was not yet satisfied with the results.

"Everything is ready, my lady." Tirzah's voice startled Michal. "But I have gathered no information about our destination. The other women know nothing, and the soldiers will not talk."

"As I expected. No matter what happens, we are well out of this place." Michal pulled back a corner of the blanket on her bed. "This is what is left of the meaningless gods they worship."

Tirzah gasped. "We must go before they find out." Then she smiled. "You did well."

"What shall we do with this remaining lump of metal?" Michal pulled the last figurine from the folds of her tunic.

Tirzah paused only a moment. "What about those crocks where the stable boys store dung for the olive tree roots?"

"Excellent!" Michal loved the symbolism of this gesture. "That will be my last act in this house."

"But, my lady," Tirzah counseled, "you have no excuse to go to the stables. You might arouse suspicion. I must deliver Astarte to her new dwelling."

Michal was determined. "No. I will do this myself. Meet me in the courtyard with our bundles."

Why did she not think of the huge jars filled with animal dung, stored in a far corner of the stable? Was it three years ago, or four, when she and Tirzah hid there during a particularly frightening celebration of the harvest?

The ever-resourceful Tirzah found a hollow gourd and dipped a little sheep dung in it. "I need a dab of this for the coat," she said, "to discourage anyone from casting sheep's eyes on it." Michal and Tirzah covered their mouths and shook with silent laughter at the

thought of sheep dung warding off sheep eyes.

It was absurd now to imagine how anything could be amusing while hiding in that stinking barn, fearful of being raped, beaten or even murdered. There were times when the desperate need for a good laugh overcame the darkest of circumstances.

That must have been four years ago, Michal thought. They hid in the stable not long after she made a beautiful blanket for Tirzah's little daughter Zora. Michal remembered how the other women curiously eyed her nightly work as she combed and carded the wool. They openly stared at her hand-held spindle as she spun the carded wool into yarn. Finally, to their amazement, she knitted the yarn into a blanket.

One of the younger wives, a slight, dark-skinned Canaanite woman who seldom spoke to anyone, shyly asked if Michal would make a blanket for *her* baby. The chief steward became interested, and soon Michal was making yarn and blankets to send to market. Michal persuaded the chief steward she could make more trade goods with Tirzah's help.

Bida complained to anyone who would listen about the chief steward's interference, taking away the head wife's authority to assign work to the women. Nevertheless, the steward had his way. Michal and Tirzah's goods were traded for merchandise everyone in the household enjoyed, such as spices, metal cauldrons, and jewelry—things that put Phaltiel in fine spirits for a day or so.

As she slipped away to the stable, Michal wondered if Bida was worried about losing the necklace and earrings she commandeered the day Michal arrived in Gallim.

"Gold jewelry!" Bida exclaimed as soon as she saw

the copper necklace. "Give it to me." Michal avoided looking at Tirzah or Sarah for fear of showing her contemptuous amusement. "Do you have any more?" Bida demanded.

"I have only these earrings made from that same metal." Michal could not resist taking advantage of Bida's ignorance. She owned other jewelry, but the chain and earrings were the only pieces of copper. Bida still wore the earrings from time to time, even though they were tarnished and lost their luster. The chain adorned the senior wife's thick neck every day.

On her way to the stable, Michal avoided the kitchen, where soldiers congregated to consume the meal provided by Phaltiel. She pulled her cloak over the side of her face and stooped to disguise her height. As soon as she reached the barn-like structure, she ducked inside and flattened herself against the wall, waiting for her eyes to adjust to the transition from the brightness outside. Listening intently, she heard only the sound of animals munching on straw. Moving to the dark, low-roofed corner where the dung jars were stored, she selected a container near the wall and pushed Astarte's evil likeness into the goo, head first. She used a small stick to guide the idol deeper into the jar.

Satisfied, she tossed the stick aside and threaded her way through the maze of containers. Michal was about to emerge from the darkness of the smelly corner when she heard men's voices. Stepping back, she crouched behind a high stack of hay.

The murmur of voices became more distinct, drawing closer. Men, two of them. She waited quietly to find out who they were. It was not a matter of friend or foe, merely greater or lesser enemy.

"I served with Lord David when he was the master of King Saul's military operations." It was Joash, a slave who tended the olive groves. He was one of the few men who took no part in the debauchery of Phaltiel's harvest festivals.

"I have no quarrel with Phaltiel. Why should I make off with one of his slaves?" The second voice belonged to the captain in charge of the soldiers.

Michal considered her options. How could she sneak out of the stable? The men stood well inside, but they had a clear view of the entrance. Any movement would cause her long cloak to rustle the straw and attract their attention.

"Captain Osh, Lord Phaltiel has held me as a slave beyond the seven years allowed by the law. Legally, I should be free. I could hide outside the gate," Joash begged. "Your men can pick me up after you have cleared the compound. Please, sir, I am a soldier like you."

Years ago, Sarah taught Michal to keep herself calm by breathing deeply. From habit, she inhaled as much of the foul stable air as she could hold, and regretted it immediately. Just as the slave said, "I am a soldier like you," Michal sneezed resoundingly.

Growing up among palace intrigues taught the princess that boldness would often succeed when stealth failed. She stood, smoothed her clothing, scratched her sandals against the straw, and walked nonchalantly toward the two men.

"On my great-grandfather's bones," Captain Osh swore. "What are *you* doing here?" He clapped his hand over his mouth for a moment and added, "Excuse my language, my lady. This man was just educating me on the subject of growing olives."

Michal smiled at the Captain. "I must be losing my fluency in Hebrew. It sounded to me as if he asked you to smuggle him out of here." She hoped her sarcasm would divert the soldier from questioning her presence in the stable.

"Picking up a few of your essential belongings from the stable, are you?"

Michal doubted this officer was a member of the royal guard, but she knew from the way he talked he was a native of Jerusalem. He might not be devout, but he would not be likely to oppose a blow against idolatry. "If you must know, I destroyed the idols of the false gods the people in this household worship. All but one, a metal Astarte, which I just now buried deep in a crock of dung."

Joash smiled. Captain Osh slapped his thigh, shook his head, and laughed aloud. "Yet another reason to go before Phaltiel can raise the alarm among his neighbors." He chuckled again.

"Why don't you do it?" Michal knew she had no right to challenge Osh.

The Captain sobered immediately. "Do what?"

"Take Joash along," she said.

"I was sent to transport one obviously difficult woman, not everyone who wants to escape from Gallim," Captain Osh said. "Only you will go with my soldiers when we leave."

"Surely you don't expect me to travel without my handmaid." Michal hoped she sounded more confident than she felt.

Osh glared at her, his jaw set.

"If Tirzah and Joash come along, I promise not to escape." Michal paused. She could see this soldier was confident she could not get away from his army. So she

offered up the only thing over which she had any control, “And I will give you my word I will not take my own life before we reach our destination.”