

Royal women in the books of Samuel

We see virtually nothing of the married lives of Saul, David or Solomon, other than a hint of David/Bathsheba, and similarly rarely see women actively mothering. Rather, women are subject to the power and whims of their royal men.



Merab, daughter of Saul, wife of Adriel the Meholathite, son of Barzillai the Gileadite, a longtime, loyal advisor to King David. David later has her five sons murdered. (1 Sam 14.49; 18.17-19; 2 Sam 21.8).

[painting by Jean-Marie Delatre, 1794]



Michal, daughter of Saul, wife of David, then taken by Saul from David and given to Palti, son of Laish, from Gallim, only to be taken back by Saul's son, Ishbaal, and given back to David, where she later rejects him and bears him no child. (1 Sam 14.49; 18.20-28; 19.11-17; 24.44; 2 Sam 3.13-14; 6.16-23)



Abigail, wife of Nabal the Calebite, becomes David's wife and bears their son, Chileab. (1 Sam 25; 27.3; 30.5; 2 Sam 2.2; 3.3)



Ahinoam, daughter of Ahimaaz wife of Saul before possibly she became a wife of David as Ahinoam of Jezreel, and bears their son, Amnon, who later raped and abandoned his half-sister, Tamar (1 Sam 14.50)

Abigail and Ahinoam are often noted as "David's two wives": 1 Sam 25.43; 27.3; 30.5; 2 Sam 2.2; 3.3, where Abigail is always named as "widow of Nabal")

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The “extra” women of David: mentioned only as mothers of a specific son: Maacah, daughter of King Talmai of Geshur, bore Absalom; Haggith who bore Adonijah; Abital who bore Shephatiah; Eglah who bore Ithream. (2 Sam 3.2-5)



Rizpah, daughter of Aiah, a “concubine” (Heb, *pilegesh*) of Saul, into whom Abner goes, only to be challenged by Saul’s son, Ishbaal, leading him to turn from the house of Saul to the house of David. David later has her two sons murdered. (2 Sam 3.7; 21.8-11)

David’s “concubines” (Heb, *pilegshim*) and “women”, who anonymously give birth in Jerusalem to Shammua, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon [note the anticipation here of the Bathsheba/Uriah situation], Ibhar, Elishua, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.



Bathsheba, wife of Uriah, raped and taken by David from Uriah, whom David had killed via Joab; their “love child” died and was succeeded by their son, Solomon. She is later manipulated by David’s royal prophet, Nathan, to assure that her son Solomon would succeed David, rather than Haggith’s son, Adonijah. (2 Sam 11.3; 12.24; 1 Kg 1.11-2.19)



Tamar, daughter of David and Maacah, sister of Absalom, who is raped and abandoned by her half-brother, Amnon, who is later murdered by Absalom after David is passive. (2 Sam 13; 14.27)



Abishag the Shunammite, brought to “warm” King David in bed; Adonijah seeks Bathsheba’s support in claiming her as a wife, but is rebuffed by Solomon and later killed by him. (1 Kg 1.3, 15; 2.17-22)

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