

THE CASE OF MICHAL
Idealism and Dignity
Banská Bystrica, 20. July 2014

1Sa 14:49; 18:20, 27f; 19:11ff, 17; 25:44;
2 Sa 3:13f; 6:16, 20f, 23; 1 Chr 15:29

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0. INTRO: THE STORY AND ITS BACKGROUND

- **2 Samuel 17:20** Then Absalom's servants came to the woman at the house and said, "Where are Ahimaaz and Jonathan?" And ^athe woman said to them, "They have crossed the brook of water." (מִיכָל הַגִּימֹם) And when they searched and could not find *them*, they returned to Jerusalem.

The story of Michal is not long or explained enough for us to draw conclusions but it does raise some important questions. We need to ask even if we don't get answers.

0.1. TEXT – HISTORY

- **1Sa 14:49** Now ^athe sons of **Saul** were Jonathan and Ishvi and Malchi-shua; and the names of his two **daughters** were these: the name of the firstborn ^bMerab and the name of the younger Michal
- **1Sa 18:15-20** When Saul saw that he was prospering greatly, he dreaded him. ¹⁶ But all Israel and Judah loved David, and he went out and came in before them. ¹⁷ Then **Saul** said to David, "Here is my older daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife, only be a valiant man for me and fight the LORD'S battles." For **Saul** thought, "My hand shall not be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him." ¹⁸ But David said to Saul, "Who am I, and what is my life *or* my father's family in Israel, that I should be the king's son-in-law?" ¹⁹ So it came about at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, that she was given to Adriel the Meholathite for a wife. ²⁰ Now Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David. When they told **Saul**, the thing was agreeable to him (וַיִּשְׂרֵה הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינָיו).
- **1Sa 18:25-29** Saul planned to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. ²⁶ When his servants told David these words, it pleased David to become the king's son-in-law. ²⁷ Before the days had expired ²⁷ David rose up and went, he and his men, and struck down two hundred men among the Philistines. Then David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full number to the king, that

he might become the king's son-in-law. So **Saul** gave him Michal his **daughter** for a wife. ²⁸ When **Saul** saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and *that* Michal, Saul's **daughter**, loved him, ²⁹ then Saul was even more afraid of David. Thus Saul was David's enemy continually.

- **1Sa 19:10-17** And Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he eluded Saul, so that he struck the spear into the wall. And David fled and escaped that night. ¹¹ Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him, that he might kill him in the morning. But **Michal**, David's wife, told him, "If you do not escape with your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed." ¹² So **Michal let David down through the window**, and he fled away and escaped. ¹³ **Michal** took an image (תִּרְפִּים) and laid it on the bed and put a pillow of goats hair at its head and covered it with the clothes. ¹⁴ And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, "He is sick." ¹⁵ Then Saul sent the messengers to see David, saying, "Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may kill him." ¹⁶ And when the messengers came in, behold, the image was in the bed, with the pillow of goats' hair at its head. ¹⁷ Saul said to **Michal**, "Why have you deceived me thus and let my enemy go, so that he has escaped?" And **Michal** answered Saul, "He said to me, 'Let me go. Why should I kill you?'"
- **1Sa 25:43-44** David had also taken Ahinoam of ^aJezreel, and ^bthey both became his wives. ⁴⁴ Now **Saul** had given Michal his **daughter**, David's wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who was from Gallim.
- **2Sa 6:13-18** And so it was, that when the ^abearers of the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling. ¹⁴ And David was dancing before the LORD with all *his might*, and David was wearing a linen ephod. ¹⁵ So David and all the house of Israel(!) were bringing up the ark of the LORD with shouting and the sound of the trumpet. ¹⁶ Then it happened *as* the ark of the LORD came into the city of David that Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised (בָּזְהָה) him in her heart. ¹⁷ So they brought in the ark of the LORD and set it in its place inside the tent which David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. ¹⁸ When David had finished offering the burnt offering and the peace offering, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts.
- **2Sa 6:20-23** But when David returned to bless his household, Michal the **daughter** of **Saul** came out to meet David and said, "How the king of Israel distinguished himself (מִהֵנְכָבֵד) today! He uncovered (נִגְלָה) himself today in the eyes of his servants' maids (לְעֵינֵי אִמְהוֹת עֲבָדָיו) as one of the foolish ones shamelessly uncovers himself! (כְּהַגְלֹת נִגְלוֹת אַחַר הַרְקִים)" ²¹ So David said to Michal, "It was before the LORD, who chose me above your father and above all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel; therefore I will celebrate before the LORD (וְשִׁחֲקֵי לִפְנֵי יְהוָה). ²² "I will be more lightly esteemed than this and will be humble in my own eyes (וְנִקְלָתִי עוֹד מִזֹּאת וְהִיִּיתִי שָׁפֵל בְּעֵינַי), but with the maids of whom you have spoken, with them I will be distinguished. (וְעַם-הָאִמְהוֹת אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתָּ עִמָּם אֲכַבְדָּה)" ²³ Michal the **daughter** of **Saul** had no child to the day of her death.

0.2. BACKGROUND – SOME RELATED ISSUES

- **Women** in the Old Testament (modern understanding of *glory* – not “fame” & worldly importance → the audience of *ONE*; submission of *slaves* vs. submission of *lovers*) – Michal is king's daughter, yet treated like possessions (given to another man while David is away, then taken back by David)
- **Polygamy** and marriage (Jesus – “In the beginning...”)
- **Violence** and the character of God (David was not allowed to build the Temple; Jesus weeping over Jerusalem)
- OT **worship** and NT worship (the Ark of the Covenant; Jerusalem → the Church)
- Social **hierarchy** (royal and common position in life → servant hood in the Church)
- *Teraphim* – household idols (**Gn 31:19** Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and **Rachel** stole her father's household gods. **Zech 10:2** For the household gods utter nonsense..., **Hos 3:4** For the Israelites must live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, and without ephod or *household idols* (וְאֵין אֶפֹד וְתִרְפִּים). **1Sa 15:23** “...presumption is as iniquity

and *idolatry*... [יָאֵן יִתְרָפִים הַפְּצָר] – small *teraphim* with Rachel; big one with Michal... **2Ki 23:24** Moreover, **Josiah** put away the mediums and the necromancers and the *household gods* and the idols and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might establish the words of the law that were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD.) **Gn 35:1-4** God said to **Jacob**, "Get up! Go to Bethel and settle there. Build an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau." ² So Jacob said to his family and all who were with him, "Get rid of the **foreign gods** (אֱלֹהֵי הַנֹּכַר) that are among you. Purify yourselves and change your clothes. ³ We must get up and go to Bethel. I will build an altar there to the God who answered me in my day of distress. He has been with me everywhere I have gone." ^a ⁴ Then they gave Jacob all their **foreign gods** and their earrings, and Jacob hid them under the oak near Shechem.

1. THE IDEALISM OF FAITH/YOUTH

- the dangers of youth idealization...
- the dangers of old age

1.1. LOVE

- young girl and a national hero David (Romeo & Juliet?)
- spiritual motive? → endangering David
- **1Sa 18:20** "...they told Saul..." – she made it obvious(?), she fell in love with the hero

1.2. RISK-TAKING

- helping the outlaw to escape → infuriating the father(?)
- God uses also imperfect instruments ... "We need not fret and be uneasy about the snares of the wicked if only we are in God's service, as time is on our side."¹

1.3. LUKEWARM RELIGION?

- Jacob: "Get rid of the **foreign gods!**"
- syncretism? "insurance"? customs?
- mixed life-style – partly Christian and partly pagan...
- the religion of "loopholes left" → you have to burn bridges behind you to be safely Christ's – otherwise you'll fall back at the first hardship

The household idols were forbidden by God, yet we see them (at least one big idol) with Michal. These idols were a part of culture, helping people to make decisions etc. We don't know whether Michal had the one just as an old thing or whether she actually worshiped it. Sometimes when a person becomes a follower of God he/she keep old habits and God starts dealing with them later – those habits (remains) are not under God's judgment straight away. But we must be careful about our habits! Ask yourself: Am I motivated by love towards people and my relationships with them? Or am I motivated by loyalty to the LORD? Michal did save David's life but she might have done it just because she was in love with him (if it was true that she actually didn't worship Jahve, but she worshiped *teraphim*).

¹ *The Pulpit Commentary* p. 366.

2. THE DANGERS OF RESPECTABILITY/DIGNITY

- the pride of Europe → 1914

2.1. SPECTATOR'S RELIGION

Michal was watching as David, clothed in very simple clothes, danced along with the lowest of the nation celebrating the presence of the arch of the covenant. Be aware of a spectator's religion! Any type of Christianity can look strange from the outside but only God sees the motives. If you only observe someone's religion you'll only imitate it too. The other danger: when the Holy Spirit's doing something, it's visible (people rejoice, people repent, cry etc.). If you're only a spectator you'll despise those being moved by the Spirit. On the other hand, if you're a Christian, don't make it your life's program to act foolish in front of people. But a true Christian doesn't mind if people despise him. TRUE HUMILITY. **2 Cor 5:12-13, Gal 1:10, John 5:44!** – faith is dependent on who I want to please, **John 12:43.**

Ask yourself a question: Do I want to be dignified and stay on the top in other people's eyes?

- **James 1:22** ...be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.
- detached (**Pr 18:1** He who *separates* (נִפְרָד) himself seeks *his own* desire, He *quarrels* against all sound wisdom. [תוֹשֵׁיף])
- withdrawn **Hb 10:38** ...my righteous one shall live by faith, and **if he shrinks back** (ἐὰν ὑποστείληται), my soul has no pleasure in him."
- **Eze 33:30-32** "As for you, son of man, your people who talk together about you by the walls and at the doors of the houses, say to one another, each to his brother, 'Come, and hear what the word is that comes from the LORD.'³¹ And they come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear what you say but they will not do it; for with lustful talk (עֲנָבִים בְּפִיהֶם) in their mouths they act; their heart is set on their gain.³² And behold, you are to them like one who sings lustful songs (עֲנָבִים כְּשִׁיר לָהֶם לְהַנְדִּיךָ) with a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument, for they hear what you say, but they will not do it.

2.2. SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS OF PRIDE

2.2.1. EMOTIONS IN FAITH

- emotions vs. emotionalism – there is no genuine Christianity without deep emotions
- "Probably David did mean to rank himself for the time among the inferior servitors of the ark."² (**1Sa 2:18** Samuel was ministering before the LORD, a boy clothed with a linen **ephod**.)
- **2Cor 5:12-13** ...that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart.¹³ For if we are beside ourselves (ἐξέστημεν), it is for God; if we are in our right mind (σωφρονούμεν), it is for you. (→ 1Cor 14! [glossolalia])

2.2.2. HUMILITY IN WORSHIP

- Ver. 16. — Michal Saul's daughter. "Possibly these words are merely to identify Michal, but they suggest the thought that, as a king's daughter, **she valued her royal dignity**. ... David's offence in the eyes of Michal was, not his dancing, but his divesting himself of his royal robes, and appearing before his subjects clad in the dress of an inferior class."³
- And David danced. "The word used means the springing round in halfcircles to the sound of music."⁴
- v. 21 "...the LORD, who chose me above your father and above all his house" → "I will be more lightly esteemed than this and will be humble in my own eyes
- "**dignified religion**" → people-pleasing; getting respect through outward appearance → *liturgy!*
- → the curse of "**WHAT WOULD PEOPLE THINK/SAY?!**"

² *The Pulpit Commentary* p. 146.

³ *The Pulpit Commentary* p. 147.

⁴ *The Pulpit Commentary* p. 146.

- Jesus – washing the disciples' feet;
- **John 5:44** **How can you believe**, when **you** receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?
- **John 12:43** they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.
- **Gal 1:10** If I were still trying to **please men**, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

2.2.3. THE HUMILITY AND INDEPENDENCE OF FAITH

- *It was* before the LORD ... therefore **I will** celebrate before the LORD
- you need to know when to *listen* to other believers and when to *ignore* them – usually we do it in the opposite way from how we should do it! – listening where we should ignore and ignoring where we should listen
- **Mt 10:36** And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.

[FINNEY/PRATNEY Winkie *Religion of Public Opinion*] 1. They do what Paul says - "measure themselves among themselves ... (2Cor 10: 12) and for this reason do not find true faith. There are a vast many people who, instead of making Jesus Christ their standard and the Bible their rule of life, obviously aim at no such thing. The great question they ask is - "Do I do as much in religion and be as good as others in the crowd or church around me?" Their aim is to keep up a *respectable* religious front for others. Instead of seriously asking for themselves what the Lord and His Word requires, they look simply at the common run of professing church people and copy them. They do that which is outwardly respectable, not primarily that which is right (Ps 36:1-2; Pr 12:15; 16:2; 30:12; Ecc 11:9; Jdg 17:6; Mt 6:1-7; 16-18).

2. A people-pleaser never bothers to raise the standards of right around him. - They are not bothered that the general standard of piety is so low in the church that a visiting early church Christian would have to backslide to be in fellowship! People-pleasers like the "present" standard, because they have conformed their religious *reputation* around it. If the real friend of God and man tries to wake up the church and raise the tone of faith, he seems critical and meddling to the people-pleasers (Mt 25; Mk 6:1-3; Acts 5; Jer 14:10-14). (<http://articles.ochristian.com/article10414.shtml> [19. 7. 2014])

3. CONCLUSIONS

- Make sure you are fully committed Christian! If you have any bridge to the world, you will eventually use it!
- Take care not to be just a religious spectator! The Church is more than just a lecture/concert hall!
- Beware of people-pleasing religion! Respectability/outward dignity is a snare too many Christians fall into!
- Do not let people take away your joy before the Lord by attacking your sincere worship! The enemy will try to put your self-doubt over the witness of the Spirit!