

Excerpt from the book
The Song of Songs - A Messiah's Confession
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Part One: Historical Background

The Davidic Dynasty

(or Incest, Onanism, Prostitution,
Promiscuity and Idol Worship, Adultery,
Murder... Messiah!)

Our story begins not at the time of the first kings of Israel but far earlier, in the time of Avrahám (Abraham), who was born in the Hebrew year 1948 (since Creation), or -1812¹ (B.C.). Lot, Avrahám's nephew, a rich man, moves to the wicked city of S'dóm (Sodom). When God decides to

¹ Instead of B.C./B.C.E. or A.D./C.E. I'll simply use the plus or minus sign when necessary. These dates are based on traditional sources such as *Seder Olam Rabba* which was written during the Talmudic Era (app. +300 to 500). There are differing opinions on the precise calculation of Biblical dates, but the discrepancies are fairly negligible.

destroy the city He sends two angels to warn Lot. Lot flees with his wife and two daughters. Disregarding the angels' warning, Lot's wife turns around to look at the destruction and is turned into a pillar of salt. Lot and his daughters head for the hills and move into a cave. Believing that the whole world is being destroyed and that the future of the human race lies with them, the daughters get their father drunk on wine and have sex with him. They both get pregnant and give birth to sons. The elder daughter, who came up with the plan, names her son Moáv, meaning "from my father." The younger daughter names her son Ben-Amí, meaning "son of my nation." Both eventually become the forefathers of tribes, named after them, Moáv (Moab) and Ammón.² Remember these names – they both play important roles in our story, as does the connection between wine and sex.

² Genesis 19:30-38



Decades pass. At the age of 90, Avrahám's wife Sara gives birth to Yitzhák (Isaac), whose wife Rivqáh (Rebecca) gives birth to Ya'aqóv (Jacob), also known as Israel, whose four wives bear him twelve sons, the forefathers of the twelve tribes of Israel.

One of these, Yehudáh (Judah), also gets involved in an unfortunate sexual

³ "Lot and His Daughters" - Simon Vouet, (1590-1649)

imbroglio. His son Eṣr marries a woman named Tamár. He doesn't want her to get pregnant (and therefore ugly in his eyes) so he practices premature withdrawal and spills his seed. God doesn't like this and He kills him. Yehudáh instructs his next son Onán to marry Tamár and carry on his brother's name. He also spills his seed since he knows that his children will be considered his brother's (hence the term "onanism"). God kills him, too. Yehudáh doesn't want to take a chance on his third and youngest son Sheláh dying as well so he tells Tamár to go home and wait until Sheláh is old enough to marry. Plenty of time passes but Yehudáh never sends Sheláh to her. Finally Tamár, finding out that Yehudáh will be on a certain road at a certain time, goes out to meet him. He mistakes her for a prostitute and propositions her. She doesn't disabuse him of his assumption. She becomes pregnant by her own father-in-law and

bears twins, Zérah and Péretz.⁴ We'll get back to Péretz later.



The Israelites go down to Egypt where they are eventually enslaved. They spend a total of 240 years of exile in Egypt, until the year 2448/-1312 when the Exodus takes place following the Ten Plagues. After Moshé (Moses) receives the Torah at Mt. Sinai, the Children of Israel forfeit the

⁴ Genesis 38:1-30

⁵ "Judah and Tamar" - Rembrandt's school, c. 1650

opportunity to enter the Promised Land after sending in twelve spies who report that the inhabitants of the land are invincible and the land unconquerable, perhaps even undesirable. This generation is doomed by God to wander in the desert for forty years, one year for each day the spies spent in the Promised Land, during which all but three of the 623,550 male adults are to die, the three being Yehoshúaꝓ (Joshua) and Kalév (Caleb), who were among the spies and reported that they could indeed conquer the land; and Pin'ħás (Phineas) the Cohen. The women were spared because they supported Yehoshúaꝓ and Kalév, which is also the reason why women are not commanded to wear tsitsít (fringes) on their garments, which serve as a rebuke and a warning to men: "...and you will see it and remember all of the Lord's commandments and you will not follow your hearts and your eyes which you stray (literally 'whore') after."⁶

⁶ Numbers 15:39

As the Israelites wander through the desert they acquire a reputation as a formidable army, conquering land wherever they go. As the 40-year desert exile comes to an end they approach the land of Moáv, across the Jordan River from the Promised Land in what is now Jordan. King Baláq of Moáv, fearing for his tribe and land, hires the prophet Bilam to curse the Israelites. Bilam's curses backfire but then Baláq comes up with a better plan: he sends out the Moabite girls to seduce the Israelite men. They fall for them, going so far as to serve the Moabite idol through rites of sex and excrement. God responds with a plague which kills 24,000 men.⁷

Soon afterwards Moshé dies and the Israelites enter Canaan – the Promised Land. At first they are governed by Yehoshúa, Moshé's right-hand man, then the Judges. There is no king as yet. They spend about 400 years trying to oust or

⁷ Numbers 22-25:9

conquer the seven nations living in Canaan. During this time there is a famine in Canaan and a man named Elimélech leaves his home in Beit-Léhem (Bethlehem) with his wife and two sons and goes to Moáv where food can be found. Elimélech and his two sons die in Moáv. Elimélech's wife Noamí (Naomi) decides to return to Canaan and one of her widowed daughters-in-law, Ruth, chooses to join her. Since Ruth is the inheritor of Elimélech's land, whoever marries her inherits his property as well. According to Israelite law, the closest kin is obligated to marry the widow, but in this case the closest kin opts out, claiming that Israelites are forbidden to marry Moabites.

Enter Bóaz. Bóaz is the great-great-great-great-grandson of Péretz (remember him?). He is seventy years old, an Israelite Judge, a virgin according to legend, and the next of kin to Elimélech after the unnamed man who has refused to marry

Ruth. At Noamí's behest (in a demonstration of personality projection that Freud would go to town on⁸) Ruth goes to where Bóaz is sleeping and "lies down at his feet" - i.e. offers herself to him. Bóaz is moved by the gesture and promises to marry her if he can. Proving to the court of law that the injunction against marrying Moabites only applies to Moabite men, Bóaz marries Ruth. Bóaz spends his wedding night with Ruth and promptly dies. Ruth becomes pregnant with Bóaz's child and gives birth to a son who is named Oved. Oved has a son named Yishai (Jesse). Yishai has eight sons. The youngest is named David.⁹



As the Torah predicted, once settled in the Promised Land the Children of Israel want a king like all the other nations,

⁸ Most of the verbs that Noamí uses in instructing Ruth are written in first person - "I will get dressed," "I will go down" etc. - but read in second person.

⁹ The Book of Ruth

despite God's warnings.¹⁰ The first king is Shaúl (Saul), a tall warrior who is anointed with the alternate anointing oil of balsam (of which much more later) by Sh'muél (Samuel) the Prophet. King Shaúl disobeys God by sparing the life of Agág, king of the Israelites' arch-enemies the Amaleqites. Sh'muél sets things straight by beheading Agág.



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¹⁰ Samuel I 8:11-20

¹¹ "The Death of Agag" - Paul Gustave Doré (1832-1883)

God decides to tear the monarchy from Shaúl and bestow it on none other than a young shepherd from Beit-Léhem named Davíd, 11th generation descendant of Yehudáh, who is also anointed by Sh'muél (this time with the anointing oil made by Moshé), and whom Shaúl unwittingly calls for to sing his blues away as he "knows how to play music and is a valiant man, a born soldier, wise in words, and handsome, and the Lord is with him."¹² At first King Shaúl likes Davíd very much and even makes him his armor-bearer. But then Davíd kills Goliath the giant, the Philistine's star warrior...

"And as they came, as Davíd returned from smiting the Philistine, the women from all the cities of Israel came out singing and dancing to meet King Shaúl with drums and joy and

¹² Samuel I 16:18

shalishim.¹³ And the women answered playfully, saying: 'Shaúl smote his thousands and David – his hundreds of thousands.' And Shaul became very angry and this displeased him and he said: 'They gave David hundreds of thousands and me they gave thousands; next thing you know he'll have the throne.' And Shaul was David's enemy from that day on."¹⁴

Shaúl tries to kill David a number of times. When this is unsuccessful he gives him his daughter Michál to wife – for a bridal-price of 100 Philistine foreskins – in an attempt to kill two birds with one stone, so to speak. David brings him not 100 but 200 foreskins.¹⁵ We can imagine what trouble he went to to get them... then

¹³ There are divided opinions as to whether this is a three-stringed instrument or a percussion instrument like a triangle

¹⁴ Samuel I 18:6-9

¹⁵ Samuel I 18:27

again, maybe that's not such a good idea. In any case, relations between them continue to go downhill and while David does all sorts of valiant deeds, Shaúl struggles from battle to battle, and getting rid of David, future successor to the throne, becomes his obsession. Eventually Shaúl commits suicide on the battlefield in a battle against the Philistines and David becomes king – but not before marrying two other women.

King David establishes his capital city in God's chosen location – in the lower city of Jerusalem, below Mt. Zion – but since he has so much blood on his hands he is not allowed by God to build the Temple. He brings the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem but it is kept in a tent as there is no Temple to put it in.

One day King David sees a woman bathing from his roof and finds out who she is – Bat-Shéva (Bathsheba), wife of Uriáh, a member of the Hittite tribe and

warrior in King David's army. Knowing that Uriáh is away at war, David has Bat-Shéva taken to his house. He has sex with her and sends her back home. Soon she sends a message to King David that she is with child. David tries to cover up his faux pas by calling for Uriáh and giving him a furlough, hinting that it's about time he spent some quality time with his wife. But Uriáh refuses to avail himself of this pleasure, feeling unworthy of the luxury "as long as the Lord's Ark dwells in a tent and the Children of Israel in huts."¹⁶ The next day David gets Uriáh drunk and tries to send him back to his wife but he refuses once again. David gets fed up and sends Uriáh back to battle with a letter for his commander Yoáv, ordering him:

"Bring Uriáh to the forefront in the heat of the battle and retreat behind him, that he may be struck and killed."¹⁷

¹⁶ Samuel II 11:11

¹⁷ Samuel II 11:15

By the way, it is in reference to this episode that the Gemara shrewdly observes:

"Man has a little organ – the more he starves it the more satiated it is; the more he feeds it the hungrier it is."¹⁸

As soon as the mourning period for Uriáh is over, David marries Bat-Shéva and she bears him a son. But as punishment for David's wicked behavior the son dies. Bat-Shéva mourns some more and David comes to console her – and gets her pregnant again. Once again she bears a boy – Sh'lomó¹⁹ – "and the Lord loved him."

¹⁸ Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 107:A. This can also be understood as "the more he starves it the more satiated *he* is; the more he feeds it the hungrier *he* is."

¹⁹ Solomon, pronounced *Sh'-lo-móh* unless preceded by a prefix of preposition or conjunction, then pronounced *lish-lo-móh*, *she-lísh-lo-móh*, etc. The primary accent is always on the last syllable

