

King David's Family

'Jesse became the father of his firstborn Eliab, Abinadab the second son, Shimea the third son, Nethanel the fourth son, Raddai the fifth son, Ozem the sixth son, David the seventh son and their sisters were Zeruah and Abigail' (1 Chronicles 2:12 to 16).

David, the anointed King of Israel was the youngest of ten children. Nine children are named in this list but there was another son Elihu, who was left out of this list so we do not know where his place was in the family. 'Elihu, one of the brothers of David' (1 Chronicles 27:18). By reading the scriptures that refer to David's family, we can get a 'picture' of what the family were like. His father Jesse earned his living as a shepherd and from what is written in the Bible, it appears Jesse was monogamous. David's mother Nahash was only mentioned in the Bible twice. 'Amasa was the son of Ithra (Jether) the Israelite and Abigail the daughter of Nahash, sister to Zeruah' (2 Samuel 17:25). David said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and my mother come to be with you until I know what God will do for me" (1 Samuel 22:3).

The family were very tall, fair skinned and very good looking. They had a 'ruddy' complexion, or rosy red cheeks that only white skinned people have. They had either blonde or red hair that was very thick and heavy. 'Do not look on his face or the height of his stature' (1 Samuel 16:7). David was described as 'ruddy with a beautiful face and good looking ... a comely person ... ruddy with a fair face' (1 Samuel 16:12 & 18; 17:42). David's daughter Tamar is described as being beautiful and fair (2 Samuel 13:1). Absalom's daughter, also named Tamar was, 'a woman with a beautiful face' (2 Samuel 14:27). 'In all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head, he had no blemish. When he cut the hair of his head at the end of each year because it was heavy on him, he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels (about 2½ kilograms)' (2 Samuel 14:25 & 26). In line with the fair-haired, fair-skinned description, the family probably had blue eyes.

King David's whole family were blessed with gifted musical talent. David was a talented musician who could play a harp, lute and lyre. He wrote, 'It is a good thing to give thanks to God, to sing praises to Your name Most High, to proclaim your loving kindness in the morning and your faithfulness every night with the ten-stringed lute, with the harp and with the melody of the lyre' (Psalm 92:1 to 3). Those stringed instruments, including the psaltery were the ancient equivalent of our modern harp, violin, viola, sitar, zither, banjo, mandolin or guitar. They also played tambourines, pipes, trumpets, flute, recorders, castanets, cymbals, drums and other forms of percussion. David wrote most of the Psalms but a man named Asaph wrote many Psalms too. Asaph was David's great nephew; grandson of David's brother Shimea (1 Chronicles 6:39).

As each of Jesse's eldest sons grew older, they stopped looking after Jesse's large flock of sheep and joined the army. 'David was the son of the Ephrathite of Bethlehem, Judah, whose name was Jesse and he had eight sons (and two daughters). The three eldest sons of Jesse had gone with Saul to the battle and the names of Jesse's three eldest sons were Eliab the firstborn, next to him Abinadab and the third Shammah' (1 Samuel 17:12 & 13). David ended up being the only son tending the sheep. He risked his life to rescue lost lambs ... "I was keeping my father's sheep and when came a lion or a bear and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after it, struck it and delivered the lamb out of its mouth. When the lion and bear arose against me, I caught him by the beard, struck him and killed him. I struck both the lion and the bear' (1 Samuel 17:34 to 36). He was 'just a youth' of about fifteen when he was first anointed to be king. David certainly proved his bravery when he was confronted by wild animals and Goliath, but his brothers and nephews were just as brave and were mighty warriors. David was always obedient to his father Jesse, who seemed to be a very caring father. Eliab, being the eldest son was typical of older brothers in that he seemed to give young David a hard time. When Eliab accused David of neglecting the sheep to see a battle, David asked him, "What have I done now?" David could have said, "What have I done this time?" That infers Eliab's bossiness towards his younger brother was normal for them, then David turned away from his brothers, which shows young David's hurt feelings.

When Samuel went to Jesse's house to anoint the new king at the Lord's instruction, Jesse brought his eldest sons to Samuel but each son was rejected from being king. The Lord said to Samuel, "Call Jesse to the sacrifice and I will show you what you will do. Anoint to Me the man whom I will name to you." ... Samuel sanctified Jesse and his sons and called them to the sacrifice. When they had come, Samuel looked at Eliab and said, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him."

But God said to Samuel, "Do not look on his face or on the height of his stature because I have rejected him. I see not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart."

Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. He said, "Neither has God chosen this man."

Jesse made Shammah to pass by. Samuel said, "Neither has God chosen this man."

Jesse made his seven sons to pass before Samuel. Samuel said to Jesse, "God has not chosen these men. Are all your sons here?"

Jesse said, "There remains yet the youngest and he is keeping the sheep."

Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and get him, for we will not sit down until he comes here."

Jesse sent for David and brought him in. He was ruddy with a beautiful face and good looking. The Lord said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he."

Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed David in the midst of his brothers and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily on David from that day forward' (1 Samuel 16:3 to 13).

David's older brothers were not accepted by God to be king and when they witnessed their youngest brother being anointed, the resentment for David did not take long to be made apparent. Jesse (the caring father) asked David to take some food to his brothers in the army, and to the army captain for the soldiers. David ran to greet his brothers, so he seemed to love them even if they resented him. David's eldest brother Eliab accused David of being proud and naughty, and neglecting the flock of sheep, which David did not do. 'Jesse said to David, "Take for your brothers an ephah of this parched grain, these ten loaves and carry them quickly to the camp to your brothers, and take these ten cheeses to the captain of their thousand. Look how your brothers fare and take their pledge (to confirm they were okay)."

Saul and David's brothers plus all the men of Israel were in the valley of Elah fighting with the Philistines. David rose up early in the morning and left the sheep with a keeper. He took the food and went as Jesse had commanded him and he came to the place of the wagons, as the army that was going forth to the fight shouted for the battle. Israel and the Philistines put the battle in array, army against army. David left his baggage in the hand of the keeper of the baggage, ran to the army and greeted his brothers. As David talked with his brothers, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, the champion, came up out of the ranks of the Philistines and spoke the same words and David heard them. When all the men of Israel saw Goliath, they fled from him and were terribly afraid. The men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who has come up to defy Israel? It will be, the man who kills him, King Saul will enrich him with great riches, will give him his daughter (for his wife) and will make his father's house free (from taxes) in Israel."

David spoke to the men who stood by him saying, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

The people answered him after this manner saying, "Thus it will be done for the man who kills Goliath."

Eliab, his eldest brother heard when he spoke to the men, and Eliab's anger was kindled against David. He said, "Why have you come down here and with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your pride and the naughtiness of your heart. You have come down so you might see the battle."

David said, "What have I done now? Is there not a cause?"

David turned away from him toward another and spoke after the same manner, and the people answered him again after the former manner' (1 Samuel 17:17 to 30).

David went on to kill Goliath then the army of Israel killed most of the Philistines (1 Samuel 17:40 to 57). The anointing of David caused resentment among the older sons but that resentment did not last for very long. The early resentment the brothers seemed to feel for David ebbed, as he was able to prove himself a good king and leader. Their bullying stopped and they stood up for David, defending him and his army. David's nephews adored their Uncle David and they too became warriors in his army. David's eldest brother Eliab was given the position of third in charge in the army (1 Chronicles 12:9). Eliab was a musician and a singer in the army (1 Chronicles 15:16 to 20). He had a daughter named Abihail who married her cousin Jerimoth, one of David's sons (2 Chronicles 11:18).

Second brother Abinadab looked after the Ark of the Covenant at his house on a hill until David wanted to take it back to Jerusalem (1 Samuel 7:1; 1 Chronicles 13:7). It was Abinadab's son Uzzah who touched the Ark and died (2 Samuel 6:3 & 4).

Third son Shimea/Shammah was a warrior in Saul's army. He had a nasty son Jonadab, who helped set up David's daughter Tamar to be raped by her half-brother Amnon, who was then killed by Absalom's servants (2 Samuel 13:3 to 32). David killed Goliath but Shimea's son Jonathon killed Goliath's son who was also a giant (2 Samuel 21:21; 1 Chronicles 20:6 & 7).

Fourth brother Nethanel was a trumpeter and a doorkeeper for the Ark of the Covenant (1 Chronicles 15:24). Fifth and sixth brothers Raddai and Ozem were not mentioned again by name but only as 'David's brothers' (1 Samuel 22:1). It is unknown where Elihu was placed within Jesse's family, but the Bible tells us Elihu was the captain of the army for all the tribe of Judah (1 Chronicles 27:18 & 22).

David's sister Zeruah and her husband Seraiah the chief priest and scribe, had three sons named Joab, Abishai and Asahel (1 Chronicles 2:16), who was light on his feet as a wild gazelle (2 Samuel 2:18). Abishai loved his Uncle David and wanted to behead a man who insulted David (2 Samuel 16:9). Joab and Abishai were made army captains over thousands of men (2 Samuel 18:1 & 2). Joab was made a chief (1 Chronicles 11:6), while Abishai and Asahel became two of David's three top army officers (2 Samuel 23:18 & 24). It was Joab who strongly rebuked David for weeping openly for his son Absalom. 'Joab came into the house to the

king and said, "Today you have shamed the faces of all your servants who today, have saved your life and the lives of your sons and your daughters, and the lives of your wives, and the lives of your concubines. You love those who hate you and hate those who love you, for you have declared today, that princes and servants are nothing to you. I perceive if Absalom had lived and we had all died today, then it would please you well. Now arise, go forth and speak kindly to your servants for I swear by God, if you do not go to them, no man will stay with you this night and that will be worse for you than all the evil that has happened to you from your youth until now" (2 Samuel 19:5 to 7). Abner, a cousin of King Saul killed Asahel with the handle end of the spear. Asahel was buried in Bethlehem with his father who must have died a few years earlier (2 Samuel 2:23 & 32). Then to avenge their brother Asahel's death, Joab and Abishai killed Abner (2 Samuel 3:30). Solomon had his cousin Joab killed by his servant Benaiah (1 Kings 2:28 to 34). There is no scriptural record telling us how Zeruah or Abishai died.

David's sister Abigail married Jether, also known as Ithra, an Ishmaelite and had a son named Amasa. 'Abigail bore Amasa. The father of Amasa was Jether the Ishmaelite' (1 Chronicles 2:17). Amasa became the captain of Absalom's army when Absalom was trying to overthrow King David. That made Amasa an enemy of David's army. Amasa and Joab were first cousins but that did not stop Joab from murdering him in cold blood during a time of peace. Amasa was very trusting and although he knew Joab was wearing a sword, did not feel in the least threatened by it until it was too late. Amasa died lying in a pool of his own blood (2 Samuel 20:9, 10 & 12).

David married at least nine women and had twenty-two sons and one daughter. David married Saul's daughter Michal who initially adored him and saved his life when Saul tried to kill him then lied to cover it up (1 Samuel 18:20 & 28; 19:11 to 17) but she then fell 'out of love' and despised him (2 Samuel 6:16). Michal's resentment of David probably stemmed from his polygamy, which is understandable. Women had no say in what their husbands did and it must have been very hard to see him take several other wives. Michal divorced David and married Paltiel (1 Samuel 25:44) but out of pure spite, David forced her to return to him, breaking the hearts of both Michal and Paltiel. David never again slept with Michal (2 Samuel 3:13 to 16) and he treated her dreadfully. Michal had no children to David (2 Samuel 6:23) but she somehow left David then married her late sister's widower Adriel and had five sons whom David took from her then had them hanged (2 Samuel 21:8 & 9). David's second wife Abigail had two sons, Chileab and Daniel. His third wife was Ahinoam who had a son named Amnon, David's firstborn. David's fourth wife Maacah was the mother of Absalom and Tamar, David's only daughter. His fifth wife Haggith was the mother of Adonijah. David's sixth wife Abital was the mother of Shephatiah. His seventh wife Eglah was the mother of Ithream. These children were born in Hebron (2 Samuel 3:2 to 5). David's eighth wife Bathsheba had a son who died soon after birth then she had Solomon (2 Samuel 12:19 & 24). His ninth wife Bathshua had three sons, Shimea, Shobab and Nathan. David then had other children born in Jerusalem to his wives and concubines (mistresses); Ibhah, Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, Eliada, two sons named Elishama, two sons named Eliphelet (1 Chronicles 3:1 to 9) and Jerimoth (2 Chronicles 11:18).

At that time in Israel's history, there was one war after another with their neighbouring nations. Death was so common the people seemed to be de-sensitised. What they did without any concern would be traumatic for us. For example, most of us could not look at a severed head without shuddering, but David carried the head of Goliath from Gath to Jerusalem in his hand (1 Samuel 17:54 & 57). Joab killed every man in Edom (1 Kings 11:15 & 16). They were all men of war (Judges 20:17). Women sang songs about how many people had recently died in battle (1 Samuel 18:7). David reigned for forty years and during that time many hundreds of thousands of people died. After all that bloodshed during David's wars, peace did not come to Israel except when they had a righteous leader. Jesse had many hundreds of descendants whose family lines can be followed through the Bible. It is possible there may still be descendants around the world who are not aware their ancestry comes from the famous family of Jesse. They may not be aware they have Jewish blood, especially if they are blue-eyed blondes because many people assume all Jewish people are dark-haired with brown eyes. Because of the terrible persecution of the Jewish people during the first century AD and beyond, many of them travelled as far north as Scandinavia and Northern Europe. David's direct bloodline can be traced to the birth of Jesus. 'The book of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the descendant of David, the descendant of Abraham' (Matthew 1:1). Both of Jesus' parents, Mary and Joseph were descendants of David through two different sons. Joseph came through the lineage of David's son Solomon (Matthew 1:6 & 7). Mary came through the lineage of David's son Nathan (Luke 3:31). When we accept Jesus as our Saviour and are adopted by God the Father, we become members of David's spiritual family (Romans 8:14 to 16). "I Jesus, have sent My angel to testify these things to you for the assemblies (churches). I am the Root and the Offspring of David; the Bright and Morning Star" (Revelation 22:16).

Amen and God bless you.

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