

Love charms and potions play a crucial role in *Rashi's Daughters: Joheved*, set in 11th century France. When Meir is traumatized by his sister's death in childbirth, he becomes impotent with fear that his beloved wife Joheved could die the same way. In order to rekindle his desire, Joheved uses a love potion and charm. Historical accuracy was paramount, so I researched medieval love spells and found that "real" ones were more imaginative than anything I could have invented.

For example: Make a wax figure, with the sex organs clearly delineated, of your beloved. Write on the breast "(N), daughter/son of (N)." Dip the figure in urine three times and pierce its heart with a hot needle, saying, "In the name of Michael, in the name of Gabriel, and in the name of Raphael, may N, daughter/son of N, burn with passion for me."

Calling upon angels and incantations from the Bible (see below) proves that white magic is involved, but it still might be dangerous if your needle misses its mark. Perhaps a potion would be better. Here's a couple:

1. Take a hot bath, cover your body with flour and perspire profusely. Wipe the flour into a clean dish, mix in oil and an egg, saying, "Your name is like the finest oil, therefore do the maidens love you (Song of Songs 1:3)." Then bake together and serve.

2. Just before sunrise, cut your fingernails, toenails and pubic hair, and burn them into powder. Leave this standing in fresh well water for nine days while the moon is waxing and then serve as a drink.

Of course, love potions are best ingested on Friday, the day ruled by the planet Venus.

The love charm that Joheved uses in *Rashi's Daughters* involves capturing images of mating dogs in a silver mirror inscribed with Meir's name. But when she can't find mating dogs and substitutes sheep instead, Meir almost dies. She nurses him back to health and finds that, with the vigor of a ram, he is indeed better than ever. For excerpts and more, visit RashisDaughters.com.