

David: Shepherd and King of Israel

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As Israel's greatest king, David made an impact on the biblical narrative greater than any other in the Hebrew Scriptures. He was a larger-than-life hero, rising to power from humble circumstances and acclaimed as king over all Israel in his own capital city, Jerusalem. A man of many talents, he was ideally suited to the royal tasks that faced him. As a shrewd military leader, he rallied a popular following, won victories over I's enemies, and established a powerful nation. As a skilled politician, he forged the tribal factions of the land into a united kingdom and administered a civil government and religious system in Jerusalem. His abilities as a poet and a musician won him acclaim as he centered I's worship in Jerusalem with the Ark of the Covenant as its focal symbol.

Despite D's outstanding personal talents, his divine favor was the true key to his many successes. He was God's chosen king for I and father of the royal dynasty that God chose to bless. In both the OT and the NT, D is described as a man after God's own heart (1 Sam 13:14, Acts 13:22). Throughout the narrative, God's gracious choice of D was confirmed by D's sincere and passionate heart for God. As I's outstanding king, D became the standard of all later kings, and when I's monarchy came to an end, he became the prototype of the ideal David anticipated in I's Messiah.

Yet notwithstanding D's many gifts and the divine favor placed on him, he was a man of both virtues and vices. Throughout the stories told of D, he is depicted as fearful, flawed, and failing. The portrait of D we gather from the narrative shows him as sometimes argumentative, arrogant and ambitious. This checkered character accounts for much of his appeal. He is vulnerable enough to identify with – as he struggles with feelings of greed, lust, rage, uninhibited joy, and haunting dread – yet noble enough to make our identification with him appealing. D, as flawed but favored, is revealed to us in the biblical accounts as a real person with profound psychological depth.

D's forty-year reign in I comes as the midpoint between his great ancestor Abraham and his great descendent Jesus. The covenant God made with D, promising blessings and an everlasting kingdom to D's royal line, stands in continuity with the covenant God made with Abraham and points to God's messianic promises to the whole world.