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King David: A Biography

Steven L. McKenzie

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One of the most important and complex characters in the Bible, King David has been the subject of innumerable portraits, both artistic and literary. Michaelangelos magnificent sculpture of him is perhaps the single best known work of art in the world, and the story of the humble shepherd who slew Goliath and became king has assumed a powerful mythological status. But was David a real person--and if so what kind of person was he? Through a close and critical reading of biblical texts, ancient history, and recent archeological discoveries, Steven L. McKenzie concludes that David was indeed a real person. This David, however, was no hero but a usurper, adulterer, and murderer--a Middle Eastern despot of a familiar type. McKenzie shows that the story of humble beginnings is utterly misleading: shepherd is a metaphor for king, and David came from a wealthy, upper-class background. Similarly, McKenzie reveals how Davids ascent to power, traditionally attributed to popularity and divine blessing, in fact resulted from a campaign of terror and assassination. While instituting a full-blown Middle Eastern monarchy, David was an aggressive leader, a devious politician, and a ruthless war chief. Throughout his scandalous reign, important figures who stood in his way died at convenient times, under questionable circumstances. Even his own sons were not spared. Davids story, writes McKenzie, reads like a modern soap opera, with plenty of sex, violence, and struggles for power. Carefully researched and vividly written, King David: An Unauthorized Biography offers a provocative reappraisal of the life of one of the Bibles most compelling figures.

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