

Who is the Real King David?

Explorations in Tanach and Talmud

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1. שמואל א טז, יא

Then Samuel asked Jesse, “Are these all the boys you have?” He replied, “There is still the youngest; he is tending the flock.” And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send someone to bring him, for we will not sit down to eat until he gets here.”

וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמוּאֵל אֶל-יִשָׁי הֲתֵמוּ הַנְּעָרִים וַיֹּאמֶר
עוֹד שָׂאֵר הַקְּטָן וְהִנֵּה רֹעֵה בְּצֹאֵן וַיֹּאמֶר
שְׁמוּאֵל אֶל-יִשָׁי שְׁלַחָה וְקָחְנוּ כִּי לֹא-נֹסֵב
עַד-בָּאוּ פֹה:

2. פסחים קיט.

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani said that Rabbi Yonatan said that David recited: “I will give thanks to You, for You have answered me” (Psalms 118:21), with regard to the success of his reign. Yishai recited: “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief keystone” (Psalms 118:22). The brothers of David recited: “This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes” (Psalms 118:23). Samuel the Prophet recited: “This is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Psalms 118:24).

אָמַר רַבִּי שְׁמוּאֵל בַּר נַחֲמָנִי אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹנָתָן:
”אוֹדֶה כִּי עָנִיתָנִי” — אָמַר דָּוִד. ”אָבֵן מְאֹסוֹ
הַבּוֹנִים הִיְתָה לְרֹאשׁ פְּנֵה” — אָמַר יִשָּׁי.
”מֵאֵת ה' הִיְתָה זֹאת” — אָמְרוּ אֶחָיו. ”זֶה
הַיּוֹם עָשָׂה ה'” — אָמַר שְׁמוּאֵל.

3. תהלים כז:

<p>Though my father and mother abandon me, the LORD will take me in.</p>	<p>כִּי־אָבִי וְאִמִּי עֲזָבוּנִי וַיהוָה יִאֲסֹפֵנִי:</p>
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4. תהלים טו:ט, יב-יג

<p>I am a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my kin.</p>	<p>מִזֶּזֶר הִנְיִיתִי לְאָחִי וְנֹכְרִי לְבְנֵי אִמִּי:</p>
<p>I made sackcloth my garment; I became a byword among them.</p>	<p>וְאֶתְנָה לְבוּשֵׁי שֶׁקַּ וְאָהִי לָהֶם לְמִשְׁלָל:</p>
<p>Those who sit in the gate talk about me; I am the taunt of drunkards.</p>	<p>יֹשְׁבֵי חֹבֵל בֵּי יוֹשְׁבֵי שַׁעַר וְנִגְיָנוֹת שׁוֹתֵי שֶׁקֶר:</p>

5. שמואל א טז, י-יא

<p>Thus Jesse presented his seven sons before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen any of these.</p>	<p>וַיַּעֲבֹר יֵשׁוּעַ שִׁבְעַת בָּנָיו לִפְנֵי שְׁמוּאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁמוּאֵל אֶל־יֵשׁוּעַ לֹא־בָחַר יְהוָה בְּאַלֶּהָ:</p>
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6. שמואל א יז, יב

<p>David was the son of a certain Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah whose name was Jesse. He had eight sons, and in the days of Saul the man was already old, advanced in years.</p>	<p>וְדָוִד בֶּן־אִישׁ אֶפְרַתִּי הַזֶּה מִבֵּית לָחֶם יְהוּדָה וְשֵׁמוֹ יֵשׁוּעַ וְלוֹ שְׁמֹנֶה בָנִים וְהָאִישׁ בַּיָּמִי שָׂאוּל זָקֵן בָּא בְּאֲנָשִׁים:</p>
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<p>So they sent and brought him. He was ruddy-cheeked, bright-eyed, and handsome. And the LORD said, “Rise and anoint him, for this is the one.”</p>	<p>וַיִּשְׁלַח וַיְבִיאֵהוּ וְהוּא אֲדָמוּנִי עִם־יָפֶה עֵינָיִם וְטוֹב רֵאִי וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה קוּם מְשַׁחֵהוּ כִּי־זֶה הוּא:</p>
<p>Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the LORD gripped David from that day on. Samuel then set out for Ramah.</p>	<p>וַיִּקַּח שְׁמוּאֵל אֶת־קֶרֶן הַשֶּׁמֶן וַיִּמְשַׁח אֹתוֹ בְּקֶרֶב אָחָיו וַתִּצְלַח רוּחַ־יְהוָה אֶל־דָּוִד מֵהַיּוֹם הַהוּא וּמִעַלָּה וַיִּקָּם שְׁמוּאֵל וַיֵּלֶךְ הַרְמָתָה:</p>

8. יומא כב:

<p>Rav Yehuda said that Shmuel said: Why did the kingship of the house of Saul not continue on to succeeding generations? It is because there was no flaw in his ancestry; he was of impeccable lineage. As Rabbi Yoḥanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yehotzadak: One appoints a leader over the community only if he has a box full of creeping animals hanging behind him, i.e., he has something inappropriate in his ancestry that preceded him. Why is that? It is so that if he exhibits a haughty attitude toward the community, one can say to him: Turn and look behind you and be reminded of your humble roots.</p>	<p>אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר שְׁמוּאֵל: מִפְּנֵי מָה לֹא נִמְשְׁכָה מַלְכוּת בֵּית שְׂאוּל — מִפְּנֵי שְׂלֵא הָיָה בּוֹ שׁוּם דּוֹפִי, דְּאָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן מִשׁוּם רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן יְהוֹצְדָק: אֵין מַעֲמִידִין פְּרָנָס עַל הַצִּיּוּר אֶלָּא אִם כֵּן קוּפָה שֶׁל שְׂרָצִים תְּלוּיָה לוֹ מֵאַחֲרָיו. שְׂאָם תְּזוּחַ דְּעֵתוֹ עָלָיו אוֹמְרִין לוֹ: חֲזוּר לְאַחֲרֶיךָ.</p>
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9. שמואל א טז, יח

<p>One of the attendants spoke up, “I have observed a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite who is skilled in music; he is a stalwart fellow and a warrior, sensible in speech, and handsome in appearance, and the LORD is with him.”</p>	<p>וַיַּעַן אֶחָד מֵהַנְּעָרִים וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה רָאִיתִי בֶן לְיִשַׁי בֵּית הַלְחָמִי יָדַע נָגֵן וְגִבּוֹר חַיִל וְאִישׁ מִלְחָמָה וְנָבוֹן דָּבָר וְאִישׁ תֵּאֵר וַיְהִיָּה עִמּוֹ: וַיִּשְׁלַח שְׁאוּל מַלְאָכִים אֶל־יִשַׁי וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁלַחָה אֵלַי אֶת־דָּוִד בְּנֶךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּצִאָן:</p>
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10. ברכות ג:

<p>Rabbi Aḥa said: David said as follows: Midnight never passed me by in my sleep..Rabbi Zeira said: Until midnight, David would doze like a horse, as a horse dozes, but never sleeps deeply. From midnight on, he would gain the strength of a lion. Rav Ashi said: Until midnight, he would study Torah, and from midnight on, he would engage in songs and praise,</p>	<p>אָמַר רַבִּי אַחָא: הָכִי קָאָמַר (דָּוִד): מֵעוֹלָם לֹא עָבַר עָלַי חֲצוֹת לַיְלָה בְּשֵׁינָה. רַבִּי זֵירָא אָמַר: עַד חֲצוֹת לַיְלָה הָיָה מִתְנַמְנֵם כְּסוֹס, מִכָּאֵן וְאֵילָךְ הָיָה מִתְגַּבֵּר כְּאָרִי. רַב אָשִׁי אָמַר: עַד חֲצוֹת לַיְלָה הָיָה עוֹסֵק בְּדַבְרֵי תוֹרָה, מִכָּאֵן וְאֵילָךְ בְּשִׁירוֹת וְתִשְׁבָּחוֹת.</p>
<p>Rabbi Shimon Ḥasida said: A lyre hung over David’s bed, and once midnight arrived, the northern midnight wind would come and cause the lyre to play on its own. David would immediately rise from his bed and study Torah until the first rays of dawn.</p>	<p>אָמַר רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן חֲסִידָא: כְּנֹר הָיָה תְּלוּי לְמַעְלָה מִמַּטְתּוֹ שֶׁל דָּוִד, וְכִינּוּן שֶׁהִגִּיעַ חֲצוֹת לַיְלָה, בָּא רוּחַ צְפוֹנִית וְנוֹשְׁבֶת בּוֹ וּמְנַגֵּן מֵאֲלִיו, מִיַּד הָיָה עוֹמֵד וְעוֹסֵק בְּתוֹרָה עַד שֶׁעָלָה עֲמוּד הַשָּׁחַר..</p>

11. שמואל א יז,נה-נח

<p>When Saul saw David going out to assault the Philistine, he asked his army commander Abner, “Whose son is that boy, Abner?” And Abner replied, “By your life, Your Majesty, I do not know.” “Then find out whose son that young fellow is,” the king ordered. So when David returned after killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought</p>	<p>וְכִרְאוֹת שְׁאוּל אֶת־דָּוִד יֵצֵא לְקִרְאֵת הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי אָמַר אֶל־אַבְנֵר שֶׁר הַצָּבָא בֶן־מִי־זָה הַנָּעַר אַבְנֵר וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְנֵר חִי־נַפְשִׁי הַמֶּלֶךְ אִם־יִדְעֵתִי: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁאֵל אֹתָהּ בֶן־מִי־זָה הָעָלָם: (ו) וְכָשׁוּב דָּוִד מִהַכּוֹת אֶת־הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי וַיִּקַּח אֹתוֹ אַבְנֵר וַיְבֹאֵהוּ לְפָנָי שְׁאוּל וַרְאֵשׁ הַפְּלִשְׁתִּי בִידּוֹ: וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו שְׁאוּל בֶן־מִי אַתָּה הַנָּעַר וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד בֶּן־עֲבֻדָּה יִשַׁי בֵּית הַלְחָמִי:</p>
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<p>him to Saul, with the head of the Philistine still in his hand.</p> <p>Saul said to him, “Whose son are you, my boy?” And David answered, “The son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.”</p>	
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12. סנהדרין צג:

<p>And one of the servants“ answered and said: Behold, I have seen a son of Yishai of the house of Bethlehem who knows to play, and is a fine warrior, and a man of war, and prudent in speech, and a comely man, and the Lord is with .(him” (I Samuel 16:18</p> <p>Rav Yehuda says that Rav says: Doeg the Edomite, one of Saul’s servants, stated this entire verse only as malicious speech, in an attempt to incite Saul to be jealous of David. “Who knows how to play” means that he knows how to ask complex and germane questions about Torah matters. “A fine warrior” means that he knows how to answer questions raised with regard to matters of Torah. “A man of war,” means that he knows to negotiate his way in the battle to understand the Torah. “A comely man” is one who displays understanding in facets of <i>halakha</i> and explains it well. “And prudent in speech [davar]” means that he infers one matter [davar] from another matter. “And the Lord is with him” means that the halakha is ruled in accordance with his opinion in every area of halakha</p>	<p>ויען אחד מהנערים ויאמר הנה ראיתי בן לישי בית הלחמי יודע נגן וגבור חיל ואיש מלחמה ונבון דבר ואיש תואר וה' עמו וגו'</p> <p>ואמר רב יהודה אמר רב כל הפסוק הזה לא אמרו דואג אלא בלשון הרע יודע נגן שיודע לישראל גבור שיודע להשיב איש מלחמה שיודע לישא וליתן במלחמתה של תורה (איש תואר שמראה פנים בהלכה ונבון דבר שמבין דבר מתוך דבר) וה' עמו שהלכה כמותו בכל מקום</p>
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<p>When David's life was drawing to a close, he instructed his son Solomon as follows:</p>	<p>וַיִּקְרָבוּ יְמֵי־דָוִד לָמוֹת וַיִּצַו אֶת־שְׁלֹמֹה בְּנוֹ לֵאמֹר:</p>
<p>"I am going the way of all the earth; be strong and show yourself a man.</p>	<p>אֲנִי הֵלֵךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ כָּל־הָאָרֶץ וַחֲזַקְתָּ וְהִיִּיתָ לְאִישׁ:</p>
<p>Keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in His ways and following His laws, His commandments, His rules, and His admonitions as recorded in the Teaching of Moses, in order that you may succeed in whatever you undertake and wherever you turn.</p>	<p>וּשְׁמַרְתָּ אֶת־מִשְׁמַרְתִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לָלֶכֶת בְּדַרְכֹי לְשֹׁמֵר חֻקֹּתָיו מִצְוֹתָיו וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו וְעִדּוּתָיו כַּכְּתוּב בְּתוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה לְמַעַן תִּשְׁכִּיל אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂה וְאֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר תִּפְנֶה שָׁם:</p>
<p>Then the LORD will fulfill the promise that He made concerning me: 'If your descendants are scrupulous in their conduct, and walk before Me faithfully, with all their heart and soul, your line on the throne of Israel shall never end!'</p>	<p>לְמַעַן יִקְיָם יְהוָה אֶת־דְּבָרֹו אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר עָלַי לֵאמֹר אִם־יִשְׁמְרוּ בְנֵיךָ אֶת־דַּרְכֹּם לָלֶכֶת לִפְנֵי בְּאֵמַת בְּכָל־לְבָבָם וּבְכָל־נַפְשָׁם לֵאמֹר לֹא־יִכָּרֵת לְךָ אִישׁ מֵעַל כִּסֵּא יִשְׂרָאֵל:</p>
<p>So David slept with his fathers, and he was buried in the City of David.</p>	<p>וַיִּשְׁכַּב דָּוִד עִם־אֲבֹתָיו וַיִּקְבְּר בְּעִיר דָּוִד:</p>

14. שבת ל:

<p>What did David do? Every Shabbat he would sit and learn all day long to protect himself from the Angel of Death. On that day on which the Angel of Death was supposed to put his soul to rest, the day on which David was supposed to die, the Angel of Death</p>	<p>כָּל יוֹמָא דְשַׁבְּתָא הָוָה יְתִיב וְגָרִיס כּוּלֵי יוֹמָא. הַהוּא יוֹמָא דְבַעֵי לְמִינַח נַפְשִׁיהּ, קָם מִלְאָךְ הַמּוֹת קַמִּיהּ וְלֹא יְכִיל לֵיהּ, דְּלֹא הָוָה פּוֹסֵק פּוּמִיָּהּ מִגִּירָסָא. אָמַר: מֵאִי אֶעְבִּיד לֵיהּ? הָוָה לֵיהּ בּוֹסְתָנָא אַחוּרֵי בֵיתֵיהּ, אֶתָּא מִלְאָךְ הַמּוֹת סְלִיק וּבְחִישׁ בְּאִלְנֵי. נִפְק לְמִיחְזֵי. הָוָה סְלִיק</p>
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stood before him and was unable to overcome him because his mouth did not pause from study. The Angel of Death said: What shall I do to him? David had a garden [*bustana*] behind his house; the Angel of Death came, climbed, and shook the trees. David went out to see, As **he climbed the stair, the stair broke beneath him**. He was startled and **was silent**, interrupted his studies for a moment, **and died**.

בְּדֶרֶגַא, אִיפְחִית דְּרֶגַא מִתּוֹתִיה, אִישְׁתִּיק וְנָח
נְפֻשִׁיה.