

David's Influence in Judaism

The traditional location of David's Tomb is a Crusader-era building just outside Zion Gate, near the southwest corner of Jerusalem's Old City wall. Since Crusader times, and perhaps earlier, this small hill has been called Mount Zion, though it is not the Mount Zion of David's day, and the Tomb cannot be David's original tomb. If you've visited Jerusalem, you've seen David's Tomb, and have been inside the spacious room of the building's upper story, called the Cenacle (SEN-ih-k'l), which commemorates Jesus' Last Supper. Christians may be pardoned for treasuring the symbolism of David and his greatest Son being honored on this one site.

A small room on the ground floor of the building houses the large, stone-built, ornately decorated Tomb of David; a larger prayer room and a much larger court, or hall, are adjacent. I have seen all three rooms and the adjoining rooms and courtyards filled to overflowing with Jewish men and boys come to pray and voice their hope of an eschatological Davidic restoration. Here, especially, observant Jewish men often sing: *DA-vid MEL-ech Yis-rah-ALE, chai, chai, veh-chai-AH-am!* David, King of Israel, [still] alive and [still] existing!

This statement seems to occur first as a phrase in the Blessing of [i.e., at the beginning of the Sabbath of] the New Moon, as early as Rabbi Judah the Prince (A.D./CE, late 2nd-early 3rd century). Set to music and sung as a round, it is a joyous little song, speaking volumes of the esteem in which David is held in traditional Judaism, an esteem and an eschatological hope that began no later than the rise of the Hasmonean Dynasty (the Mac-cabees) in the second century B.C./BCE, and continues strong to the present day.

Of course, David's influence within Judaism, as with in Christianity, begins with the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures), where David's story begins in 1 Samuel 16, continues through 2 Samuel, and concludes with the record of his death in 1 Kings 2. In addition, 1 Chronicles 11–29, though less biographical, is primarily about David and his administration. Thus, David is more prominent than any other biblical figure, save Moses, and Jesus himself. (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Paul each wrote many chapters of Scripture, but most are not primarily *about* them.)

Haggadah (or Aggadah) is the vast number of stories about, and commentary upon, biblical characters and events, material not found in the biblical (or other historical) sources themselves. Some of these stories include historical details, but much in them is legend, told to illustrate the superlative characteristics of the figure being portrayed. Commentary upon the persons or events demonstrates their esteem (or lack thereof) at the time of the commentators.

In virtually all the Haggadah discussing David, and in the current treatment of traditional observant Judaism, as well, David's eternal kingship is emphasized. Though the active rule of David's line over the Jewish people ended with the Babylonian captivity of 586 B.C., it remains an article of faith within observant Judaism that

God will re-establish David on his throne. This is not taken as a re-establishment of David's dynasty in one of his descendents—as Christians (e.g., understand it to be fulfilled in Jesus), David's eternal Descendent. Rather, God will resurrect David personally, and place him on his throne once again.

David's influence can be measured at least as extensively across the spectrum of Jewish contributions in the arts, as in parallel Christian contributions. Jews and Christians alike have expanded the stock of stories about David; some have been told for the "truth," some to illustrate one or another heroic aspect of his character and/or persona. Jews and Christians alike have written poems, short stories, novellas, novels, and plays about David and those who surround him in the biblical narrative. Jews and Christians alike have composed various kinds of musical works celebrating David. Jews and Christians alike have represented David across a wide spectrum of the media of the visual arts—painting, sculpture, illuminated manuscripts, and others.

This should not surprise us; David himself was a musical artist. Though some of the psalms attributed to him may not have come directly from his own hand, both Jewish and Christian tradition are comfortable speaking of David as the "sweet singer of Israel," and looking to him as the father of the Psalter. Moreover, it is certain that a significant number of the psalms (most within the Psalter, but several elsewhere) headed by the superscription *le-David*, or some longer attribution, actually were written by David himself. Some of these are evidenced by the further information of their superscriptions, noting the occasions from David's life which they commemorate.

Jewish tradition says David died on the second of the great Torah-mandated festivals, Shavuot (Shah-voov-OVE), known to Christians as Pentecost. This lends added poignancy to Peter's reference, on the day of the first Christian Pentecost, to David's death and the presence of his tomb in Jerusalem "to this day" (Acts 2:29). Peter even may have gestured toward the by-then-traditional structure of David's tomb (though *not* the structure existing today), a few yards from where he was speaking.

Most observant Jews today look forward to God's re-establishment of David on his ancient throne, in fulfillment of God's promise to "raise up [again] the fallen booth of David" (Amos 9:11). Christians see this promise already-but-not-yet fulfilled in the death, Resurrection, and immanent return of Jesus "Davidson" (ben-David or bar-David), David's own Lord and Redeemer, though yet his human Descendent. Perhaps in the common hope, even differently interpreted, we may find room to talk together of God's lavish, immeasurable grace intended for all believers, Jew and Gentile alike.

BY JOSEPH E. COLESON

professor of Old Testament, Nazarene Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Missouri

ACTION GOAL FOR UNIT I

Overcoming Giants

June 7—August 30, 2009

The purpose of the action goal is to help us practice Christlike living, and not just talk about it.

Chained by a Giant!

Many people have been chained by a giant. For some, the giant is a habit that seems unshakeable. They've tried to get free, but failed to break the chain every time.

For others the giant is something they fear. The fear consumes them, but they've become captive and can't break free.

For some the giant is an area of disobedience they can't bring themselves to give up. They know it's wrong, but feel they no longer have the strength to change.

There are many different kinds of giants. Some folks keep them under their beds or in their closets. Others just carry them around on their backs.

Is there a giant in your life that you need to overcome? Only you can answer that question.

Overcoming Giants

God has been helping people overcome giants for a long time. He will help and enable you to the extent that you allow Him access to your life.

If you are ready to allow God's enabling Holy Spirit to help you overcome your giant, begin now.

1. Surrender your life to His control.

Prayerfully seek Him. Make a full surrender to live

under His guidance. You can have the assurance that God's Spirit will guide you as you live daily with a sense of His presence.

2. Commit to seek Him daily.

Find a time (start with 5 to 10 minutes) you can spend with Him each day for prayer and scripture reading. You will find His renewal daily (2 Corinthians 4:16).

3. Choose and memorize a scripture promise.

Choose a scripture you can take to heart and commit to memory that will give you encouragement. For example, consider Proverbs 3:5-6.

4. Establish a support system.

Commit yourself to be a part of the opportunities your local church provides for worship, study, prayer, and fellowship. Find a Christian friend with whom you can share accountability and support.

5. Trust God to enable what He requires.

You cannot overcome the giants you face in your own strength. But you can trust God to enable you to do whatever He requires of you. God is faithful.

6. Praise God for His unfailing love.

Share with others your praise for God's goodness and faithfulness.



Bill Manning

Editor

THE LESSON PLAN

The lesson plan for each session is divided into these four presentation sections.

1 engage interest

"Why is this important?"

Your participants come to the session with a multitude of concerns, questions, and priorities. The opening activity is designed to capture their attention and interest, and to begin moving their thoughts to the Bible topic selected for this session.

[This section should take approximately 20 percent of your presentation time; 5-10 minutes in a 45-minute session.]

2 explore the word

"What does God's Word say?"

This is the heart of your time of study. You and your adults will seek to discover what the Scripture passage meant within its timeless truths.

[This section should take approximately 40 percent of your presentation time; 15-20 minutes in a 45-minute session.]

3 examine life

"How does this apply to us?"

During this portion of the session, you and your participants will apply the truths that you explored in the last section. In what ways should a Christian's life be changed and rearranged by the biblical principles encountered in the study passage?

[This section should take approximately 30 percent of your presentation time; 10-15 minutes in a 45-minute session.]

4 exercise your faith

"What should I do about this?"

Conclude with practical steps to put God's truth into action. This section allows your adults to make personal decisions and commitments to enact God's Word in their lives.

[This section should take approximately 10 percent of your presentation time; about 5 minutes in a 45-minute session.]