



David and Solomon: In Search of the Bible's Sacred Kings and the Roots of the Western Tradition

By Israel Finkelstein, Neil Asher Silberman

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There has been an explosion of recent discoveries in biblical archaeology. These finds have shed powerful light on figures and stories from the Bible -- and completely changed what we know about some of its most famous characters. The reputations of the first great kings, David and Solomon, evolved over hundreds of years. In *David and Solomon*, leading archaeologists Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman focus on the two great leaders as a window into the entire biblical era. *David and Solomon* covers one thousand years of ancient civilization, separating fact from legend and proving that the roots of the western tradition lie very deep.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Lacking clear archeological evidence or extrabiblical testimony, biblical scholars are often challenged in persuading a skeptical world that the Bible's characters really existed and that their stories are actual historical records. The task of separating myth from history can be a daunting one. Finkelstein and Silberman, both renowned archaeologists (Finkelstein chairs the archaeology department [at Tel Aviv University; Silberman is a contributing editor to *Archaeology* magazine), take a different approach: integrating ancient heroic and warrior archetypes into the lives of the kings of Israel, thus synthesizing history and myth in support of the religious endeavor. The authors are careful to note that the absence of contemporary confirmation outside the Bible is no reason to believe that the characters did not actually exist. Rather, the biblical stories form the basis for a legend tradition in which the Davidic legacy gradually transforms "from a down-to-earth political program into the symbols of a transcendent religious faith that would spread throughout the world." Finkelstein and Silberman, who also had a winner with *The Bible Unearthed*, tell their story in a clear and easily understood manner, never boring but always challenging. *Discovery Club main selection, BOMC, QPB and History book clubs alternate selection. (Feb. 8)*
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From [Booklist](#)

As Finkelstein and Silberman cite, the figure of David (shepherd, warrior, and divinely protected king) and of his son, Solomon (a great builder, wise judge, and serene ruler of a vast empire) have become timeless models of righteous leadership and God's sanction. They contend that the archaeological discoveries of recent decades have shown "how far from the glamorous scriptural portraits the actual world of David and Solomon was." They also posit that many of the famous episodes in the biblical story are highly exaggerated. Although it seems possible that David and Solomon were actual historical characters, they were very different from their scriptural portraits. Finkelstein and Silberman offer evidence that it is unlikely that David ever conquered land more than two days' march from the heartland of Judah and that Solomon's Jerusalem was "neither extensive nor impressive." Their point is to show how the legends of David and Solomon developed and how they came to guide Western thinking and shape Western religious and political traditions in important ways. *George Cohen*
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Review

"A bold and provocative book, well researched, well written, and powerfully argued. It challenges many of the assumptions developed by the literal religious minds of the ages, opening traditional possibilities to new conclusions." -- John Shelby Spong, author of *Here I Stand: My Struggle for a Christianity of Integrity, Love, and Equality*

"A brutally honest assessment of what archaeology can and cannot tell us about the historical accuracy of the Bible, presented with both authority and panache." -- Jonathan Kirsch, *Los Angeles Times*

". . . an intellectual high-wire act. Their audacity and skill is admirable . . . The book's most stunning accomplishment is its skillful reconciliation of competing perspectives within the biblical text." --
Archaeology Magazine

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Kevin Buckley:

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