

King David: Man, Myth, and Legend

An elective course for Prozdor High School

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Fall 2013

Course Description:

David slew Goliath, became King of Israel, and is the progenitor of the Messiah. Right? How much of this story comes from the Bible? And what parts of King David's life are kept *out* of most Sunday School classes? Why did the rabbis consider David so important, showing him to be a faultless hero? King David has captured the imagination of artists and writers for centuries, and students in this course will follow suit. Through exploring original text, historical context, religious development, and artistic interpretation, students will delve deeply into the meaning behind Jewish tradition's most illustrious and commanding figure.

Enduring Understanding:

King David symbolizes Judaism's deepest aspirations. Therefore, in encountering King David in his many forms, I encounter profound aspects of Jewish tradition.

Text:

King David is a legend of mythic proportions. The archetype of warrior-king is well known, as is the archetype of the faithful and musical prophet; King David is all of these at once and more. While the biblical story of David is found primarily in 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, and the first chapters of 1 Kings, references and allusions to David pervade the Tanakh. Our class will refer to biblical passages—primarily those of the narrative of David's life—as its primary texts; however, we will also honor and acknowledge other interpretations of King David as important sources for understanding this larger-than-life figure. Highly recommended is Robert Alter's *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel*, and this translation will be used primarily in class.

Class Session Outline:

Sept. 22 (Sukkot) – Session 01: A Biblical Game of Thrones

The saga of King David is truly epic, unparalleled in Tanakh and Jewish lore. Our introductory session will explore the historical and literary context of the King David story, providing an overview of important characters, places, and social positions. We will also read the first biblical account of David's election to become king to set the stage.



Sept. 29 – Session 02: David and Goliath: A Kaleidoscopic View, Part 1 [Daniel out]
Tanakh offers a *second* account of David’s election to become king: his defeat of the Philistine warrior, Goliath. We will conduct a close reading of I Sam. 17 in order to learn: What does this new perspective offer us in our understanding of the character of David?

Oct. 6 – Session 03: David and Goliath: A Kaleidoscopic View, Part 2
After reviewing the biblical account of the David and Goliath episode, we will compare two modern interpretations in the television shows *Kings* and *The Bible: The Epic Miniseries*. This will help us focus our attention on textual details and stimulate our own interpretive imaginations.

Oct. 13 – Session 04: David vs. Saul
David’s rise to kingship is complicated by Saul, who was already anointed king when David was chosen by God. Their entangled relationship is complex and troubled, characterized by love, deceit, respect, and warfare.

Oct. 20 – Prozdor Shabbaton; no class

Oct. 27 – Session 05: David Rules
Upon Saul’s death and David’s marriage to his daughter, David secures his position as King of Judah. His work is far from finished, however. Exploring the military, diplomatic, and political means that David uses to secure his monarchy will provide insight into the lessons David offers us today about effective leadership.

Nov. 3 – Session 06: David and Bathsheba [Daniel out]
David’s kingship is marred by lust, betrayal, and violence. The turning point in King David’s remarkable career is his impulsive and destructive relationship with Bathsheba. This moral failure sows seeds of dissent and deception that would come to harm the too-complacent king in the coming years.

Nov. 10 – Session 07: Kingship in Decline and a Surprising Deathbed Request
While David is often remembered in his prime, significant trials toward the end of his life give even sharper relief to his character. As David struggles to retain his position and to secure his legacy to his chosen heir, we see new sides of the ever-complex King of Israel.

Nov. 17 (Global Jewish Day of Learning) – Session 08: David in Art
David is a musician and a poet, and Jewish tradition accords him authorship of the Psalms. It is only fitting, then, that artists for centuries have looked to him for inspiration. In exploring the figure of David in sculpture, music, and painting, we will seek new perspectives on how to understand the messages that David can bring to us today.



Nov. 24 – Session 09: David’s Relationships: A Closer Look
With some distance from the text, we can take a closer look at who David was through the eyes of those around him. We will see David through the eyes of those who loved him and ask whom he loved in return. We will explore in particular his relationship with his first wife, Michal.

Dec. 1 – Thanksgiving recess; no class

Dec. 8 – Session 10: Interpreting David

Tanakh sees David in different ways; we see that through differing texts, sometimes placed side-by-side. Passages such as 1 Kings 2:3-4 show editorial efforts to resolve difficulties with David's character, and these intratextual interpretations give license to the rabbis as well to interpret David variously. How and why did David become such a hero in Jewish tradition? What questions did our ancestors struggle with, and how might we answer them today? Students will write their own interpretations of David, keeping in mind the methods and focuses of readers who have come before us.



Dec. 15 – Session 11: Did All This “Really” Happen?

Many today are concerned with the question of whether King David was a real person. We will examine historical evidence that seeks to inform us about the historicity of Tanakh's account of King David, and we will explore how the historical record impacts the lessons we can draw from David today.

Dec. 22 – Winter recess; no class

Dec. 29 – Winter recess; no class

Jan. 5 – Off-campus day of learning; no class

Jan. 12 – Session 12: The King in Hell Meets the King in Heaven: David's Messianic Legacy

Absalom, David's rebellious son, is described in Midrash as ruling like a king in hell. Contrastingly, David himself is described as ruling like a king in heaven. Miraculously, father and son are to be reunited at the coming of the messiah. Our final session will explore connections between King David and the Messiah, offering us a glimpse of how this legendary figure is imagined living on into eternity.



King David: Man, Myth, and Legend

Enduring Understanding: Jewish debate seeks to bring us closer to a deep understanding of truth. In engaging in this debate, I can both grow personally and contribute to the intellectual and social project of the Jewish people.

Session 01, September 22 – A Biblical Game of Thrones 40 minutes

Overview: The saga of King David is truly epic, unparalleled in Tanakh and Jewish lore. Our introductory session will explore the historical and literary context of the King David story, providing an overview of important characters, places, and social positions. We will also read the first biblical account of David’s election to become king to set the stage.

Materials:

- Syllabus (1 per student)
- “Israel in the Days of King Saul” map (1 per student)
- “What’s Going On Here?” handout (1 per student)
- 1 Sam. 16 (1 per student)

Learning plan

1. Getting to know each other (10 min)

Welcome students to class and—perhaps for some of them—to Prozdor itself! Introduce yourself.

Ask each student to share his or her name and one leader he or she really admires.

2. Review the syllabus (5 min)

Distribute the syllabus and go over it. Give an overview of the course and answer questions.

3. Context of the saga of King David (10 min)

Review the following information with students:

Source material: Our primary text for the life of King David, at least in the beginning of the class, will be Tanakh. The main books of Tanakh that portray this story are 1 and 2 Samuel and the beginning of 1 Kings.

Composition of this narrative: Robert Alter writes, “No one knows with certainty when the main part of the original [King David] narrative was written, though there is good reason to place it, as a

recurrent scholarly view does, quite close to David's own time, in the first half of the tenth century BCE. ... The book was probably edited at the time of King Josiah's cultic and theological reforms in the late seventh century BCE, though it may well have undergone a secondary Deuteronomistic redaction in the Babylonian Exile, during the sixth century BCE" (xii).

Important context: Distribute "Israel in the Days of King Saul."

- There had never been a king of Israel until the beginning of the 10th century BCE.
- Prior that, prophets, priests, judges, and heads of family had led the tribes of Israel.
- 1 Samuel records the demand of the people for Samuel to appoint a king over them, overturning the rule of the priests.
- Samuel appoints Saul, who conquers much territory for the Israelites.
- Note, however, that other peoples surround the area:
 - Canaanites to the west and in the center (note that the Jebusites control the city that will be conquered by David and renamed Jerusalem)
 - Syria to the north (not addressed in our narrative)
 - Ammon and Moab to the east
 - Philistines to the southwest (a big problem!)
 - Amalekites to the south (a major enemy)
- Saul conquers much territory formerly held by Amalek, but he does not entirely wipe out Amalek as God had commanded. As a result, God dis-elects Saul and chooses a new king to replace him.

Answer questions.

4. Election narrative of King David (15 min)

Distribute "What's Going On Here?" and explain that we're going to read the first "election narrative" of King David, the story that shows that God had selected him to be king. Read the questions together so that students have a sense of what they're going to see.

Distribute 1 Samuel 16, copied from Robert Alter's *The David Story* (p. 95-100).

Read the text aloud while students follow along and fill out the "What's Going On Here?" sheet.

If necessary, read the text again or review salient parts. Make sure everyone has correctly answered the "Facts" section and invite a few interpretations from the "Opinions" and "Predictions" sections.

What's Going On Here?



Facts:

Who decides that Saul is no longer fit to be king?

Who is Eliab?

What is David's role in his family?

What does David look like?

How do Saul and David first meet?

How does Saul feel about David?

Opinions:

How does Samuel feel about God dis-electing Saul?

What features seem to be important in selecting a king?

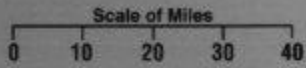
How do David's brother's feel about Samuel anointing him?

How does David feel about Saul?

Predictions:

What do you think is going to happen next?

ISRAEL IN THE DAYS OF KING SAUL



Mediterranean Sea



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Session 02, September 29 – David and Goliath: A Kaleidoscopic View 50 minutes

Overview: Tanakh offers a *second* account of David’s election to become king: his defeat of the Philistine warrior, Goliath. Following a careful reading of the biblical account(s), we will compare two modern interpretations in the television shows *Kings* and *The Bible: The Epic Miniseries*. This will help us focus our attention on textual details and stimulate our own interpretive imaginations.

Materials:

- DVDs of *The Bible: The Epic Miniseries* (disc 2) and *Kings* (disc 1)
- “David in *The Bible: The Epic Miniseries*” worksheet (1 per student)
- 1 Sam. 17 (1 per student)
- “What’s Going On Here?” worksheet (1 per student)
- “David in 1 Samuel 17” worksheet (1 per student)
- “The Battle of David and Goliath” (1 per student)
- “David in *Kings*” worksheet (1 per student)

Before class:

Log into the computer in Unterberg 310 and turn on the TV/monitor. Ensure that the sound is working by adjusting the volume on the computer and listening for the automatic tone.

Load disc two of *The Bible: The Epic Miniseries* into the computer and wait through the opening sequence. At the title menu, select “Play All” and the first episode of the disc will open. Pause the video, which you will play from the beginning at the start of class.

Learning plan

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

Welcome students and allow them time to settle into their seats. Sign any course add/drop forms and put them with the attendance sheet. Introduce yourself and take attendance.

2. David and Goliath in *The Bible: The Epic Miniseries* (15 min)

Tell students that today we're going to look at three versions of the David and Goliath story. We'll conduct a close reading of the biblical text (1 Samuel 17) and watch two versions produced for TV. For each version, we will pay special attention to the character of David.

We will begin with a miniseries that ran on the History Channel, *The Bible*.

Distribute "David in *The Bible: The Epic Miniseries*" to each student. Ask students to fill this out as they watch the TV clip.

Play from the beginning of the episode through approximately 13:07.

3. David in 1 Samuel 17 (20 min)

Distribute 1 Sam. 17 and the "What's Going On Here?" worksheet. (Last week, the students used a similar format while reading 1 Sam. 16.)

Explain that we will now turn our attention to the biblical narrative of 1 Sam. 17. Tanakh is famous for communicating tremendous detail in very brief language, so we will take the time to read the passage slowly and carefully.

Tell the students that if this reading takes longer than anticipated, Daniel will pick up with the *Kings* episode next week; they shouldn't worry that they won't get to watch it.

Have a student read the first section (verses 1-11) and then stop to discuss the questions. Make sure everyone's understood all the questions by not only calling on students with their hand raises. Ask students to fill in answers to each question as we discuss even if they don't write down the answers as the class is reading together. Continue section by section through the end of the chapter.

Note that you should distribute the maps while discussing the first question on the page.

Answers to the questions follow:

1 Samuel 17:1-11

Questions:

1. Where does this story take place?

A: Between Socoh and Azekah; distribute map

2. Who is Goliath?

A: Champion of the Philistines; > 8-foot-tall warrior

3. What challenge does he offer?

A: You beat us, we become your slaves; we beat you, you become our slaves.

1 Samuel 17:12-24

Questions:

1. How does David spend his time during Israel's war with the Philistines?
A: He splits his time between tending his father's flock in Bethlehem (see map) and bringing provisions to his brothers in Saul's camp.
2. How long does Goliath's challenge remain unanswered?
A: Forty days. Enough time for David to arrive on one of his visits and hear the challenge.

1 Samuel 17:25-37

Questions:

1. What is the reward for defeating Goliath?
A: The king will give the champion a great fortune, his daughter's hand in marriage, and permanent tax exemptions.
2. How does Eliab react to his younger brother interacting with Saul's troops?
A: He seems angry. He says that David has come just to watch the battle for fun.
3. Why is David taken before Saul?
A: He asks so many times about the reward that, it would seem, people start to think that he wants to fight Goliath himself. So, he is brought before the king.
4. Why does David think he can beat Goliath?
A: (1) His skills as a shepherd have taught him to strike down wolves and bears at close quarters; Goliath is no different. (2) God will rescue him.

1 Samuel 17:38-54

Questions:

1. How does David prepare for battle?
A: He starts by putting on Saul's armor, but he can't move comfortably in it, so he takes it off. Instead, he collects five stones for his slingshot, takes his stick, and walks out.
2. How does David appear to Goliath?
A: (Verse 42) "A lad, and ruddy [reddish], with good looks."
3. What does David say to Goliath?
A: He says that he will kill him with the help of God.
4. How does Goliath die?
A: It's possible that the stone killed him but more likely that he died when David cut off his head.

1 Samuel 17:55-58

Questions:

1. Robert Alter suggests that Chapter 17 is an election story from a different perspective from Chapter 16, which we read last week. So, assuming that this is the first time that Saul and David meet, how do you think Saul feels to see David with Goliath's head in his hand?
A: Interpretation.

4. David in *Kings* (20 min)

Distribute “David in 1 Samuel 17” and ask students to fill it out while you set up the DVD for *Kings*.

Insert the DVD into the computer and select “play all” from the main menu to begin the first episode. Pause before continuing.

Distribute “David in *Kings*” and ask students to fill it out as they watch. Ask students also to note differences between this version and previous versions.

Scroll forward to 8:02 and play until the scene cut at 9:18.

Discuss major differences between these three versions with the students at the conclusion of the clip. They may include:

- Age of David
- Relationship between David and Saul
- Presence of Jonathan (he’s in both TV shows but not in the Bible)
- Speed with which Goliath’s challenge is met
- Understanding of what “Goliath” may refer to
- Depiction of the Philistines
- Motivations of David

After class

Please leave all materials in my box in the Prozdor office. Please also record here a brief summary of the class, and comment on how far you were able to get. If you didn’t have a chance to discuss the *Kings* clip, please note that here:

Thank you!

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Enduring Understanding: Jewish debate seeks to bring us closer to a deep understanding of truth. In engaging in this debate, I can both grow personally and contribute to the intellectual and social project of the Jewish people.

Session 04, October 15 – David vs. Saul 50 minutes

Overview: David’s rise to kingship is complicated by Saul, who was already anointed king when David was chosen by God. Their entangled relationship is complex and troubled, characterized by love, deceit, respect, and warfare.

Materials:

- I Samuel 18:1-16 (p. 112-115) (1 per student)
- “Saul Has Slain his Thousands” lyrics (1 per student)
- I Sam. 21-22 (p. 131-140), annotated (1 per student)
- Storyboard frames (2 per student)

Learning plan

1. Review (5 minutes)

Remind students that during the previous two weeks, we took a close look at the David and Goliath story that established David as a hero. During our first class, we noted that Samuel anointed David as king, so the David and Goliath episode leaves the reader wondering how David will ascend to the kingship.

2. Saul has Slain his Thousands and David his Ten Thousands (10 min)

Distribute I Samuel 18:1-16 (p. 112-115).

Ask students to read vv. 1-9.

Distribute the lyrics to “Saul Has Slain his Thousands” from Alan Menken and Tim Rice’s *King David* and play the music (available online:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VBPTbXbATzQ&feature=c4-overview-vl&list=PL1153B001DAD9196E>).

Ask students to describe how the music interprets the text.

Ask students why they think the song leaves out Saul’s voice.

3. Saul's madness (5 minutes)

Continue with I Sam. 18:10-16 (p. 114-115)

Ask students what clues the text gives us about what will happen later on in the story.

4. David flees and gains an army; Saul slaughters priests at Nob (15 minutes)

Distribute I Sam. 21-22 (p. 131-140).

Mark the texts as follow:

21:1-10 = Scene 1

21:11-15 = Scene 2

22:1-5 = Scene 3

22:6-19 = Scene 4

22:20-23 = Scene 5

Read through text with students (a different student for each scene). After the conclusion of each scene, ask a student to briefly summarize that scene.

5. Interpretation (10 minutes)

Distribute storyboard frames to the students and ask them to pick one of the five scenes. Each student should create an interpretation of one of the scenes in a style of comic books/graphic novels.

Saul Has Slain his Thousands
from *King David*

Israelite Women

Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands
One has been our daylight
And one the very sun
Saul has slain his thousands
And David his ten thousands
One has been our daylight
And one the very sun

Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands
One who has served his people well
Whose race is almost run
Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands
One who's made us realize
No battle no prize cannot be won

Joab

In normal times a soldier king would gladly take on board
His people's talk of thousands who have fallen to his sword
But it's not so amusing when
They praise someone younger, then
Multiply their praise by ten
It's getting hard at court
To know whom to support

Chorus

Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands
Philistines are scattered
A spent and broken crew
Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands
Sing as the corpse of proud Goliath
Molders in its stew
Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands
Widely are their stories told
But one story's old
The other's new
Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands
One has been our daylight
And one the very sun

Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten
thousands
One who has served his people well
Whose race is almost run
Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten
thousands

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One who's made us realize
No battle no prize cannot be won
Saul has slain his thousands . . .
David, David . . .
One who's made us realize
No battle no prize cannot be won

King David: Man, Myth, and Legend

Enduring Understanding: Jewish debate seeks to bring us closer to a deep understanding of truth. In engaging in this debate, I can both grow personally and contribute to the intellectual and social project of the Jewish people.

Session 05, October 27 – David Rules 50 minutes

Overview: Upon Saul's death and David's marriage to his daughter, David secures his position as King of Judah. His work is far from finished, however. Exploring the military, diplomatic, and political means that David uses to secure his monarchy will provide insight into the lessons David offers us today about effective leadership.

Materials:

- I Samuel 30 (p. 183-188) (1 per student)
- II Samuel 2:1-11 (1 per student)
- II Sam. 3:12-39 (1 per student)

Learning plan

1. Review (5 minutes)

Remind students that two weeks ago we looked at Saul vs. David and read about David on the run from Saul. Saul pursues David through the land of Israel; most of the people support Saul (their king) while David receives only lip service from the masses and actual military support from a very small group of soldiers. Eventually, Saul is killed in battle with the Philistines, though his son, Ish-Boshet, inherits his throne.

Today, we will look at David's keen leadership, watching how he gains the loyalty of first his own tribe, then key figures in Saul's court.

2. Rise to Judah (25 min)

Distribute I Samuel 30 (p. 183-188). Read through the text with students.

Note that Abiathar is the sole survivor of Nob, whose priests Saul slaughtered last time (I Sam. 22). Ask students to pay special attention to how David treats the Egyptian lad, the troops who travel with him, and the troops who stay behind. Direct students' attention to Alter's note on v. 26 about securing alliances in Judah.

Distribute II Samuel 2:1-11

Note that David moves to Hebron (where the tribe of Judah is settled) and becomes king there. Note how David treats those who buried Saul, his former enemy.

Ask students to discuss some leadership traits of David's.

3. Dealings with Abner and Joab (20 minutes)

Background: Abner was Saul's general and is the strongman behind the throne. He put Ish-Boshet on the throne, and it's his support that keeps him there. Abner has been fighting against David, even killing David's nephew in battle.

Distribute II Sam. 3:12-39

Read through the text with students. Note how David treats Abner and Joab. Ask students why he acted the way he did and whether they thought it was right to do so.

Consider leaders who may have been in an analogous position (real or fictional), or imagine yourself in David's shoes. What would you do?

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Session 06, November 3 – David and Bathsheba 50 minutes

Overview: David’s kingship is marred by lust, betrayal, and violence. The turning point in King David’s remarkable career is his impulsive and destructive relationship with Bathsheba. This moral failure sows seeds of dissent and deception that would come to harm the too-complacent king in the coming years.

Materials:

- DVD of *The Bible: The Epic Miniseries* (disc 2)
- “David and Bathsheba in *The Bible: The Epic Miniseries*” worksheet (1 per student)
- 2 Sam. 11:1-12:25 (p. 249-263) (1 per student)
- “When in Love” lyrics (1 per student)

Before class:

Read 2 Sam. 11:1-12:25 (p. 249-263) and all notes. Robert Alter’s notes will help you answer questions that are raised in class and will help you to guide discussion during class.

Log into the computer in Unterberg 310 and turn on the TV/monitor. Ensure that the sound is working by adjusting the volume on the computer and listening for the automatic tone.

Load disc two of *The Bible: The Epic Miniseries* into the DVD player or computer and wait through the opening sequence. At the title menu, select “Play All” and the first episode of the disc will open. Fast forward until 33:00 (David enters Jerusalem with the Ark of the Covenant). You will play from here until 45:00, which is the end of the episode.

Also, load up the following YouTube link:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RjaKWA_pPzk&list=PLF07E66727BAC9005

Learning plan

1. Introduction and Review (5 minutes)

Welcome students and allow them time to settle into their seats. Take attendance. Review that last week, we watched David finally become king:

- Saul was killed in battle.
- Abner, Saul's general, propped up Saul's son Mephiboshet as king, basically ruling from behind the throne.
- David became king of the tribe of Judah and ruled in Hebron for seven years.
- When Mephiboshet scolded Abner for sleeping with one of Saul's former concubines, Abner decides that he's not worthy to be king. He approaches David with a peace treaty, which David accepts on condition that he can marry Michal, Saul's daughter, to whom he had previously been betrothed.
- Joab, David's general, learned that David had made peace with Abner, who had killed Joab's brother. Joab and his other brother sneakily kill Abner, and David curses Joab.
- David married Michal (in addition to at least two other wives that we've read about) and became king over all Israel.
- (David subsequently conquered Jerusalem, which he established as his capital.)

2. David and Bathsheba in *The Bible: The Epic Miniseries* (20 min)

Tell students that today we're going to return to the miniseries that ran on the History Channel, *The Bible*, that we watched when we studied David and Goliath.

Distribute "David and Bathsheba in *The Bible: The Epic Miniseries*" to each student. Ask students to fill this out as they watch the TV clip.

Play from 33:00 to the end of the episode, at approximately 45:00.

As you watch, point out the following:

- King David is the character in the beginning dancing in front of the Ark of the Covenant; he is not wearing a shirt.
- The woman he approaches is Bathsheba. The man standing with him is her husband, Uriah.
- The old man who approaches David on the roof is the prophet Nathan.
- Students may want to know what the Hebrew text pictured says. It's all gibberish (though the word *shalom* can be discerned in two places.)

Discuss the following questions (found at the bottom of the worksheet):

- According to this version, what is the moral of the David and Bathsheba story?
- What methods does the TV program use to communicate this moral message?

Continue to refer to the TV version of the story as you read through the biblical text.

3. David and Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11:1-12:25 (20-25 min)

Distribute 2 Sam. 11:1-12:25 (p. 249-263 in Robert Alter's *The David Story*).

Explain that we will now turn our attention to the biblical narrative of 2 Sam. 11:1-12:25. Tanakh is famous for communicating tremendous detail in very brief language, so we will take the time to read the passage slowly and carefully.

I've found that keeping the students engaged in biblical text is not impossible but it does require frequent pauses to highlight the drama of the story. Have one student read the first section of the story, another student read the second, and so on.

I propose pausing after the following verses (I include the concluding words) and highlighting these details. Feel free also to add information from or refer to Robert Alter's notes.

- 11:1 — And David was sitting in Jerusalem.
 - The text goes out of its way to show us that the army, which seems to include virtually every able-bodied person (*all Israel*), has gone off to war.
 - David, however, remains behind.
 - Already, this is a sign of trouble.
- 11:2-11:6 — And Joab sent Uriah the Hittite to David.
 - Note that David did not know Bathsheba before he saw her bathing. Presumably, he does know Uriah.
 - Verse 4, “cleansed herself of her impurity” means that she had finished her menstrual cycle. Once she becomes pregnant, therefore, since Uriah's off at war, there's no way that he can be the child's father.
- 11:7-11:13 — but to his house he did not go down.
 - David is trying to make Uriah comfortable enough to sleep with his wife so that people will think that he is the father of the baby once it is born.
 - However, Uriah refuses, claiming that it would be inappropriate to enjoy the comfortable pleasures of the capital and his home while his comrades are at war.
 - There are (at least) two possible readings:
 - Uriah knows that David has slept with Bathsheba. His piety may still be genuine or at least partially feigned.
 - Uriah doesn't know and is really just being virtuous.
 - **Ask students to consider what each of these interpretations would mean.**
 - How does Uriah's knowledge affect what happens later?
- 11:14-11:17 — and Uriah the Hittite also died.
 - Robert Alter points out that Joab would be foolish to follow David's orders directly; if troops pulled back to let Uriah die, everyone would know that it was a setup. So, he makes a move that is intentionally tactically unsound so that many soldiers, including Uriah, will fall in battle.
 - Uriah is the messenger of his own demise. Ask students to reflect on what impact this has on the story.
- 11:18-11:25 — And so rouse his spirits.
 - The messenger is keen to focus on Uriah's death, as Joab instructed him. This seems to indicate that “everyone knows” about David and Bathsheba at this point.
- 11:26-11:27 — the thing that David had done was evil in the eyes of the Lord.
 - The narrator for the first time condemns David's action. However, the narrator does not specify what “the thing that David had done” was. **Ask students what they think this refers to.**

- 12:1a — And the Lord sent Nathan to David.
 - We haven't met Nathan yet in our class, but he did appear earlier in the narrative. In 2 Samuel 7, Nathan told David that he would not build God's Temple but rather that David's son would.
 - Note that this exchange appears in the TV version of the Bathsheba episode.
- 12:1b-12:4 — and prepared it for the man who had come to him.
 - Nathan is clearly making a parable to David's situation (though David doesn't catch on).
 - **Ask students to identify the analogue in each case:**
 - Rich man = David
 - Poor man = Uriah
 - Ewe = Bathsheba
 - I don't know if the traveler has an analogue. Perhaps the traveler is a symbol for love or lust? I probably wouldn't get into that with the students. In any event, the traveler evokes hospitality, which David surely did not show to Uriah when he brought him back into the city (even though he pretended to do so).
- 12:5-12:6 — and because he had no pity.
 - It's clear that David doesn't get that he's being implicated by Nathan's parable.
- 12:7a — And Nathan said to David, "You are the man!" (אַתָּה הֵאֱמָרָה)
 - Notice how stark his words are!
- 12:7b-12:12 —but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.
 - Nathan accuses David of murder even if he didn't directly kill Uriah.
 - Nathan promises many more curses to come down on David's house, and they do, in fact, befall him.
 - **Ask the students:** At this point, what do you think was referred to back in 11:27, "the thing that David had done was evil in the eyes of the Lord?"
- 12:13-12:20 — and he ate.
 - David fasts for seven days (the traditional mourning period) to try to atone for his sin and to save his son but to no avail.
 - After the son dies, David resumes normal activity. **Ask the students if they think this is surprising behavior for the king.**
- 12:21-12:23
 - Obviously, David's servants think his behavior is strange. **Ask the students: How do you think David is feeling now?**
 - **Ask students to share their reactions to David's emotions and behaviors.**
- 12:24-12:25 — and called his name Jedidiah, by the grace of the Lord.
 - Here is the birth of Solomon, who will rule after David dies.
 - We will not see him (or Bathsheba) again until David's sons struggle to succeed him.

Questions for discussion:

- What have we learned about David as a person and as a ruler?
- If you were one of David's servants, how would you feel about him at the end of the story?
- What do you make of Bathsheba's role in the biblical narrative?
- What lessons does this text have for us today?

4. Bathsheba's Feelings in the King David Musical (5-10 minutes)

If there's time following this discussion (which I doubt), distribute the lyrics of and play the song ["When in Love"](#) from the King David Musical.

Ask students to reflect on the depiction of Bathsheba in this interpretation. In particular, how does it differ from the TV version? Why do you think the authors made this interpretive choice?

Thank you!

Name: _____

David and Bathsheba
in *The Bible: The Epic Miniseries*

In watching this interpretation of the David and Bathsheba episode from *The Bible: The Epic Miniseries*, take note of the following details:

When does David meet Bathsheba for the first time?

How well does David know Uriah, Bathsheba's wife?

When does David see Bathsheba bathing?

How does Bathsheba feel about David's affections?

Why does Uriah not spend the night with his wife?

According to the narrator, what is David's sin?

What punishment does Nathan the Prophet decree?

How does Bathsheba feel about the death of her son?



Questions for discussion:

- According to this version, what is the moral of the David and Bathsheba story?
- What methods does the TV program use to communicate this moral message?

When in Love
from *King David*

Bathsheba

We make our promises of love without a thought
That infidelity will ever touch our lives,
And then the everyday procession
Ensures no certainty survives.
And all too soon
We change our tune;
We don't remember.

For when in love,
There's nothing I won't do
Since I've been close to you
To bring me closer still.
I once believed
I never would betray
The man I used to love
And honor and obey.
Will I do anything?
Yes, I will.

You make a mockery of how I lived before.
You are by far the purest love I've ever known,
By far the best, most overwhelming.
The die is cast; the birds have flown.
Defenses fall,
You have it all,
You've changed my life.

For when in love,
There's nothing I won't do
Since I've been close to you
To bring me closer still.
I once believed
I never would betray
The man I used to love
And honor and obey.
Will I do anything?
Yes, I will.
I already have.
There's nothing I won't do...

WALT DISNEY THEATRICAL PRODUCTIONS
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ANDRÉ DJAOUI
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ALAN MENKEN & TIM RICE'S
KING DAVID

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with
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ANTHONY GALDE **JUDY KUIHN** **ALICE RIPLEY**
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BILL NOLTE **TIMOTHY SHEW**

Scenic Designer Costume Designer Lighting Designer
TONY WALTON **WILLIAM IVEY LONG** **DAVID AGRESS**

Sound Designer Production Stage Manager Casting
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Music Direction, Vocal and
Incidental Music Arrangements Orchestrations Music Coordinator
MICHAEL KOSARIN **DOUGLAS BESTERMAN** **JOHN MILLER**

General Press Representative Co-Producer
BONEAU/BRYAN-BROWN **RITZA B. BARATH**

Directed by
MIKE OCKRENT

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King David: Man, Myth, and Legend

Enduring Understanding: Jewish debate seeks to bring us closer to a deep understanding of truth. In engaging in this debate, I can both grow personally and contribute to the intellectual and social project of the Jewish people.

Session 07, November 10 – Kingship in Decline and a Surprising Deathbed Request 40 minutes

Overview: While David is often remembered in his prime, significant trials toward the end of his life give even sharper relief to his character. As David struggles to retain his position and to secure his legacy to his chosen heir, we see new sides of the ever-complex King of Israel.

Materials:

- 2 Sam. 16:5-23 (p. 290-295)
- *A Game of Thrones*, Season 1, Episode 7 (19:58-25:08)
- 1 Kings 2:1-12 (p. 374-377)

Learning plan

1. Introduction (8 minutes)

Tell students that today we're going to see the low point of David's career, which steadily worsened after the episode with Bathsheba. Background:

- Amnon and Tamar (Absalom's sister) happens right David and Bathsheba
- Absalom did not speak with Amnon either evil or good, for Absalom hated Amnon for having abused Tamar his sister (13:22).
- Absalom kills Amnon secretly and flees.
- Joab convinces David to recall him.
- Absalom torches Joab's field.
- Absalom gathers an army and proclaims himself king.
- David retreats

2. David's Nadir (12 minutes)

Distribute 2 Sam. 15:5-23

3. How a King Should Die (10 minutes)

A Game of Thrones, Season 1, Episode 7 (19:58-25:08)

4. Death of David (10 minutes)

1 Kings 2:1-12 (p. 374-377)

King David: Man, Myth, and Legend

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Session 08, November 17 – King David in Art 50 minutes

Overview: David is a musician and a poet, and Jewish tradition accords him authorship of the Psalms. It is only fitting, then, that artists for centuries have looked to him for inspiration. In exploring the figure of David in sculpture, music, and painting, we will seek new perspectives on how to understand the messages that David can bring to us today.

Materials:

- King David in Art Power Point
- “This New Jerusalem” lyrics (1 per student)
- Art supplies

Learning plan

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

Remind students of some of the stories we’ve read together, writing them on the board:

- David and Goliath
- David in relationship to Saul (Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands)
- David rules (becoming King after Saul dies and Abner makes peace with him)
- David and Bathsheba
- David’s decline

2. David in Art (10 minutes)

Distribute “This New Jerusalem” lyrics to each student. Explain that we’re going to view about 15 different depictions of King David in art while the song “This New Jerusalem” from *King David* the musical plays in the background. Students may prefer to listen closely to the song and follow along with the lyrics to consider the depiction of David in the song. (Play the song from here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BDyZiAUQRn8&list=PLF07E66727BAC9005>.)

Show the slideshow “David in Art” including the imbedded YouTube video about Michelangelo’s *David*.

3. Discussion of Art (15 minutes)

Distribute a printout of the slideshow to remind students of the art. Ask students about paintings that grabbed their attention and why. Draw attention to details that artists selected in order to depict David in one light or another. Draw from the semester's discussions about David's character to frame a conversation about how artists choose to depict King David.

4. Studio (20 minutes)

Students will choose one or two scenes from the David story that they remember or will choose to depict David in a general fashion. Each student will create a piece of artwork or write a description of a piece of artwork and then write an analysis of why they made the decisions they did. Students can draw a picture; write a story, poem, or song; or use written words to describe another form of art.

This will be collected and evaluated in consideration of the student's final grade.

King David: Man, Myth, and Legend

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Session 09, November 24 – David’s Relationships: A Closer Look 40 minutes

Overview: With some distance from the text, we can take a closer look at who David was through the eyes of those around him. We will see David through the eyes of those who loved him and ask whom he loved in return. We will explore in particular his relationship with his first wife, Michal.

Materials:

- “The Love of David’s Life” (1 per student)
- 1 Sam. 19:1-17 (p. 118-121 of Robert Alter’s *The David Story*)
- *Kings*, episode 11: “Javelin”

Learning plan

1. Love in David’s Life (10 minutes)

After reviewing today’s theme briefly with the students, distribute “The Love of David’s Life.” Tell students that these verses include every mention of the root אהב (“love”) in the David cycle when that word is connected in some way to David. Read the examples on the first page, pointing out that everyone in Saul’s family loves David. Briefly skim the examples “The people love David” and then turn to “David mourns the death of Jonathan and Saul.” Dwell here for a few minutes and ask students to consider what the two references to love here mean. It’s not clear that David has actually loved anyone, though this comment makes it seem as though he does.

If there’s time, circle back up to 2 Sam. 19:20, where Joab accuses David of “loving those who hate you.” Here, Joab refers to Absalom, and there seems to be a strong case that David does indeed love Absalom even though it’s not explicitly mentioned. Students can reflect on what this says about David and how this love could impact his choices.

2. David and Jonathan & Michal in the Bible (15 minutes)

Tell students that we’ll use the rest of our time today looking at one relationship in particular: David’s relationship with Michal (and also, to some extent, David’s relationship with Jonathan). Read 1 Sam. 19:1-17 with the students, pointing out the instances of Jonathan’s and Michal’s love for David and what they do for him. Note how Saul seems no longer to love David.

3. David and Michal in *Kings* (15 minutes)

The image of the relationship between Jonathan and David and Michal and David is different in the TV program *Kings*. Show episode 11, “Javelin” from the beginning through 7:30. Ask students to differentiate between the two depictions, especially David’s clear articulation, “I love you” to Michelle Benjamin.

If there are five minutes or more left, show 22:25-24:00 and 34:00ff to show how Michelle promises to testify to save David and then fails him. Contrast this depiction with the biblical text we read together.

The Love of David's Life

Saul loves David:

וַיָּבֵא דָּוִד אֶל שָׂאוּל וַיַּעֲמֵד לְפָנָיו וַיֶּאֱהָבֵהוּ מְאֹד וַיְהִי לוֹ נִשְׂא כְּלִים :

And David came to Saul and stood in his presence, and Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor bearer (1 Sam. 16:21).

Jonathan loves David:

וַיְהִי כְּכַלְתּוֹ לְדַבֵּר אֶל שָׂאוּל וַיִּנָּפֶשׂ יְהוֹנָתָן נִקְשָׁרָה בְּנַפְשׁ דָּוִד וַיֶּאֱהָבֵהוּ יְהוֹנָתָן כְּנַפְשׁוֹ :
And it happened as he finished speaking with Saul that Jonathan's very self became bound up with David's, and Jonathan loved him as himself (1 Sam. 18:1).

וַיִּכְרַת יְהוֹנָתָן וְדָוִד בְּרִית בְּאֶהָבָתוֹ אֹתוֹ כְּנַפְשׁוֹ :

And Jonathan, and David with him, sealed a pact because he loved him like he loved himself (1 Sam. 18:3).

וַיִּוָּסֶף יְהוֹנָתָן לְהִשָּׁבִיעַ אֶת דָּוִד בְּאֶהָבָתוֹ אֹתוֹ כִּי אֶהָבֵת נַפְשׁוֹ אֶהְיֶה :

And Jonathan once again swore to David in his love for him, for he loved him as he loved himself (1Sam. 20:17).

Michal loves David:

וַתֶּאֱהָב מִיכַל בֵּת שָׂאוּל אֶת דָּוִד וַיִּגְדּוּ לְשָׂאוּל וַיִּשֶׁר הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינָיו :

And Michal, the daughter of Saul loved David, and they told Saul, and the thing was pleasing in his eyes (1 Sam. 18:20).

וַיֵּרָא שָׂאוּל וַיַּדַּע כִּי ה' עִם דָּוִד וּמִיכַל בֵּת שָׂאוּל אֶהָבֵתָהּ :

And Saul saw and marked that the Eternal was with David, and Michal the daughter of Saul loved him (1 Sam. 18:28).

The people love David:

וְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיהוּדָה **אָהָב** אֶת דָּוִד כִּי הוּא יוֹצֵא וּבָא לִפְנֵיהֶם :
But all Israel and Judah loved David, for he led them into the fray (1 Sam. 18:17).

וַיִּצַו שָׂאוּל אֶת עֲבָדָיו דַּבְּרוּ אֵל דָּוִד בְּלֵט בִּלְט לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה חָפֵץ בָּךְ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְכָל עֲבָדָיו **אֲהַבְוּךָ** :
וְעַתָּה הִתְחַתֵּן בַּמֶּלֶךְ :

And Saul charged his servants: “Speak to David discreetly, saying, ‘Look, the king desires you, and all his servants love you, and now then, become son-in-law to the king” (1 Sam. 18:22).

וַיָּבֵא יוֹאָב אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ הַבַּיִת וַיֹּאמֶר הַבִּשְׁתָּ הַיּוֹם אֶת פְּנֵי כָל עֲבָדֶיךָ הַמְּמַלְטִים אֶת נַפְשְׁךָ הַיּוֹם וְאֵת נַפְשׁ בְּנֶיךָ וּבְנֹתֶיךָ וְנַפְשׁ נְשִׂיךָ וְנַפְשׁ פְּלִגְשִׂיךָ : **לְאַהֲבָה** אֶת שְׂנְאֵיךָ וְלִשְׂנֹא אֶת **אֲהַבְיָךָ** כִּי הִגַּדְתָּ הַיּוֹם כִּי אֵין לְךָ שָׂרִים וְעֲבָדִים כִּי יְדַעְתִּי הַיּוֹם כִּי לוֹ אֲבָשְׁלוּם חַי וְכֻלְנוּ הַיּוֹם מֵתִים כִּי אֲזִי יִשָּׂר בְּעֵינֶיךָ :

And Joab came to the king within the house and said, “You have today shamed all your servants who have saved your life today and the lives of your sons and daughters and the lives of your wives and the lives of your concubines, to love those who hate you and to hate those who love you. For you have said today that you have no commanders or servants. For I know today that were Absalom alive and all of us today dead, then would it have been right in your eyes (2 Sam. 19:9-10)!

David mourns the death of Saul and Jonathan:

שָׂאוּל וַיהוֹנָתָן **הַנְּאֻהָבִים** וְהִנְעִימָם בְּחַיֵּיהֶם וּבְמוֹתָם לֹא נִפְרְדוּ מִנְּשָׂוִים קָלוּ מֵאֲרִיּוֹת גְּבָרוּ :

Saul and Jonathan, beloved and dear, in their life and their death they were not parted. They were swifter than eagles and stronger than lions (2 Sam. 1:23).

צָר לִי עֲלֶיךָ אַחִי יְהוֹנָתָן נְעִמָת לִי מְאֹד נִפְלְאַתָּה **אֲהַבְתָּךְ** לִי **מֵאֲהַבְת** נְשִׂים :
I grieve for you, my brother, Jonathan. Very dear you were to me. More wondrous your love to me than the love of women (2 Sam. 1:26).

King David: Man, Myth, and Legend

Enduring Understanding: Jewish debate seeks to bring us closer to a deep understanding of truth. In engaging in this debate, I can both grow personally and contribute to the intellectual and social project of the Jewish people.

Session 10, December 8 – Interpreting David 40 minutes

Overview: Tanakh sees David in different ways; we see that through differing texts, sometimes placed side-by-side. Passages such as 1 Kings 2:3-4 show editorial efforts to resolve difficulties with David’s character, and these intratextual interpretations give license to the rabbis as well to interpret David variously. How and why did David become such a hero in Jewish tradition? What questions did our ancestors struggle with, and how might we answer them today? Students will write their own interpretations of David, keeping in mind the methods and focuses of readers who have come before us.

Materials:

- 1 Kings 2:3-4, p. 374-375 (1 per student)
- “Two Midrashim About King David” (1 per student)
- Paper and writing utensils

Learning plan

1. Opening to Midrash (10 minutes)

Distribute 1 Kings 2:3-4. Ask students to reflect on how these verses differ from the character of David we’ve come to know so far. Read the first sentence of Robert Alter’s note on p. 374 and explain that this verse was inserted into the narrative by a later editor. This is an *internal* midrash = interpretation made later.

2. Rabbinic Midrashim (20 minutes)

Distribute and read through “Two Midrashim About King David.” Ask students to identify where the rabbis innovated the character of David and on what they based their interpretation. Note in particular that the rabbis focus on David’s relationship with God: God protects David, and David chats with and blesses God. (There aren’t really midrashim that highlight David as warrior or politician; rather they focus on his being a poet and saint.) **Why do you think the rabbis painted King David in this light?**

Note: **Re’em** (רֵאֵם) is mentioned nine times in the Hebrew Bible. It is translated as “oryx” and also as “unicorn” in the Authorized King James Version Bible. It was first identified in modern times with the aurochs by Johann Ulrich Duerst who discovered it was based on the Akkadian cognate

rimu, meaning *Bos primigenius*, the aurochs, progenitor of cattle. In the Jewish folklore, the Re'em was so large that Noah had to strap it on the side of the Ark.

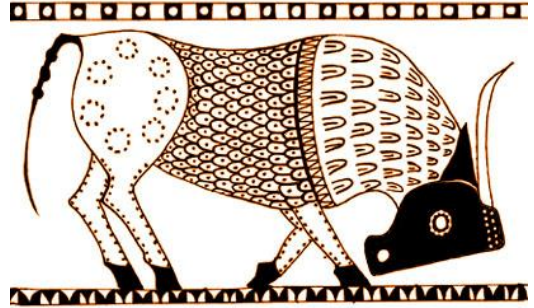
3. Modern Midrash (10 minutes)

Invite students to compose a midrash of their own. Suggest the following frame:

- Characters = King David + one other character from the story
- Setting = Israel while David is King but in a scene we haven't seen yet
- Plot = David behaves with a familiar characteristic in an exaggerated fashion

Two Midrashim About King David

While David was tending sheep, he came upon the *re'em* asleep in the wilderness and, thinking it was a mountain, climbed upon it and continued to tend his sheep. The *re'em* woke up and arose, and David, astride its horns, was lifted up as high as the heavens. [At that moment David prayed before the Holy One to bring him down from the horns of the *re'em*.] What did the Holy One do? God caused a lion to come toward the *re'em*, and when the *re'em* saw the lion, he was afraid of it and cringed before it, for the lion is king of all animals and beasts. When David saw the lion, he also was afraid of it. Then the Holy One caused a gazelle to come along, and as the lion sprang after it, David descended and went his way. Hence David said, “Save me from the lion’s mouth: for Thou hast answered me from the horns of the *remim*” (Psalms 22:22).



Midrash Tehillim, from *The Book of Legends* 117:82

Once, while seated on the roof of his house, David, king of Israel, saw a wasp eating a spider. David spoke up to the Holy One: Master of the universe, what benefit is there from these two You created in Your world? The wasp merely despoils the nectar of flowers—no benefit from it. Throughout the year, the spider spins but makes no garments. The Holy One replied: David, you belittle My creatures! The time will come when you shall have need of both of them.

Later, when fleeing from King Saul, David had taken refuge in a cave. The Holy One sent a spider, which spun a web across the cave’s entrance, sealing it. When Saul came and saw the cave’s entrance with the web across it, he said: Surely no man has come in here, for had he come, he would have torn the web into shreds. So Saul went away without going into the cave.

And when David went out of the cave and saw the spider, he all but kissed him, saying: Blessed is your Creator, and blessed are you.

Subsequently, David found Saul asleep within a barricade [in the royal tent] and Abner lying prone across the tent’s entrances, his head in one entrance and his feet in the opposite entrance. But Abner’s knees were raised up, and so David was able to come in under them and pick up the water jar [see 1 Samuel 26:12]. As he was about to leave the way he came, Abner stretched out his legs, which in size were like two gigantic columns, pinning David down. Beseeching the Holy One’s compassion, David prayed, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” (Psalms 22:2). Then the Holy One performed a miracle for him—God sent him a big wasp, which stung Abner’s legs so that he again bent his knees, and thus David was free to leave.

In that instant, David said, in praise of the Holy One: Master of the universe, who can imitate Your works, Your mighty acts—all Your works are beautiful!

Alphabet of Ben Sira, from *The Book of Legends* 118:84

King David: Man, Myth, and Legend

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Session 11, December 15 – Did All This “Really” Happen? 50 minutes

Overview: Many today are concerned with the question of whether King David was a real person. We will examine historical evidence that seeks to inform us about the historicity of Tanakh’s account of King David, and we will explore how the historical record impacts the lessons we can draw from David today.

Materials:

- “Historicity of King David” (1 per student)

Learning plan

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

Ask students how historical they think the stories we’ve been studying are. Suggest that they are based in historical events but are not meant simply to be records. Nevertheless, we can learn much about history from these stories, and these stories can also inform the way we interpret archaeological discoveries.

2. “The Story of King David” (35 minutes)

Distribute “The Historicity of King David.” Ask students to fill out this worksheet as we watch the video.

Show “The Story of King David” at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fAJ6dBXbIvs> .

After the video, review the answers to the questions on “The Historicity of King David.”

3. Discussion (10 minutes)

(Why) does it matter whether King David really existed?

(Why) does it matter if the details of his life are accurately recorded?

The Historicity of King David

In what religions is King David important?

If King David lived, what century would he have lived during?

Why is there not very much evidence from this century?

What is the Tel Dan stele?



What is Tell Es-Saffi?

Does Tell Es-Saffi give conclusive evidence that David lived?

What did Mohammad Najjar discover in Jordan?

How might the description of Goliath's clothing be explained?