

## SHOW THYSELF A MAN

By  
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*. . . the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people. . . (I Samuel 13:14).*

"Long live the King!" Ten thousand voices in high-pitched stentorian acclaim had crowned David king of all Israel. The sun that had so recently set on the tragedy of Mt. Gilboa was rising again with new hope and promise for the Children of Jacob. The man who had slain his tens of thousands and who had brought the head of Goliath back from the battlefield was now the unrivaled monarch of the chosen people of God.

No man ever loved or was loved more than David. No man ever rose from obscurity to the highest pinnacle of popular favor through more adversity than did he.

He was not born a Prince; he did not inherit the kingdom from his parents. His father was a poor, pastoral farmer, and David was a shepherd boy. He received not his grooming for the kingdom in the halls of palatial plenty, but he acquired the tact and wisdom that made him a mighty empire builder as he followed his flock through the mountains and sat at the feet of nature. Even while a ruddy-faced lad, roaming the wild hills of Judea, he, like Joseph dreaming of the stars, was able to transform the flock that he followed into the armies of men and nations. The shepherd's crook in his hand became a scepter and the rocks upon which he sat, were thrones.

He is at once the most gifted and versatile character of Israelite history; a just ruler, great in his own right; a warrior, in a category to himself; and a writer, of sacred psalm that will hand him down to all future time as the world's greatest master of lyric song.

No greater injustice could be done him than by forming an estimate of his character in the light of his one great failure. He is humanity's most sincere penitent. He sank to no depths of iniquity without rising to correspondingly greater heights of penitence, desire for pardon, purity and communion with God in the "secret place of the Most High" (Psalm 91:1).

"He has entered closest to the heart of nature; he has caught as none other its ever manifold expression; he has soared nearest heaven and lifted mankind toward Divinity." (Editor's note: This is an apparent quote from a source not cited.)

He was firm and rugged as the mountains where he lived as a fugitive; yet, he had the soul of a poet and the tenderness of a mother.

The stability of his character and the wisdom of his statesmanship is best revealed in that he welded together a divided kingdom and established a dynasty that lasted for over

450 years. The dignity of his bearing and the esteem that he enjoyed from his subjects were so unrivaled until the Jewish mind could conceive of no grander virtues in their coming Messiah than to pray that He would be a king like David.

An angel did not announce his birth. His appearance on the stage of action and his introduction into the annals of human history were so simple until it may well appear incidental. Knowledge of his early years as a shepherd is very meager; but the one reference to it made by David himself reveals something of his hazardous existence and self-imposed disciplinary training that in later years made of him such a resourceful man.

Before he left the sheepfold to become an armor bearer to King Saul, his versatility and accomplishments were common knowledge in the kingdom. Said a young man of David when a musician was sought for Saul: "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in speech, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him" (I Samuel 16:18).

A more concise appraisal of a man's qualities of character was never written. To read these lines is to get a life-sized portrait of the mighty David who was the leader of mighty men. From this short biography, we learn that he was an accomplished musician, a physical giant, a courageous personage, a fearless warrior, a profound thinker, a poetic orator, a handsome gentleman, and the spirit and power of God was upon him.

These virtues that made him Israel's mightiest king were acquired during those silent years when he fought with the bear and the lion and learned to conquer his own spirit. He learned to finger the strings of the harp by playing the harmony to the melodies of the wind – so skillfully until he played the devil out of King Saul and played himself into the hearts of all Israel.

When a lad of lesser vision would have been lolling in the shade of the olive trees, he was learning to use the sling; an accomplishment that later saved his life on the battlefield with the giant and brought back Goliath's head to an astonished and amazed king.

He was such a close observer until he explored every cave and ravine, and marked the size and shape of every rock and rill. He was familiar with every path of the mountains and knew every secret hiding place. Thus, he was able to elude Saul's searching party and laugh at their stupidity as they combed the mountains to take away his life.

He developed his physical body until he was sure-footed as an antelope and as lithe as a mountain cougar. Had he not such perfect mastery of his physical body, he would have been pinned to the wall by the javelin of Saul as he sat with the king at his table. Again, his life was saved because David trained and developed himself physically.

He let no cobwebs collect in his brain; he used his mind when he might have been building air castles. He propounded the problems of God, inquired into the mysteries of nature and weighed the values of life.

Thus, in the real battles of life, he was able to outwit his enemies and figure himself out of a hundred impossible situations to go onward to the day of his coronation and triumph over all who hated him.

He studied the nature of sheep and learned how to herd them together, and from this store of practical knowledge, he gathered the scattered tribes of Judah and Israel and welded them together into a solidarity that was nothing short of a diplomatic genius.

While he was learning the manner of sheep and getting close to nature, he became acquainted with God and learned how to get in touch with Him. He learned to fight, to write, to sing, and to play and most important of all, he learned how to pray. Thus, when the battles of life went against him, when his son became a traitor and when his sin found him out, he knew how to pray.

When those whom he loved turned traitors, and his sun went into eclipse; when the bearer of heavy tidings stood at the gate, David was glad that he knew how to pray.

While a fugitive from the wrath of Saul, he found a secret hiding place in the mountains of Judea; but beyond that, while he was fleeing from the haunting memory of his shameful sin, he discovered the secret hiding place of the Most High God.

Because of his war-like nature, he sustained a great disappointment in the evening of his life; but withal, he received an enviable tribute that stands today in a class apart, for of him it was said: "the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart" (I Samuel 13:14).