



# What's in a name?

## Spotlight on David – King and Composer

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To name a boy “David” (“beloved” in Hebrew) goes back to the biblical king and poet (10<sup>th</sup> century BCE). It still is a common and popular name in Christian, Jewish, and Islamic traditions.

Famous “Davids” of our time: David Bowie, Beckham, Lynch, Attenborough, Hockney.....







As the biblical King David is thought to have been the composer of various Psalms, the traditions surrounding his name and history are long and broad. Here we focus on medieval handwritten books and single leaves that showcase King David.

Contrary to what was long thought, most early Christian hymns did not have Psalms for texts.

However, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, desert monks introduced the practice of continuous “psalmody”, singing the complete cycle of 150 psalms each week. Singing the psalms has inspired people ever since.

In medieval times, we often find scenes of David’s life depicted in so-called Psalter manuscripts. Known as the most common European prayer-book in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, medieval Psalters are available to only the few and therefore are quite rare and valuable today.

Dyson-Perrins Psalter-Hours.  
Manuscript illuminated in the workshop of the *Bible Moralisée*.  
France, Paris, c. 1250-1260.

152 x 105 mm. 230 leaves, vellum.  
With 10 historiated initials and 24 calendar illustrations.





Opening Psalm I, letter *B*:  
King David is often represented  
playing the psaltery. The second  
scene below shows the moment  
when he, still a young shepherd,  
kills the giant Goliath.

Dyson-Perrins Psalter-Hours.  
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workshop of the *Bible Moralisée*.  
France, Paris, c. 1250-1260.





ominus il  
luminatio  
mea: et salu  
mea quem  
timebo. **D**o  
minus pro  
tector uite  
mee: a quo  
trepidabo.

**C**um appropiant super me nocentes:  
ut edant carnes meas. **Q**ui tribu  
lant me inimici mei: ipsi infirma  
ti sunt et ceciderunt. **S**i consistat  
aduersum me castra: non timebit cor  
meum. **S**i exurgat aduersum me pre  
lium: in hoc ego sperabo. **Q**uia peti  
a domino hanc requiram: ut inhabitem  
in domo domini omnibus diebus uite mee.  
**E**t uideam uoluntatem domini: et iusti



alium  
me facies  
quoniam intra  
uerunt  
aque us  
que ad ani  
mam me  
am. **I**n  
fons sit  
in limo

profundi: et non est substantia. **V**eni in  
altitudine maris: et tempestas demer  
sit me. **L**aboravi clamans rauce facte  
sunt fauces mee: defecerunt oculi mei  
dum spero in domino meo. **M**ultiplicati  
sunt super capillos capitis mei: qui o  
derunt me gratis. **C**onfortati sunt  
qui persecuti sunt me inimici mei in  
te: que non rapui tunc exsoluebam. **S**

Psalm 26, *Dominus illuminatio mea* – “the Lord is my light and my salvation”. King David, attended by an angel, points to his eye and gazes upwards to God in heaven. And: Psalm 68, *Saluum me fac Deus* – “Save me O God: for the waters are come in even unto my soul”. A naked King David wallows in waters, while pleading with the Lord above.

Two leaves in the Dyson-Perrins Psalter,  
illuminated in the workshop of the *Bible Moralisée*.  
France, Paris, c. 1250-1260.





God sent Samuel to find his chosen shepherd: David, the youngest son of Jesse of Bethlehem who was out tending sheep. - The boy was called in and anointed by Samuel with oil "and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David" (1 Samuel 16: 7-13).

Much later (2 Samuel 7: 1-17 ), David made preparations to build a temple, but God did not allow him – instead God promised to build a house for him.

This promise included a prediction that Solomon would build the temple. It also spoke of the coming Messiah, the son of David who would reign forever. The tree of Jesse depicts the ancestors of Christ.

Tree of Jesse in:  
 Biblia Latina – 'Pocket Bible',  
 Manuscript illuminated by the 'Mathurin' workshop.  
 France, Paris, c. 1250.  
 139 x 86 mm. 630 leaves, vellum.  
 With 11 historiated initials.





Letter B with God blessing and a stunning portrait of King David playing the psaltery.

Initial B[*eatus Vir*] on a leaf from a large Choir Psalter, attributed to Don Simone Camaldolese, a monk at Santa Maria degli Angeli in Florence — a monastery renowned for its book-production. Italy, Florence, c. 1380.

514 x 382 mm (leaf), 128 x 138 mm (initial), vellum, tempera, and gold.





A rich, newly discovered Latin Psalter,  
 possibly illuminated in Wales,  
 c. 1400-1425.

295 x 216 mm. 114 leaves, vellum,  
 2 large miniatures and 7 historiated initials  
 within full borders.

Sold





Boys in Wales were often named David – after the popular patron saint David of Menavia.

Could the *M*'s on David's robe refer to St. Dewi of Mynyw or David of Menavia, the holy bishop and patron of Wales in the 5<sup>th</sup> century?

Sold



**I**llum  
 me fac  
 deus: quo  
 man in  
 traue nit  
 aque us  
 ad animam meam.  
**I**nferus sum in limo  
 pundi: et non est salu  
**Q**uoniam malitidmem  
 maris: et tempestas de  
 merfit me.  
**A**loram damans cau  
 te facie sunt fauces mee:  
 defecerunt oculi mei dis  
 spm in deo meo.  
**M**ultiplicati sunt sup  
 capillos capitis mei: qui  
 oderunt me gratis.  
**C**onfo: rati sunt qui  
 pserunt sunt me inimi  
 mei: nauite que non ra  
 pui tunc et soluelam.  
**D**eus tuus inspicie

69.  
 nam meam: et delicta me  
 a te non sunt abscondita.  
**N**on erulestant in me  
 qui expectant te domine:  
 domine iuratum.  
**N**on confundamur su  
 p me: qui querunt te deus  
 israel.  
**Q**uoniam propter te  
 sustinui obprobrium: ope  
 ruit consilio faciem me  
 am.  
**E**traueus factus su  
 fratrib: meis: et pgrin  
 filius matris mee.  
**Q**uoniam zelus domi  
 tue comedit me: et obpro  
 bria exprobrauerunt tibi  
 ceciderunt sup me.  
**E**t opui in ierumo a  
 nimam meam: et fami  
 est in obprobrium nuchi.  
**E**t posui uestimenta  
 meum alium: et factus



Initial D, David being anointed by Samuel while a devil watches (f. 21r)

Initial S, David in waters, blessed by God in heaven (f. 49r)

David in initial E playing bells (f. 60r).



Sold





The present full-page miniature portrays King David kneeling inside a portico. His harp lies on a bench, his crown on the floor next to his sceptre. The penitent David turns to God the Father, who appears in a golden cloud in heaven.

Through the arcades, the view widens onto a castle and a town. The borders are adorned with a fine landscape illustrating two episodes from the young David's life.

Full-page miniature from a Book of Hours, illuminated in the workshop of Simon Bening.

Flanders, Bruges or Antwerp, c. 1520.

118 x 84 mm. Tempera and liquid gold on vellum.





David fighting a lion and David fighting a bear. Both events are recorded in the Book of Samuel "thy servant slew both the lion and the bear" (1 Samuel 17: 34-37), in which David, when still a shepherd, slew the animals that attempted to rob sheep from the flock he was entrusted to guard.

Full-page miniature from a Book of Hours,  
illuminated in the workshop of Simon Bening.  
Flanders, Bruges or Antwerp, c. 1520.  
118 x 84 mm. Tempera and liquid gold on vellum.





King David on a large leaf from a Franciscan Choir  
Psalter,

illuminated in the circle of the Master of 1446.  
Italy, Bologna, c. 1470.

552 x 365 mm,  
Tempera, ink, and gold on vellum.





King David playing the psaltery,  
sitting in a landscape in a large  
historiated initial B,

from a large choir psalter.  
Northern Italy, Cremona, Baldassarre  
Coldiradi,  
c. 1480-1490.

240 x 222 mm,  
Ink, tempera, and gold on vellum.

Sold



<p><b>N</b>on habitabit in medio domus meae qui facit sup- biam: qui loqui- tur iniqua nō di- rexit in conspectu oculorū meorū.</p> <p><b>I</b>n matutino in- terficiēbam omēs pccōres terre: ut dis- cederēt de ciuitate dñi omnes operā- tes iniquitatem.</p> <p><i>Cyrius huius ius fuerit: et corā</i></p>	<p><b>N</b>on habitabit in medio domus meae qui facit sup- biam: qui loqui- tur iniqua nō di- rexit in conspectu oculorū meorū.</p> <p><b>I</b>n matutinis in- terficiēbam omēs pccōres terre: ut dis- cederēt de ciuitate do- nū omēs qui ope- rantur iniquitatē.</p> <p><i>psalmi. Oratio domino effudit</i></p>	<p><b>N</b>on habitabit in medio domus meae faciens doli: loquens menda- cium non place- bit in conspectu oculorū meorū.</p> <p><b>M</b>ane perda om- nes impios terre: ut interficiam de ciuitate dñi uni- uersos qui operā- tur iniquitatem.</p> <p><i>pauperis tui auxi- um suum.</i></p>
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<p><b>D</b>omine exaudi o- rationē meam: et clamor meus ad te veniat.</p> <p><b>N</b>on auertas fa- ciem tuā a me: in quacūq; die tribu- lor inclina ad me aurem tuam.</p>	<p><b>D</b>omine exaudi o- rationē meam: et clamor meus ad te pueniat.</p> <p><b>N</b>on auertas fa- ciem tuā a me: in quacūq; die tribu- lor inclina ad me aurem tuam.</p>	<p><b>D</b>omine exaudi o- rationē meam: et clamor meus ad te veniat.</p> <p><b>N</b>on abscondas faciē tuā a me: in die tribulationis meae inclina ad me aurem tuā.</p>
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Three scenes from the life of David,  
all in the letter D, showing Psalm 101,

on a leaf from the Psalterium triplex of the Zwolle  
Bible,  
written by Jacobus van Enckhuysen,  
illuminated by the Masters of the Zwolle Bible in 1474,  
made for Herman Droem at Utrecht.

534 x 355 mm.

Tempera, ink, and gold on vellum.





The Ark of the Covenant had been previously captured by the Philistines. David wanted to bring the Ark back to Jerusalem (1 Samuel 4, 7:1), but he omitted some of God's instructions on how to transport it and who was to carry it. Three months later, David resumed the plan to return the Ark, this time, following instructions (2 Samuel, 6:1-11, 14-22). On his deathbed he confirmed Solomon, his son by Bathseba, to be his successor (1 Kings 1-11)

Three scenes from the life of David from the Psalterium triplex of the Zwolle Bible. Psalm 101.  
Zwolle, 1474.

534 x 355 mm.  
Tempera, ink, and gold on vellum.



Ut pio regi pariter canētes cum suis sanctis me-  
reantur aulam ingredi celi simul et beatā dūcere  
vitam. **R**estet hoc nobis deitas beata patris  
ac nati pariterq; sancti spūs cuius reboat omni  
gloria mundo. Amen.



Eatis vir qui non abyt in consilio impiorū:  
et in via peccatorū non stetit: et in cathedra pe-  
stilentie non sedit. **S**ed in lege domī volūtas  
eius: et in lege eius meditabitur die ac nocte.  
**E**t erit tamquā lignū quod plantatū est se-  
cus decursus aquarū: quod fructū suū da-  
bit in tpe suo. **E**t foliū eius non defluet: et oīa  
quęcumq; faciēt prosperabuntur. **N**on sic im-  
pio non sic: sed tamquā pulvis quē proiciat vētes

a facie terre. **I**n deo non resurgunt impii in iu-  
dicio: neq; peccatores in consilio iustorū. **Q**uo-  
nam nouit dominus via iustorū: et iter impio-

**Q**uare fremuerūt **C**um peribit:  
gentes: et populi meditati sunt inania

**A**stiterunt reges terre et principes  
conuenerunt in unū: aduersus dñm et aduersus tra-  
sum eius. **O**trumpamus vniuersa eorū: et proi-  
ciamus a nobis iugū ipōrum. **Q**ui habitat in  
celis irascetur eos: et dominus subleuabit eos.

**N**unc loquetur ad eos in ira sua: et in furore  
suo turbabit eos. **E**go autem cōstitutus sum  
rex ab eo super syon montem sanctū eius: predi-  
cans preceptum eius. **D**ñs dixit ad me filius  
meus es tu: ego hodie genui te. **P**ostula a me  
et dabo tibi gentes hereditatē tuā: et possessionē  
tuā terminos terre.

**R**eges eos in virga ferrea:  
et tamquā vas figuli confringes eos. **E**t nunc  
reges intelligite: erudimini qui iudicatis terrā.

**A**eruite domino in timore: et exultate a cū tre-  
more. **A**pprehendite disciplinam: ne quando iras-  
catur dominus et peatis de via iusta.

**Q**um ex-  
arserit in breui ira eius: beati omnes qui confidunt  
in eo. **D**omine quid multiplicati sūt in eo.

**S**unt qui tribulant me: multi insurgūt  
aduersum me. **M**ulti dicunt anime  
mee: non est salus ipī in deo eius.

**Q**ui  
autē domine susceptor meus es: gloria mea et ex-  
altans caput meū. **V**oce mea ad dominū clama-  
ui: et exaudiuit me de monte sancto suo. **E**go

King David in the letter B at Psalm I in a ferial Psalter.

Southern Germany, Constance (?), c. 1480-1490.

255 x 175 mm, 102 leaves, vellum.

With 7 pen-and-wash illustrations, 20 illuminated initials, and decorated borders.





Book of Hours made for Jean de Labarde upon his  
 marriage to Brunette Isalguier,

illuminated after the style of Jean Bourdichon.  
 France, Tours, c. 1490-1500.

208 x 113 mm, 136 leaves, vellum.  
 With 17 miniatures surrounded by full borders.





Although David was chosen by God, he was also human and sinful. In illuminated Books of Hours, David's sin and repentance serves as a cautionary tale.

...it happened that David arose from his bed after noon ... And he saw from the roof of his house a woman washing herself, ... and the woman was very beautiful.

And David sent messengers, and took her, and she came in to him, and he slept with her.

When she was pregnant, David arranged for her husband Uriah to be killed in battle, so that he could marry her (2 Samuel 11).

Book of Hours,  
illuminated by the Master of Philipppa of Guelders.  
France, Paris, after 1506.

178 × 115 mm, 160 leaves, vellum.  
With some 60 large and small miniatures.





King David on his deathbed (f. 37r) asking for God's mercy; the lower register shows the messenger sent to lure Bathsheba into David's palace.

Book of Hours,  
illuminated in the circle of the Monnypenny Master.  
France, Paris, c. 1500-1510.

185 x 123 mm, 63 leaves, vellum.  
10 full-page compositions combining half-page  
miniatures with related scenes below text.





King David  
painted in Tours, in the style of Jean Bourdichon

David, king and composer has inspired and  
still inspires...

Johann Sebastian Bach (d. 1750), one of the  
greatest composers of all time created some  
50 Psalm related cantata.

More recent was Leonard Cohen's song  
"Hallelujah" (1984), with several references  
to David:

"there was a secret chord that David played  
and it pleased the Lord"

"you saw her bathing on the roof"

"The baffled king composing Hallelujah".





# Spotlight on David

## King and Composer

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