SAMPLE

Dawud: The King and the Psalms

The Story of Prophet Dawud (داود) in the Quran and Islamic Tradition

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Introduction

Dawud (عليه السلام —) David — is the prophet who was a king. He is the only prophet in the Quran who is simultaneously a prophet, a king, and a warrior. He began as a shepherd boy, slew the giant Goliath with a single stone, was chosen by Allah to rule the Israelites, received the Zabur (the Psalms) as divine revelation, and established a kingdom that would be inherited by his son Sulayman. His story is the Quran's most dramatic narrative of rise — from the pasture to the palace, from the sheep to the throne, from the sling to the crown.

The Quran mentions Dawud sixteen times across multiple surahs. He appears as: - The slayer of Goliath (Jalut) and the champion of the Israelites (2:249-251) - The recipient of the Zabur — the Psalms — as divine scripture (4:163, 17:55) - The king who was given wisdom, kingdom, and judgment (38:20-26) - The prophet who was tried and who repented (38:21-25) - The man whose voice and whose mountains and birds praised Allah (21:79, 34:10, 38:18) - The craftsman who made coats of mail (21:80, 34:10-11)

Dawud's story is the Quran's teaching on power and faith — on what happens when a prophet holds temporal authority. Most prophets confronted power from the outside. Dawud held power from the inside. He was not just a messenger to a king; he was the king. And the Quran shows how he wielded that power: with justice, with humility, and with repentance when he erred.

This book traces Dawud's story through the Quran: his rise from shepherd to king, his slaying of Goliath, his reception of the Zabur, his judgment and wisdom, his trial and repentance, his worship through the mountains and the birds, and the lessons for every person who holds power and seeks to use it in the service of Allah. It is the seventeenth light in the NurOne - The Prophets series — the light that ruled, the light that sang, the light that showed that a prophet can be a king and a king can be a prophet.

The Quran introduces Dawud as a prophet, a king, and a servant of extraordinary closeness to Allah. In Surah Sad, Allah says: "And remember Our servant Dawud, the possessor of strength. Indeed, he was one who turned often to Allah" (38:17). The verse identifies two qualities: strength and frequent return to Allah. The Quran does not present Dawud as strong in spite of his devotion. It presents his strength as inseparable from it. His psalms were recited in praise. His kingdom was held in obedience. His justice was administered by the command of the One who gave him the throne.

The Quran elsewhere records a moment of judgment that tests Dawud. In

Surah Sad, two disputants come to Dawud: "Indeed, this my brother has ninety-nine ewes, and I have one ewe. He said: Entrust it to me. And he overpowered me in speech" (38:23). Dawud judged immediately in favor of the wronged party, and then the Quran says: "And We certainly tried Dawud and he sought forgiveness and fell down bowing and turned to Allah in repentance" (38:24). The Quran does not detail the nature of the test, but it shows Dawud's response: when he recognized the test, he did not argue or defend. He fell down. He repented. The Quran uses this to teach that even a prophet-king must turn back to Allah when he recognizes his need, and that the mark of righteousness is not flawlessness but the speed and sincerity of return.

In a related verse, the Quran says Dawud's gifts beyond prophecy and kingship. In Surah Sad: "And We certainly gave Dawud from Us bounty. O mountains, repeat Our praise with him, and the birds. And We made iron soft for him, saying: Make full coats of mail and calculate the precise weights, and work righteousness. And We made the mountains and the birds to exalt Our praise along with Dawud. And We were doing" (34:10-11, 38:18). The verses describe a world where nature itself joined Dawud in worship. The mountains echoed his praise. The birds sang with him. Iron was made soft in his hands so he could craft armor. Dawud was not just a prophet and king. He was a worshipper whose devotion resonated with the natural world. The Quran offers a portrait of this as the ideal relationship between power and humility: the man who commands a kingdom but whose voice is raised, first and always, in the praise of the One who gave him the throne.

Additionally, the Quran records of Dawud: "And your Lord is the best of judges" (7:87, repeated theme). In Surah Sad, Allah mentions the mountains and birds joining Dawud in praise: "Indeed, We subjected the mountains to praise with him evening and morning, and the birds assembled, all with him reverently" (38:18-19). The natural world worshipped Allah through Dawud. The Quran sets before us this as a sign of the relationship between a prophet and creation: when a human being turns fully to Allah, the creation around him turns too. The mountains do not change. The birds do not convert. But the praise of the prophet resonates with the praise that all creation already offers to its Maker, and the Quran records this resonance as a gift given to Dawud alone among all the prophets. The chapters that follow trace his story from his anointing, through Goliath, through the kingdom, through the Psalms, through his justice, to the moment of his death and the legacy he left to Sulayman.

The Quran describes Dawud as a figure of extraordinary integration: a king who was a prophet, a warrior who was a poet, a ruler who was a worshipper. In Surah Sad, Allah says: "O Dawud, indeed We have placed you as a successor on the earth, so judge between the people in truth and do not follow desire,

lest it lead you astray from the way of Allah" (38:26). The verse is both an appointment and a warning. The throne is given. The authority is granted. But the path is narrow: judge in truth, do not follow desire. The Quran uses Dawud to show that power and devotion are not contradictory. A king can be a prophet. A warrior can be a worshipper. A man with a throne and a Psalms can be, in the eyes of Allah, nothing more or less than a servant who turned often to his Lord. The chapters that follow trace the complete story of Dawud from his first mention to his final praise.

The example of Dawud reveals that worship and power are not enemies. The king who judged was the prophet who prostrated. The warrior who slew Goliath was the poet whose Psalms are still recited. The Quran portrays Dawud as the integration of strength and devotion, a man whose throne and prayer mat occupied the same space.

The Quran says in Surah Al-Isra: And We gave Dawud Sulayman. And he said: O my people, we have been given a great matter, and we have been given insight. The verse shows that Sulayman, the son of Dawud, recognized what he had been given. The legacy of Dawud was not merely a throne but a principle: use power in obedience. Sulayman continued what Dawud began. The Psalms of Dawud and the kingdom of Sulayman were two chapters of the same story, a story the Quran tells to show that power and devotion can coexist when the one who holds the power remembers the One who gave it. The chapters that follow trace the complete story of Dawud, from shepherd to king, from warrior to worshipper, from prophet to legacy.

The example of Dawud reveals that the highest form of power is power held in service to the One who gave it, and the highest form of worship is worship offered by the one who holds power.

Chapter 1: Dawud in the Quran

Dawud (عليه السلام) appears in multiple surahs with varying levels of detail:

Surah Al-Baqarah (2:249-251) — The slaying of Goliath. Dawud appears as the young warrior who defeats the giant and establishes the Israelite kingdom. "And Dawud killed Jalut, and Allah gave him the kingdom and wisdom and taught him of what He wills" (2:251).

Surah Sad (38:17-29) — The most detailed passage about Dawud. It covers his judgment, his trial, his repentance, and his qualities. "Indeed, We made Dawud a vicegerent — follow me. O mountains, repeat [Our praise] with him, and the birds. And We made iron soft for him" (38:18-19).

Surah Al-Anbiya (21:78-80) — Dawud's judgment and his craftsmanship.

"And We gave Dawud and Sulayman knowledge, and they said: Praise to Allah who has favored us over many of His believing servants" (21:79).

Surah Saba (34:10-11) — The mountains, the birds, and the coats of mail. "And We certainly gave Dawud from Us great favor. O mountains, repeat [Our praise] with him, and the birds. And We made iron soft for him" (34:10).

Surah An-Nisa (4:163) — Dawud in the prophetic list: "We revealed to... Dawud and Sulayman and Ayyub and Yusuf and Musa and Harun."

Surah Al-Isra (17:55) — The Zabur: "And your Lord is most knowing of whoever is in the heavens and the earth. And We have made some of the prophets exceed others, and to Dawud We gave the Zabur."

Surah Al-An'am (6:84) — Dawud in the genealogical list: "from his descendants, Dawud and Sulayman and Ayyub."

The Quran calls Dawud a khalifa — a vicegerent, a successor:

"O Dawud, indeed We have made you a khalifa in the land" (38:26).

The word khalifa means a deputy, a representative, a successor. In the context of Dawud, it means that Allah appointed Dawud as His representative on earth — to rule with justice, to judge with wisdom, and to lead with faith. The title is not merely political; it is theological. Dawud's kingship was not a human achievement; it was a divine appointment. He ruled because Allah placed him on the throne, and he ruled on behalf of Allah, not on his own behalf.

The word khalifa is the same word used for Adam (2:30) — "I will make a khalifa on earth." The connection is significant: Adam was the first khalifa, and Dawud was a khalifa in the line of Adam. The title connects Dawud to the

original purpose of humanity — to represent Allah on earth, to govern creation in His name, to maintain justice as His deputy.

The Quran states that Dawud received a divine scripture:

"And We gave Dawud the Zabur" (4:163, variant).

The Zabur — the Psalms — is one of the four divine books mentioned in the Quran (the Torah, the Zabur, the Injil, and the Quran). The Zabur was given to Dawud as a book of praise, worship, and wisdom. While the Torah was primarily law and the Injil was primarily guidance, the Zabur was primarily worship — the language of the heart speaking to Allah.

The Quran says: "And to Dawud We gave the Zabur" (17:55). The Zabur is placed alongside the Torah and the Injil as divine revelation. Dawud's prophethood was confirmed by the reception of scripture — he was not just a king who happened to be righteous; he was a prophet who received a book from Allah.

Dawud appears in every major prophetic list:

"We revealed to Ibrahim and Ismail and Ishaq and Yaqub and the descendants and what was given to Musa and Isa and what was given to Dawud and Sulayman" (4:163).

"From his descendants, Dawud and Sulayman and Ayyub and Yusuf and Musa and Harun" (6:84).

In every list, Dawud is paired with Sulayman — father and son, two kings, two prophets. The pairing is consistent: the Quran does not mention one without the other. Dawud established the kingdom; Sulayman perfected it. Dawud fought the wars; Sulayman built the temple. The two together represent the Quran's model of prophetic kingship — the warrior-prophet and the wise-king.

Dawud belonged to the Children of Israel, from the tribe of Judah — one of the twelve tribes descended from Yaqub. Before Dawud, the Israelites had been led by prophets and judges but had no king. The Quran records their request for a king:

"Have you not considered the assembly of the Children of Israel after Musa, when they said to a prophet of theirs: Send to us a king, and we will fight in the way of Allah" (2:246).

The Israelites wanted a king — a temporal leader who could rally them for battle. They had been oppressed, scattered, and defeated. The prophet (identified in tradition as Samuel) warned them that a king would tax them and conscript them, but they insisted. Allah appointed Talut (Saul) as their king —

and it was under Talut that Dawud would rise to prominence.

Dawud's lineage is significant because it establishes that prophetic kingship was not a human invention but a divine appointment. The Israelites asked for a king; Allah chose the king. And the king Allah chose — Dawud — was not from the established elite. He was a shepherd boy, the youngest of his brothers, the one nobody expected. The pattern is consistent with the Quran's broader theme: Allah chooses whom He wills, not whom people expect.

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Aira Aurora is an independent researcher and writer specializing in Quranic studies. Her work focuses on close reading of the Quranic text, exploring its themes, narratives, and moral framework with attention to both the original Arabic and the broader human context.

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Her work is published under the pen name Aira Aurora.

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