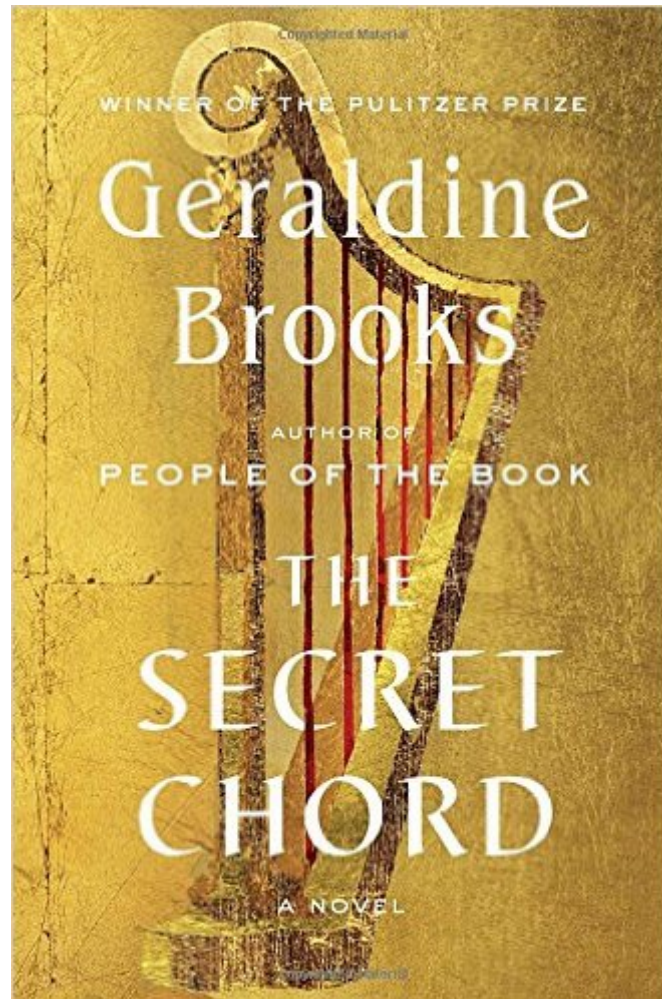


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The Secret Chord: A Novel



Synopsis

“A page turner. . . Brooks is a master at bringing the past alive. . . in her skillful hands the issues of the past echo our own deepest concerns: love and loss, drama and tragedy, chaos and brutality.” — Alice Hoffman, *The Washington Post* A rich and utterly absorbing novel about the life of King David, from the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *People of the Book* and *March*. With more than two million copies of her novels sold, New York Times bestselling author Geraldine Brooks has achieved both popular and critical acclaim. Now, Brooks takes on one of literature’s richest and most enigmatic figures: a man who shimmers between history and legend. Peeling away the myth to bring David to life in Second Iron Age Israel, Brooks traces the arc of his journey from obscurity to fame, from shepherd to soldier, from hero to traitor, from beloved king to murderous despot and into his remorseful and diminished dotage. *The Secret Chord* provides new context for some of the best-known episodes of David’s life while also focusing on others, even more remarkable and emotionally intense, that have been neglected. We see David through the eyes of those who love him or fear him—from the prophet Nathan, voice of his conscience, to his wives Mikhal, Avigail, and Batsheva, and finally to Solomon, the late-born son who redeems his Lear-like old age. Brooks has an uncanny ability to hear and transform characters from history, and this beautifully written, unvarnished saga of faith, desire, family, ambition, betrayal, and power will enthrall her many fans.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

King David. A man like any other, though one who triumphs and fails in spectacular fashion. One whose life lives on in the words of the Bible. Yet, there is so much more to a life than what any Bible can capture - particularly a life such as his. In "The Secret Chord", Geraldine Brooks attempts to show the reader who David may have been as a person. Not just what was captured in the Bible, but his whole life. His motivations, his character, his flaws...everything that defined who he was. Written from the perspective of his ever-present courtier, Nathan (Natan in the book), "The Secret Chord" largely succeeds in its goal. I will be frank - I came to this book not because I was really all that interested in David. I grew up in a religious household, and am familiar with him, but I am not what I would deem "religious" these days. I actually decided to read this book because I had loved Brooks' "People of the Book" and wanted to read another of her books. So that perspective may color my review. I am not interested in exact historical accuracies as compared to the Bible (though from what I remember, she did an excellent job with that as well). I *am* interested in learning more about what makes people function, and such a large character as King David is no different. Brooks starts the book by creating the opportunity for Natan to write David's history. Not only does David give permission for Natan, he sends out orders to those who might resist speaking to the prophet. As was usually the case, there was more to David's agreement than was originally apparent...but that comes later (I don't do spoilers). From there, the book covers David's whole life - from conception to his pronouncement of Solomon as king, and everything in between.

"The Secret Chord," by Geraldine Brooks, is a novelization of King David's life, narrated by Nathan, who counseled the sovereign for many years. As the scorned youngest son of Yishai, David spends most of his days tending his father's sheep in the wilderness. Samuel proclaims that David, whom his older brothers ostracized, is destined to become the future king of Israel. The young man's victory over Goliath brings him great acclaim, and initially, King Saul takes the boy under his wing. David not only distinguishes himself on the battlefield, but also composes beautiful music, plays the harp, and sings with divine inspiration. Unfortunately, Saul becomes jealous of David and turns against him in a murderous rage. The author focuses on David's sensuality, fiery temper, vindictiveness, and violence towards his enemies. Nathan, a seer who reveals his visions to David, informs him that he will lead his people but will not build the Holy Temple with his bloodstained hands. In addition, Nathan warns David that he is destined to pay dearly for his poor judgment, excesses, and transgressions. Those who are familiar with the Bible will find little new in these pages, with one glaring exception. Although Brooks would have us believe otherwise, there is no conclusive evidence that David's relationship with Jonathan was anything but platonic. The author

takes literary license when she creates a love triangle between David, Jonathan, and Michal, one of David's wives and the daughter of King Saul. Brooks's writing is readable but undistinguished. Her efforts to sound biblical sometimes backfire ("Pursue! For you shall overtake and you shall rescue!"), and her characters' occasional use of foul language is jarring.

Geraldine Brooks is Pulitzer Prize winning author and she continues to keep her writing standards high. "The Secret Chord" is a book about King David. One does not have to be Old Testament fan, there are so many stories about King David - just think of the story about David and Goliath. I loved this book from start to finish. It is probably the only book, carefully researched that describes the life of one of the giants of the past from his childhood until his death. Everything about David is contradiction. From the way he was conceived to the last day of his life. David was raised in a large family and despite of his name that means "Beloved", it was probably only his mother who gave him at least an inkling of love. His father and his brothers banished young David to the mountains to tend to the sheep so he can be out of site and minimize rift within the family that his existence alone seemed to cause. So from humble shepherd boy, we get to learn about the hero who conquered Goliath and became one of the King's favorite soldiers. David was a quick learner and more importantly he was a survivor. He manages to find his way to king's court and even get married off to one of his daughters. But envy knows of no limits and once again, David finds himself falling out of King's favor and having to flee to exile. His skill as a warrior and drive eventually lead him to become a King himself. David is shrewd and understands that having offspring is the way for him to secure his succession. So with a string of political marriages, he manages to have a large family with multiple wives who give him many sons and one daughter - Tamar.

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