The Bible portrays King David as an exceptional man and a paragon of godly devotion. But was he? Some scholars deny that he existed at all. Did he? This challenging book examines the written and archaeological evidence critically in an effort to paint an accurate picture of one of the Bible's central figures. Neither defending nor rejecting the traditions about David, Baruch Halpern, a leading scholar of biblical history and the ancient Near East, traces the origins and development of David's persona. Because the biblical text clearly responds to concerns that can only be contemporary with David himself, we can believe that David was both real and a central actor in the historical drama of ancient Israel. Yet at the same time, the written record also shows that contemporaries understood David's character to be much more unsavory than the tradition has hitherto allowed. Halpern digs beneath the layers of tradition to understand David as an individual, as a person. The man he uncovers turns out to have been complex, ambiguous, and--above all--surprising. According to Halpern, the image of David grew over time. He was the founder of the dynasty that perpetuated the texts about him, and they progressively exaggerated his accomplishments. But in the earliest writings David remains a modest figure, as this book shows for the first time. To understand David as a human being, one must keep in mind that he was primarily a politician who operated in a rough-and-tumble environment in which competitors were ready literally to slit throats. Halpern's work raises many provocative questions: Was David an Israelite or a Philistine? Was Solomon really David's son? Did David take the throne of Israel by the consent or against the will of the people? How many murders did he commit on his way to the crown? Indeed, was David someone it would have been wise to even invite to dinner? The challenging arguments in "David's Secret Demons are sure to provoke all kinds of discussion among biblical scholars and general readers alike. In addition--a big bonus--Halpern's accessible, at times humorous prose will itself draw readers everywhere into the compelling story of David found between these covers.
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