


King David as a Righteous Man in the Light of Qumran Literature and Post-Biblical Texts of Early Judaism

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ABSTRACT: The present paper analyses the picture of David as a righteous man depicted in non-biblical Qumran texts and the literature of Early Judaism. The choice of such a broad research field results from the fact that no articles have been published so far that would examine this theme in detail based on the above compositions. Thus, undertaking this task is a justified endeavour. The paper will be divided into three parts. The first part will present the biblical background, mainly based on post-exilic literature. In the second part, fragments of four Qumran manuscripts – 4QMMT, CD, 1Q33 and 11Q5 – will be analysed. Finally, the literature of early Jewish writings containing depictions of David will be discussed. A thorough analysis of all these texts will show that David was a righteous man.

KEYWORDS: Qumran, David, Early Judaism, righteous man, 4QMMT, CD, 1Q33, 11Q5

David is one of the most important biblical heroes who has been depicted widely in the Old Testament. His youth, his ascent to the throne, and building a great dynasty are narrated by the Deuteronomist (1 and 2 Sam, 1 Kgs) and the Chronicler (1 Chr). Furthermore, David's name has been associated with several Psalms: 3–41; 51–70; 72 and 138–145; his figure also occurs in prophetic (Isa 11:1; 16:5; Jer 23:5; Ezra 37:24–25; Amos 9:11) and wisdom literature (Sir 47:8–10). David is mentioned by authors of non-biblical manuscripts at Qumran, as well as writers of texts belonging to apocryphal literature.

The multifaceted personality of David has been emphasised by a number of exegetes whose studies, based on sources from both biblical and non-biblical literature, show how David was perceived in different lights. These works present eight levels at which authors of biblical, non-biblical, and Qumran texts, as well as theologians, philosophers, and Jewish historians created the image of David. They are: 'the progenitor of the Messiah', 'victorious warrior', 'an ideal ruler and king', 'psalmist', 'prophet', 'founder of the Jerusalem cult', 'a man of piety and righteousness', and David as 'an exorcist'.¹ The present article will analyse the

¹ There are several studies dedicated to this issue, e.g., A.G. Auld – C.Y.S. Hos, "The Making of David and Goliath," *JSOT* 56 (1992) 1–39; C.G. Bradley, "The Warrior-Poet of Israel. The Significance of David's Battles in Chronicles and Ben Sira," *Rewriting Biblical History: Essays on Chronicles and Ben Sira in Honor of Pancratius C. Beentjes* (eds. J. Corley – H. van Grol) (DCLS 7; Berlin: De Gruyter 2011) 79–96; M. Biegas, "Postać Dawida w hebrajskiej wersji Psalmu 151 (11Q5)," *BA* 8/1 (2018) 5–28; M. Biegas, "Was King

picture of David as a righteous man as depicted in non-biblical Qumran texts and the literature of Early Judaism. The choice of this research field results from the fact that no articles exploring this theme in detail, based on the above compositions, have been published so far. Thus, undertaking such a task is a justified endeavour.

The paper will be divided into three parts. The first part will present the biblical background, mainly based on post-exilic literature. In the second part, fragments of four Qumran manuscripts – 4QMMT, CD, 1Q33, and 11Q5 – will be analysed. Finally, the literature of early Jewish writings depicting David as a righteous man will be discussed.

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1. Biblical Background

Analysing the books that make up the biblical canon, particularly those that contain the most references to this ruler, we can see a series of descriptions written in various, sometimes ambivalent, ways. These differences are most visible when comparing the Deuteronomistic narrative about David with the texts produced by the Chronicler.

Although the Books of Samuel present David as a pious and righteous man chosen by God, they do not conceal his moral failings, which take on the character of serious sins. The passage that comes to the forefront is 2 Sam 11:2–27, which describes David's adultery with Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:2–5), and then, through a series of lies and intrigues with Joab, a conscious action leading to the killing of Uriah the Hittite (Bathsheba's husband) in the battles with the Ammonites.

In post-exilic literature, chiefly in 1 Chr, there is a noticeable trend to emphasise David's traits, such as righteousness, piety, and involvement in cultic matters, while at the same time minimising his vices. According to exegetes, the Chronicler whitewashed the image of David, showing him as an ideal, crystal-clear figure. This is supported by the fact that the author of 1 Chr is silent on his adultery, murder, rebellious offspring, or the execution of Saul's family. David's only moral failure mentioned by the Chronicler is his decision to conduct a census. However, this did not prevent the author of 1 Chr from turning this infidelity to David's advantage; in this way, the ruler is presented as a model of a repentant sinner.² In the scene of the solemn bringing of the ark of God to Jerusalem, the Chronicler precisely described David's clothes as a robe of fine linen and a linen ephod (1 Chr 15:27), which contrasts with the account of 2 Sam 6:14, 16, 20, where David, in the account of the same event, is dancing half-naked in front of the ark. This behaviour is sharply criticised by Michal, the daughter of Saul, who, first, as the text of 2 Sam 6:16 says, despised him in her heart, and then directed a critical remark at him, pointing out that David had uncovered himself before the eyes of his servants' maids 'as any vulgar fellow might shamelessly uncover himself' (2 Sam 6:20). The Chronicler, pointing out that David was dressed properly, does so on purpose to ignore Michal's critical remark.

The author of Sirach speaks in a similar tone about David in the hymn 'In Honour of Our Ancestors' (Sir 44–50).³ The sage depicts David just after the prophet Nathan and before speaking about King Solomon (Sir 47:2–11). Using the image of David from 1 Chr, Ben Sira shows David as the initiator of cult in Jerusalem (Sir 47:8–10), and places his figure in the concept of covenant, which is characteristic of 'Hymn in Praise of the Fathers'.⁴ In that passage, special attention should be paid to vv. 8 and 11.

2 Pomykala, "Images of David," 44; N.G. Knoppers, "Images of David in Early Judaism: David as Repentant Sinner in Chronicles," *Bib* 76/4 (1995) 449–470.

3 The block of texts described as "Hymn in Praise of the Fathers" includes chapters 44–49 of the Book of Sirach. They present the history of biblical Israel. Applying his own criteria, the sage portrays the most important and positive heroes of this history.

4 J.J. Pudelko, "Dawid jako organizator kultu w Pochwie Ojców (Sir 47,8–10)," *BPTH* 10/2 (2017) 263.

In v. 8, the author focuses on David's piety and his attitude towards God. However, in the previous verses, he speaks of David's fight with Goliath and his other struggles, from which David emerges victorious *ἐπεκαλέσατο γὰρ κύριον τὸν ὑψιστον* – 'for he called upon the Most High' (v. 5). In v. 8, the sage stresses David's righteousness by using a synthetic parallelism. The first line of this parallelism is *ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ αὐτοῦ ἔδωκεν ἑξομολόγησιν ἁγίῳ ὑψίστῳ* – 'in his every deed he glorified the Holy One, the Most High.' It contains the term *ἑξομολόγησις*, meaning 'confession, recognition, praise, adoration', and most frequently referring to proclaiming God's glory in public. In the other line of the text: *ῥήματι δόξης ἐν πάσῃ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ ὑμνησεν καὶ ἠγάπησεν τὸν ποιήσαντα αὐτόν* – 'with a word of glory he sang hymns with all his heart, and he loved his Maker,' the sage specifies the action previously expressed by the phrase *δίδωμι ἑξομολόγησιν*. That 'proclaiming his glory' is *ῥήματι δόξης* and *ὑμνησεν*. The phrase *ῥήματι δόξης* allude to the psalms composed by David, which is strongly stressed in the Qumran text of 'David's Compositions' in 11Q5,⁵ while the verb *ὑμνησεν* indicates the act of singing hymns, songs in praise of God. This text (Sir 47:8) resembles the composition of 2 Sam 23:1–7 – 'the Last Words of David'. At the beginning of this composition, in its first two verses (2 Sam 23: 1–2), we read:

נאם דוד בן־ישי ונאם הגבר הקם על משיח אלהי יעקב ונעים זמרות ישראל רוח יהוה דבר־בי ומלתו על־לשוני

The oracle of David, son of Jesse, the oracle of the man exalted, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the singer of the psalms of Israel. The spirit of the Lord speaks through me, and his word is upon my tongue.

David describes himself as *ישראל זמרים* – 'singer of the psalms of Israel',⁶ which corresponds to the Greek verb *ὑμνησεν* and phrase *ῥήματι δόξης*.

David's attitude is motivated by his love of God, which is evidenced in v. 8: *καὶ ἠγάπησεν τὸν ποιήσαντα αὐτόν*. Interestingly, the Hebrew version of this text emphasises his love of God even more: *בכל לבו אוהב עושהו* 'with all his heart he loved his Maker,' which is a clear reference to another biblical text, namely Deut 6:5.⁷ An essential aspect of David's character is presented in v. 8 as the love of God with all your heart is expressed in the practice of the first commandment of the Decalogue, i.e., the rejection of idolatry. Fidelity to God alone is one of David's greatest virtues, and, at the same time, a manifestation of the attitude of a righteous man, which is worth imitating.⁸

The second verse where the sage shows David as a righteous man is v. 11, which closes his praise of the ruler. Here the translator writes: *κύριος ἀφείλεν τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀνύψωσεν εἰς αἰῶνα τὸ κέρας αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ διαθήκην βασιλέων καὶ θρόνον δόξης ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ* – 'The Lord took away his sins, exalted his horn forever and gave him a covenant of kings and a glorious throne in Israel'

5 J. Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll of Qumran Cave 11 11QPsa* (DJD 4; Oxford: Clarendon 1965) 91–93; M. Biegas, "The Division and Structure of 'David's Compositions' (11Q5)," *BA* 13/2 (2023) 319–334.

6 Pudelko, "Dawid jako organizator kultu," 275.

7 Pudelko, "Dawid jako organizator kultu," 276; Cf. Deut 10:12; 11:13; 13:4; 30:6.

8 Pudelko, "Dawid jako organizator kultu," 276.

In this verse, we can see God's four actions as rewards for David's righteousness. These actions in favour of David have to do with cleansing him from his sins: κύριος ἀφείλεν τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτοῦ, exalting him – ἀνύψωσεν εἰς αἰῶνα τὸ κέρας αὐτοῦ, entering into a covenant with him – ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ διαθήκην βασιλείων, and consolidating his dynasty, his throne – θρόνον δόξης ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ. Some exegetes see here an announcement of a Messianic character, although, as G. Xeravits rightly notes, the final verse (Sir 47:11) concerns the praise of the historical David as a righteous, religious, and ideal man. In this way, the sage follows the general intention of the entire 'Hymn in Praise of the Fathers,' where, in almost every case (except some priestly issues, e.g., the case of Pinchas), the author speaks without any future or even eschatological overtones.⁹ Thus, the content of v. 11 would be a poetical re-reading of the fragments of the Deuteronomist's writings, i.e., 2 Sam 12:13, 24–25, and 2 Sam 7.

The next passage (1 Macc), in which the author follows the trend of idealising David in the post-exilic books, is a fragment of Mattathias's death speech, combining the postulate of fidelity to the law and covenant, which are characteristic of the attitude of righteousness. This is accomplished by recalling the most important figures from the history of Israel. The examples of great figures in the history of Israel given in vv. 51–61, presented in chronological order, have a common ground for consideration, which is the experience of great difficulties in their lives, which they overcame through the power of faith in God's righteousness.¹⁰ Between the content referring to Caleb (Num 13–14) and Elijah (1 Kgs and 2 Kgs), the author inserts one sentence about David: Δαυιδ ἐν τῷ ἔλκει αὐτοῦ ἐκκληρονόμησεν θρόνον βασιλείας εἰς αἰῶνας – 'David through his mercy inherited a throne of kingdom forever' (1 Macc 2:57). Analysing this verse, we can conclude that the author of 1 Macc regarded the promise of 2 Sam 7 as the most important event in David's life. Here, the essential element is the noun ἔλεος, usually rendered as 'mercy, compassion.' Placing the noun in this verse, the author might have wanted to refer to the events from David's life, when his actions were motivated by this attitude. The references especially concern the mercy shown to Jonathan's house (1 Sam 20:14–15; 2 Sam 9:1) and to Hanun, king of the Ammonites (2 Sam 10:2; 1 Chr 19:2). In this context, it is worth mentioning the fact that David spared Saul's life (1 Sam 26:9–12) or that he helped Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan (2 Sam 9:7). Moreover, we should recall the episode when David did not revenge and retaliate against Shimei who had cursed him (2 Sam 16:5–14), or against Absalom (2 Sam 18:5). The noun ἔλεος in 1 Macc 2:57 may also refer to the fragment of the song of thanksgiving, which the Deuteronomist included in 2 Sam 22:21–25 (cf. Ps 18).¹¹ Although there is no mention of mercy or eternal throne, the author depicts David as a righteous man by using twice the Hebrew expression יְהוָה כִּצְדָקְתִּי גַמְלָנִי – 'the Lord rewarded me according to my

9 G.G. Xeravits, *From Qumran to the Synagogues: Selected Studies on Ancient Judaism* (DCLS 43; Berlin – Boston, MA: De Gruyter 2019) 54–55.

10 J. Nawrot, *Pierwsza Księga Machabejska (Rozdziały 1,1–6,16). Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz* (NKB.ST 14/1; Częstochowa: Edycja Świętego Pawła 2016) 532–535.

11 Nawrot, *Pierwsza Księga Machabejska (Rozdziały 1,1–6,16)*, 542.

righteousness' (v. 21) and יִשָּׁב יְהוָה לִי כִצְדָקָתִי – 'the Lord has recompensed me according to my righteousness' (v. 25).

Therefore, taking into consideration the content of these Deuteronomistic fragments, the presence of the noun ἔλεος in 1 Macc 2:57 refers to the attitude of faithfulness to God, which ultimately contributed to David being rewarded.

The foregoing analysis of the biblical texts has shown that, in the post-exilic books, there was a noticeable tendency to present David as a righteous man. This trend intensified at the beginning of the third century BC, when the compositions discovered in the Judean Desert began to be redacted. Hence, the next group of texts in which the problem posed in the title of the present paper should be examined is the Qumran manuscripts.

2. Qumran Manuscripts

The Dead Sea Scrolls include several references to the figure of David, namely CD, 1QM, 4Q161, 4Q174, 4Q177, 4Q252, 4Q285, 4Q397, 4Q398, 4Q457b, 4Q479, 4Q504, 4Q522, 6Q9, 11Q5, 11Q11, 11Q13 and 11Q14.¹² C. Evans divides these manuscripts, the content of which is related to David, into three categories. The first category includes those passages that refer to David as a historical figure. The second category comprises those manuscripts that emphasise David's individual virtues. The last category presents David in an eschatological perspective.¹³ Four of these manuscripts; 4Q398 (4QMMT), CD, 1QM, and 11Q5 deserve special attention because they include material associating David with justice.

2.1. 4QMMT

The first manuscript that is thematically related to David as a righteous king is 4QMMT. It is a polemical document originating at Qumran. According to the authors of its critical edition, 4QMMT was originally composed of four sections: an opening formula (now completely lost); a calendar of a 364-day year; a list of more than 20 halakhot, most of which refer to the community; and an epilogue concerning the theme of the separation of the community from other people, including a message calling on the addressee to adopt the legal order of the community.¹⁴ Based on a palaeographical analysis, 4Q398 is dated to the first part of the Herodian era, which limits the period of its origin: from the end of the first century BCE to the beginning of the first century CE.¹⁵ At the end of part C, vv. 25–26, the passage in Table 1 can be found.

¹² Porzig, "David in the Judean Desert," 10–11.

¹³ Evans, "David in the Dead Sea Scrolls," 183–197.

¹⁴ E. Qimron – J. Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4. V. Miqsat Ma'aseh ha-Torah* (DJD 10; Oxford: Clarendon 1994) 1.

¹⁵ Qimron – Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4*, 21–25.

Table 1. 4QMMT E (C) (= 4Q398 25–26) and its English translation¹⁶

| Hebrew text | | Line |
|--|--|------|
| [בשר] א עונות זכור [את] דויד שהיא איש חסדים [ו] אף | | 25 |
| [היא] [ב]צל מצרות רבות ונסלוח לו ואף [] | | 26 |
| Translation | | |
| 25 | [forgiv]en (their) sins. Remember David, who was a man of merciful acts, [and] | |
| 26 | he, too, [was] freed from many afflictions and was forgiven. [] | |

This fragment emphasises these features of David, which, in the opinion of its author, are worth imitating. According to Coulot,¹⁷ in order to encourage the addressees to cultivate positive attitudes, the author of 4QMMT presented David as a law-abiding king who was distinguished by righteous deeds, thanks to which he avoided many afflictions in his life and received forgiveness of the sins he had committed.

First of all, we should note the syntagma **איש חסדים** related to David in l. 25. In the Hebrew Bible, the word **חסד** usually means loyalty, faithfulness, proofs, and deeds of mercy and grace.¹⁸ In the context of righteous deeds, this noun commonly refers to God (e.g., Ps 21:8; 33:5; 52:10; 103:17; 136:1–26). However, it can also be used with reference to man's righteous acts. An example of such a text is Neh 13:14, in which, depicting the acts of the governor (Nehemiah) in purely cultic matters out of love for the temple, the Chronicler puts in Nehemiah's mouth a request to God to remember his righteous deeds (**חסדי**).¹⁹ Reading 4QMMT alone, the reader does not learn what pious deeds of David the author meant. Thus, Evans suggests connecting the syntagma **איש חסדים** (4Q398) with the episodes in 2 Sam 9:7; 10:2 and Isa 55:3. In the first text, the noun **חסד** appears in the context of the meeting between King David and Merib-baal, son of Jonathan, son of Saul. David guarantees Merib-baal safety, contrary to the custom of the current ruler killing the family of the previous ruler. David not only grants Merib-baal the grace to spare his life but also decides to show him mercy (**חסד**) for the sake of his father, Jonathan. This means that David is prepared to show kindness, which the Deuteronomist mentions later in this verse. In turn, as we read in 2 Sam 10:2, David decides to do good (**חסד**) to Hanun, new king of the Ammonites, just as his father Nahash dealt loyally (**חסד**) with him. In Isa 55:3,²⁰ Deutero-Isaiah uses the noun **חסד** to remind people of the covenant of David (2Sam 7). The message of this verse expresses the conviction that God will bestow his graces on the nation for the sake of David. Moreover, the expression **איש חסדים** should be considered in the light of 2 Chr 32:32; 35:26, where the author, referring to the positive aspects of power exercised

¹⁶ Qimron – Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4*, 60.

¹⁷ Coulot, "David à Qumrân," 315–343.

¹⁸ DCH III, 277–281.

¹⁹ H. Langhammer, *Księgi Ezdrasza – Nehemiasza. Wstęp – przekład z oryginału – komentarz – ekskursy* (PŚST 2/3; Poznań – Warszawa: Pallottinum 1971) 289–290.

²⁰ The same expression as in Isa 55:3 is used in 2 Chr 6:42, with a slightly different orthography.

by the Judean kings Hezekiah and Josiah, summarises their deeds by using the same noun (חסדיו).²¹

In 4QMMT C, l. 26, there is the expression [נ]צל מצרות רבות – ‘he was freed from many afflictions,’ and, as a consequence of the above syntagma, it is understood by being referred to the Deuteronomist, who used the word נצל, meaning ‘be saved’ and ‘be freed,’ depicting a few events from David’s history. In 1 Sam 17:32–37, David, speaking to Saul just before his fight with Goliath, tells the king that he had to protect sheep in the deserted pastures of Palestine. While protecting the sheep entrusted to him, it often happened that God saved him (הצילני) from the paw of the lion and the bear; further on, David expressed confidence that in the same way God would save him (יצילני) from the Philistine (v. 37).²² Another example can be found in 1 Sam 26:24, which is a part of the narrative of Saul’s third expedition against David (1 Sam 26:1–26). At the end of this pericope, the author relates a conversation between Saul and David, stating that David did not kill the king, since he respected the dignity of the Lord’s anointed. David proved to be a righteous man, for he neither acted deceitfully, nor took the opportunity to kill his king. For the sake of this, David expected justice by being freed (יצילני)²³ from all his afflictions, in particular he expected protection for his life.²⁴

The final element in l. 26 (4Q398) is the forgiveness of David’s sins. The biblical text says that the king committed several sins, the gravest one being his affair with Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:1–5), treacherously causing the death of her husband Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam 11:6–25), and ordering a census (2 Sam 24). These sins, after serving the punishment, were forgiven him, as Sirach mentions in the ‘Hymn in Praise of the Fathers,’ at the end of the pericope dedicated to David (Sir 47:11).

Referring, among other things, to these historical facts from David’s life, the author of 4Q398 suggests that, if the addressees act like David, they can expect similar results in their lives.²⁵

2.2. CD = Damascus Document

The Damascus Document, found in the Cairo Geniza, is dated to the second century BCE.²⁶ In its text, made up of 4Q266–273 and 5Q12 and 6Q15, one can distinguish two parts. The first part, which includes columns I–VIII and XIX–XX, form the so-called ‘Admonition.’ It is an account of the history of Israel, containing lists of punishments sent to the

²¹ Evans, “David in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 189.

²² Evans, “David in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 189.

²³ In 1 Sam 26: 24 appears a similar construction צרה נצל. This construction brings this biblical text closest to the Qumran record.

²⁴ J. Łach, *Księgi Samuela. Wstęp – przekład z oryginału – komentarz – ekskursy* (PŚST 4/1; Poznań: Pallottinum 1973) 285; the word נצל in reference to David still appears in 2 Sam 12:7; 2 Sam 22:1; 2 Sam 22:18, 49. These contexts have a generalising character.

²⁵ Coulot, “David à Qumrân,” 337–338.

²⁶ B.Z. Wacholder, *The New Damascus Document. The Midrash on the Eschatological Torah of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Reconstruction, Translation and Commentary* (STDJ 56; Leiden: Brill 2007) 3–4.

nation, and acts of salvation of selected groups. Here, the author calls all who know righteousness and who enter the Covenant, encouraging them to walk in the way of God as members of the new Covenant in the 'land of Damascus'. The second part, which includes columns IX–XVI, called 'Laws', contains sets of rules ordering the life of the community.²⁷ The laws concern, among others, the purity of priests and offerings, diseases, marriage, land cultivation, tithes, relations with gentiles, regulations for those entering into the community of covenant and oaths taken on this occasion, communal life, keeping the Sabbath, and organisation of the community.²⁸

In col. V, 2–6, part of the first section of CD, there is a fragment referring to the person of David.

Table 2. CD V, 2–6 and its English translation²⁹

| Hebrew text | | Line |
|---|--|------|
| לא ירבה לו נשים ודויד לא קרא בספר התורה החתום אשר | | 2 |
| היה בארון כי לא [נפ] נפתח בישראל מיום מות אלעזר | | 3 |
| ויהושע ויושע והזקנים אשר עבדו את העשתרת ויטמון | | 4 |
| נגלה עד עמוד צדוק ויעלו מעשי דויד מלבד דם אוריה | | 5 |
| ויעזובם לו אל וגם מטמאים הם את המקדש אשר אין הם | | 6 |
| Translation | | |
| 2 | He should not multiply wives to himself (Deut 17:17); However, David had not read the sealed book of the law which | |
| 3 | was in the ark, for it had not been [n p] opened in Israel since the day of the death of Eleazar | |
| 4 | and of Jehoshua, and Joshua and the elders who worshipped Ashtaroth. One had hidden | |
| 5 | the public (copy) until Zadok's entry into office. And David's deeds were perfect, except for Uriah's blood, | |
| 6 | and God forgave him those. And they also defiled the temple, for they did not | |

This fragment forms a part of a wider argument containing a teaching about the so-called three nets in which Belial (בליעל, CD IV 15) tries to catch people, i.e., three ways of tempting people to commit such sins as fornication, wealth, and desecration of the temple. The author also criticises those who break the commandments concerning marriage. Speaking about marriage, he quotes the law from Deut 17:17: 'he must not acquire many wives for himself.' In this context, the reader should expect criticism of the ruler because David, broke this commandment by having several wives. However, immediately after the quotation from Deut 17:17, the author continues his thought, justifying David's actions. As the text says, David was unaware of the significance of his

²⁷ G.W.E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction*, 2 ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 2005) 64.

²⁸ J. VanderKam, *Manuskrypty znad Morza Martwego* (trans. R. Gromacka) (Warszawa: Cyklady 1996) 64.

²⁹ D.W. Parry – E. Tov – G.I. Clements (eds.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader. I. Texts Concerned with Religious Law, Exegetical Texts and Parabiblical Texts*, 2 ed. (Leiden: Brill 2014) 88–89.

actions since *החֲתוּם הַתּוֹרָה בַּסֵּפֶר* – ‘he had not read the sealed book of the law,’ which was in the ark, for it had not been opened in Israel since the day of Eleazar’s death (CD 5, 2–3).³⁰ The author clearly justifies David’s deeds by saying that he did not have access to the book that was in the ark, which is emphasised by the term *הַחֲתוּם*, which means ‘sealed,’ and therefore David cannot be held responsible for taking more than one wife.

Having excused David’s polygamy, the author makes an intriguing statement in ll. 5–6: *וַיַּעַל מַעֲשֵׂי דָוִד מִלְּבַד דַּם אֹרִיָּה* – ‘And David’s deeds were perfect, except for Uriah’s blood.’ The beginning of this sentence, in fact its first syntagma *וַיַּעַל*, raises a certain interpretative problem. Different interpretations of this syntagma can be encountered in contemporary exegetical studies. All of these opinions were set out by de Roo in his article. Cook translates the whole expression *וַיַּעַל מַעֲשֵׂי דָוִד* as ‘David’s deeds were perfect’; meanwhile, Davies opts for the interpretation that David’s deeds were overlooked. Garcia Martinez writes that David’s deeds were exalted, while Vermes translates it to ‘David’s deeds were lifted up.’ These versions of the syntagma *וַיַּעַל* result from different understandings, considering the morphological perspective.³¹ The syntagma derives from the Hebrew root *עלה*, which, depending on the conjugation in which it is found, takes on different meanings, usually coming down to: ‘to ascend, to go up,’ ‘to make a way,’ ‘to be exalted,’ and ‘to arise,’ etc.³²

In l. 5, the *imperfectum* is preceded by a waw-consecutive, *וַיַּעַל*, and can, from the morphological point of view, with appropriate vocalisation, be interpreted as the imperfect conjugation for *qal*, *niphal*, *piel*, *pual*, *hiphil*, and *hophal* verbs. Of the forms presented, the first thing to exclude is the *hiphil*, because this sentence lacks a direct object. The acceptance of the *piel* form is also doubtful, as it does not occur in the Hebrew Bible. However, it is attested in rabbinic literature as a transitive verb with the meaning ‘to praise, to exalt, to lift up.’ Nevertheless, the verb in *piel* requires a direct object. The other possibilities include accepting *וַיַּעַל* as *qal*, *niphal*, *pual*, and *hophal*. The best option was proposed by Cook, who understood the form under analysis as an imperfect *qal*: David’s deeds surpassed other deeds, and thus, they were perfect. This interpretation was followed by Evans who supported his view by citing two passages from the Hebrew Bible: Deut 28:43 and Prov 31:29, where the verb *עלה* occurs in its *qal* form. In both texts, the verb *עלה* is followed by the preposition *על*, which means ‘over, above.’ Thus, *עלה על* would be literally translated as ‘to rise above,’ which may metaphorically be rendered as ‘to be perfect.’ In both texts (Deut 28:42 and Prov 31:29), we have references to someone who is superior to someone else, so he is, with a metaphorical reference, more perfect.³³

30 It is highly possible that by using the phrase *סֵפֶר תּוֹרָה קָרָא*, the author of the record is referring to the time between Josh 8:34 and 2 Kgs 22:8, i.e., the last time (when Eleazar was still alive) and the first time (the time of Josiah) of the ‘reading of the Book of the Law’.

31 de Roo, “David’s Deeds in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 45–46.

32 DCH VI, 400–414.

33 de Roo, “David’s Deeds,” 46–47; Evans, “David in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 187–188.

In Evans's opinion, CD 5,5 is rooted in biblical literature. This basis is 1 Sam 19:4, which is part of Jonathan's defence speech in favour of David, spoken in the presence of Saul וידבר יהונתן בדוד טוב אל־שאול אביו ויאמר אליו אל־יחטא המלך בעבדו בדוד כי לוא חטא לך וכי מעשיו – 'Jonathan spoke well of David to his father Saul, saying to him, "The king should not sin against his servant David, because he has not sinned against you, and because his deeds have been very good to you"' In the next verse (1 Sam 19:5), Jonathan states what deeds of David he means. First, he mentions that David showed courage, risking his life, and killed the Philistine, thanks to which the Lord brought about a great victory for all Israel, and Saul saw it and rejoiced.³⁴

At the end of l. 5, directly after the words showing David's prefect deeds, we read: מלבד דם אוריה – 'except for Uriah's blood'. This expression seems to be included there under the influence of 1 Kgs 15:5: אשר עשה דוד את־הישר בעיני יהוה ולא־סר מכל אשר־צוהו כל ימי חייו 'because David did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and did not turn aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.'

This verse is part of the narrative where the Deuteronomist evaluates the rules of Abijam, king of Judah (1 Kgs 15,1–8). It is clear that the author, in order to show the existing contrast between Abijam and David, characterises the former ruler as an unfaithful sinner, while the latter is presented as an example of a faithful and ideal ruler, even though his life was overshadowed by the murder of Uriah, Bathsheba's husband.

Continuing this motif, the author of CD writes at the beginning of l. 6: וַיַּעֲזֹב לוֹ אֱלֹ – ‘and God forgave him those.’ According to Cook, this text should be understood in the light of already quoted 4QMMT C 25–26, which, just for the record, states: ‘Remember David, who was a man of the pious ones, [and] he, too, [was] freed from many afflictions and was forgiven.’³⁵

The verb עָזַב, used in CD 5,6, usually means ‘to leave, abandon, depart from someone,’ and often appears in the context of some negative action; for example, it is used for those who leave God (Deut 28:20), or God leaving his people (Deut 31:17). The context of CD suggests that, in l. 6, the verb should be understood positively, since the author clearly wants to present David in a positive light by acquitting him of an offense as serious as murder. This is also evidenced by the Hebrew construction of this part of the sentence: the verb עָזַב + direct object + particle לְ, combined with the indirect object, seems to be an idiomatic expression meaning ‘to leave something for someone, for their benefit.’³⁶

2.3. 1Q33 = War Scroll (Sefer ha-Milhamah)

The Scroll of the War, the most famous eschatological work, was found in Cave 1 at Qumran. Parts of nineteen columns of the text have been preserved; fragments of six copies

34 Evans, "David in the Dead Sea Scrolls," 187–188.

35 Evans, "David in the Dead Sea Scrolls," 48–49.

36 De Roo, "David's Deeds," 58; A similar construction appears in Neh 3:34.

(4Q491–496) were recovered from Cave 4; some of these, as VanderKam argues, indicate that the text was modified and rewritten as subsequent copies were made.

This manuscript is usually dated to two periods: the Seleucid era or the period of the Roman Empire. Supporters of the dating to the Seleucid era indicate the beginning of the Maccabean revolt (165 or 164 BCE), the peak of Jonathan’s military power (143 BCE), or the reign of John Hyrcanus I (135–104 BCE) as the time of its redaction. Scholars who point to the Roman period indicate that 1QM was written in the middle of the first century BCE. Yadin places the composition of the scroll between the capture of Jerusalem by Pompey (65 BCE) and the death of Herod the Great (4 BCE).³⁷ In turn, based on palaeographical analyses and archaeological arguments, Cross opts for dates similar to the ones suggested by Yadin.³⁸

In the entire manuscript, the author discusses the course of the forty-year war that will be fought between two groups: ‘the sons of light’ and the opposing camp, ‘the sons of darkness’. In the first column of the text, the author makes it clear that this will not be an ordinary battle, but a final clash (1QM 1, 5–9). In the manuscript, at the beginning of col. 11, there is a reference to the figure of David.³⁹

Table 3. 1Q33 XI, 1–5 and its English translation⁴⁰

| Hebrew text | | Line |
|--|--|------|
| כִּי־אִם לִכְה־הַמִּלְחָמָה וּבִכְוֹחַ יָדְכֶם רוּשׁוּם פְּגִרֵיהֶם לֹאִין קוֹבֵר וְאֵת גּוֹלִית הַגִּתִּי אִישׁ גְּבוּר חֵיל | | 1 |
| הַסִּגְרָתָה בִּיד דָּוִיד עֲבַדְכֶם כִּי־אֵת בְּטַח בְּשִׁמְכָה הַגְדוֹל וְלֹא בַחֲרֵב וְחֲנִית כִּי־אֵת לִכְה־הַמִּלְחָמָה וְאֵת | | 2 |
| פְּלִשְׁתִּים הַכְּנִי] עַפְעִמִים רַבּוֹת בְּשֵׁם קֹדֶשְׁכָּה וְגַם בִּיד מַלְכֵינוּ הוֹשַׁעְתָּנוּ עַפְעִמִים רַבּוֹת | | 3 |
| בַּעֲבוּר רַחֲמִיכָה וְלֹא כַמַּעֲשִׂינוּ אֲשֶׁר הִרְעָנוּ וְעֲלִילוֹת פִּשְׁעֵינוּ לִכְה־הַמִּלְחָמָה וּמֵאֲתַכָּה הַגְּבוּרָה | | 4 |
| ... וְלֹא לָנוּ ... | | 5 |
| Translation | | |
| 1 | For the battle is yours! With the might of your hand their corpses have been torn to pieces with no-one to bury them. Goliath from Gath, gallant giant, | |
| 2 | you delivered into the hands of David, your servant, for he trusted in your powerful name and not in sword or spear. For the battle is yours! | |
| 3 | The Philistines you humiliated many times for your holy name. By the hand of our kings, besides, you saved us many times | |
| 4 | thanks to your mercy, and not by our own deeds by which we did wrong, nor by our sinful actions. For the battle is yours! And it is from you that power comes, | |
| 5 | and it is not our... | |

37 Y. Yadin, *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1962) 243–246.

38 F.M. Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran* (New York: Anchor Books 1961) 124; D.O. Wenthe, “The Use of the Hebrew Scriptures in 1QM,” *DSD* 5/3 (1998) 291.

39 Evans, “David in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 188; Porzig, “David in the Judean Desert,” 28–29; Pomykala, “Images of David,” 44.

40 Parry – Tov – Clements, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader*, 258.

The quotation is the beginning of col. 11 (1Q33=1QM), in which the author teaches about the true source, from where strength and courage flow during the eschatological war. This source, as evidenced by the ending of 1.4 and the entire 1.5, is God Himself. Looking at the content of col. 11 more broadly, the author refers to four texts known from biblical literature. The first one, mentioned above, describes David's fight with Goliath (1 Sam 17), in particular 1 Sam 17:45–51. In lines 6–7, 1QM XI deals with the theme of Balaam's oracle from Num 24:17–19. In the first half of l. 10, he recalls the episode of crossing the Red Sea, or more precisely, the death of the Egyptians in the depths of the sea (Exod 14:26–28, 30–31). At the end of l. 11 and the beginning of l. 12, he alludes to Isa 31:8, which is part of a longer passage, i.e., 'Oracle against Assyria' (Isa 31:4–9).⁴¹ All these texts are used to confirm the author's thought – the image of God as the one who, through his might and strength, is able to free man from various threats posed by people and the superpower.

In the discussed fragment (col. 11, lines 1–5),⁴² God's might and strength are revealed in the life of young David, which is first emphasised at the end of l. 1, which describes Goliath, David's opponent. Goliath is *אִישׁ גִּבּוֹר חָיִל*; 'a gallant giant'. In this construction, there is the noun *גִּבּוֹר*, meaning 'a brave, courageous, hero',⁴³ followed by another noun *חָיִל*, one of its meanings being 'might', and referring to people, when it is combined with the noun *אִישׁ*, it points to a 'competent, brave' man.⁴⁴ Therefore, this construction highlights, as confirmed by the narrative of 1 Sam 17, the fact that David's opponent was a gallant warrior, well trained in the art of war.

The beginning of l. 2, which continues the thought of l. 1, clearly shows that this warrior failed: *הַסִּגְרָתָהּ בְּיַד דָּוִיד עֲבָדָהּ* – 'you delivered into the hands of David, your servant.' The justification for such a course of events begins already in this sentence through the noun used in its content: *עֶבֶד* – 'servant, slave', combined with the masculine singular second person pronominal suffix. The syntagma *עֲבָדָהּ* defines David's relationship with God. Such a term is used to define outstanding figures from the Old Testament history who enjoyed close relationships with God.⁴⁵

Further in l. 2, the author continues his thought explaining the main cause of Goliath's failure and David's victory: *כִּיָּא בִטַּח בְּשִׁמְכָהּ הַגָּדוֹל וְלֹא בַחֲרֵב וְחַנִּית* – 'for he trusted in your powerful name and not in sword or spear.' This justification is syntactically introduced

⁴¹ Parry – Tov – Clements, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader*, 258–261.

⁴² The phrase *כִּיָּא לַכָּה הַמְלִיחָהּ* at the beginning and end of the record creates an inclusion exposing the strength of David's trust in light of the fate of God's enemies persecuting His people.

⁴³ *DCH* II, 302–305.

⁴⁴ *DCH* III, 213–215.

⁴⁵ In such cases, we most frequently have the following construction: *עֶבֶד* + pronominal suffix, singular first person *עַבְדִּי* – 'my servant' or *עֶבֶד* + pronominal suffix, masculine singular third person *עַבְדּוֹ* – 'his servant'. This term was used to depict Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (cf. Exod 32:13; Deut 9:27), Caleb (Num 14:24), Moses (Exod 14:31; Num 12:7; Deut 34:5; Josh 1:2, 7; 9:24; 11:15), Joshua (Josh 24:29), Isaiah (Isa 20:3), David (1 Kgs 8:66; Isa 37:35; Ezek 34:23; 37:24f; Ps 78:70; 89:4, 21; 132:10; 144:10; 1 Chr 17:4, 7, 24; 2 Chr 6:15–17, 42), Elijah (2 Kgs 10:10), etc.: *DCH* VI, 215–225;

by the hebrew word כִּיא, here an example of a longer form found in the corpus of the Qumran manuscripts.⁴⁶ The particle is followed by the commonly used order of a verbal clause: בָּטַח בַּשֵּׁמֶךְ הַגָּדוֹל. The first place is occupied by the verb בָּטַח, morphologically in the perfect *qal* masculine singular third person, usually meaning ‘to trust, to rely on someone’,⁴⁷ defining David’s conduct towards God.⁴⁸ The verb is followed by an object, which is the noun שֵׁם with the masculine singular second person suffix and the adjective גָּדוֹל in *scriptio plena*. The object shows the reader the essence of the name of God. Trust in the great name of God led David to victory, even though he was doomed to defeat from the outset. Additionally, David’s attitude is emphasised by the further content of 1.2, containing an indirect complement, which is syntactically a negation: וְלֹא בַחֶרֶב וְהַנִּיט – ‘and not in sword or spear’. The author mentions the basic equipment of every warrior used in ancient wars. The first weapon is חֶרֶב, usually meaning ‘a sword’, ‘a short sword, dagger’ or ‘stonemason’s chisel’; the other noun is הַנִּיט – ‘a spear’.⁴⁹ The two nouns in l. 2 seem to have been introduced on purpose, because they strongly emphasise the action expressed by the verb בָּטַח – ‘to trust’.⁵⁰ This technique allowed the author of this part of 1QM to depict David as a man who totally trusted God, i.e., a righteous man, drawing his warlike strength from the divine source.

2.4. 11Q5 = 11QP^s^a

The Psalms Scroll from Cave 11 (11Q5 = 11QP^s^a) comprises 49 compositions, of which seven were preserved in separate fragments (A, B, C, D, E, F),⁵¹ while the rest in columns I–XXVIII. This manuscript is the best preserved and longest scroll containing the psalms. According to the official critical edition, it measures 4 m and 11.2 cm in length,⁵² and, taking into account the additional fragments, it could have measured – according to Dahmen – between 5.30 m and 5.60 m in length.⁵³ Palaeographic analyses have shown that the individual compositions reflect a transitional script between the early and late Herodian eras, which allows dating 11Q5 – following Sanders’ analysis – to the first half of the first century CE. These conclusions are shared by Dahmen, who narrows the palaeographic dating to the 30s–50s CE.⁵⁴

46 E.D. Reymond, *Qumran Hebrew: An Overview of Orthography, Phonology, and Morphology* (Atlanta, GA: SBL 2014) 7.

47 DCH II, 139–141.

48 In Psa 26:1 there is the only connection in the Bible between David (from the heading of the psalm) and trust in God + in the following verses a self-presentation by the author of the psalm.

49 DCH III, 271.

50 The same motif of rejecting confidence in weaponry is present in Ps 33:16–17 and 44:6–7.

51 Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll*, 18–49.

52 Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll*, 4.

53 U. Dahmen, *Psalmen- und Psalter-Rezeption im Frühjudentum: Rekonstruktion, Textbestand, Struktur und Pragmatik der Psalmenrolle 11QP^s aus Qumran* (STDJ 49; Leiden – Boston, MA: Brill 2003) 25.

54 Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll*, 6–9; Dahmen, *Psalmen- und Psalter*, 26.

In the penultimate, 27th column, there is a previously unknown work, which the editor titled 'David's Compositions'.⁵⁵ It should also be noted that 11Q5 is the only manuscript where this composition was preserved. It is located between 2 Sam 23:7 and Ps 140:1–5, occupying 10 out of the 15 lines of the entire column.

Table 4. 'David's Compositions' (11Q5 col. XXVII, 2–11)
and their English translation⁵⁶

| Hebrew text | | Line |
|--|--|------|
| ויהי דויד בן ישי חכם ואור כאור השמש'סופר | | 2 |
| ונבון ותמים בכול דרכיו לפני אל ואנשים ויתן | | 3 |
| לו יהוה רוח נבונה ואורה ויכתוב תהלים | | 4 |
| שלושת אלפים ושיש מאות ושיר לשורר לפני המזבח על עולת | | 5 |
| התמיד לכול יום ויום לכול ימי השנה ארבעה ושישים ושלוש | | 6 |
| מאות ולקורבן השבתות שנים וחמשים שיר ולקורבן ראשי | | 7 |
| החודשים ולכול ימי המועדות ולי ם הכפורים שלושים שיר | | 8 |
| ויהי כול השיר אשר דבר ששה ואבעים וארבע מאות ושיר | | 9 |
| לנגן על הפגועים ארבעה ויהי הכול ארבעת אלפים וחמשים | | 10 |
| כול אלה דבר בנבואה אשר נתן לו מלפני העליון | | 11 |
| Translation | | |
| 2 | There was David, son of Jesse, wise and enlightened like the light of the sun and (was) a scribe | |
| 3 | and a wise man and perfect in all his ways before God and men. The Lord gave | |
| 4 | him a discerning and enlightened spirit. He wrote psalms | |
| 5 | three thousand six hundred, and songs to sing before the altar over the perpetual burnt offering | |
| 6 | on every day for all the days of the year – three hundred and sixty-four; | |
| 7 | and for the sabbath offerings – fifty-two songs; and for the offerings of the new | |
| 8 | moon and for all the days of the appointed festivals and the Day of the Atonement – thirty songs. | |
| 9 | All the songs which he spoke were four hundred and forty-six, and songs | |
| 10 | to perform over the possessed – four. The total was four thousand and fifty. | |
| 11 | And all of these he spoke thanks to the prophecy that had been given to him from before the Most High. | |

⁵⁵ Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll*, 48, 91.

⁵⁶ Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll*, PL. XVI.

Syntactic and lexical analyses allow us to distinguish a two-part literary structure in 'David's Compositions'. The first part of this structure is formed by the content of the entire l. 2 and l. 3, excluding the last word of this line, i.e., the syntagma ויתן, which functions as a predicate in the next, new sentence. In this way, the first part contains the characteristics of David himself, his genealogy, and attributes.

The second part of 'David's Compositions' opens with the already mentioned syntagma ויתן in l. 3, consisting of all the following lines in col. XXVII. It is in this part that the author indicates the scope of David's literary output, stating the number of all his psalms and songs. In addition, this section can be divided into three subdivisions:

- (1) l. 3–4 – David is given a discerning and enlightened spirit,
- (2) l. 4–10 – enumeration of David's psalms and songs,
- (3) l. 11 – David possesses the gift of prophesy.⁵⁷

Considering the topic of this paper, the most essential information can be found in the entire l. 3, excluding its first word (ונבון) and last word (ויתן): ותמים בכול דרכיו לפני אל ואנשים: '[David was] perfect in all his ways before God and men.'

The adjective תמים usually means: 'perfect', 'complete', 'ideal', 'without blemish', or 'without fault'.⁵⁸ It has parallels to the canonical texts, especially to Ps 18:24, 26, 33 (2 Sam 22:24, 26, 33). As Sanders notes, it is highly likely that the expression in 2 Sam 22:33: ויתר תמים דרכי – 'he makes my path ideal,' influenced the creation – in this word order – of this expression in 'David's Compositions'.⁵⁹ A similar view was presented by Dahmen, who claims that this expression was formulated based on biblical parallels. On the one hand, in the Hebrew Bible, there are texts speaking about perfection towards God, e.g., Deut 32:4, but, on the other hand, the MT contains allusions to perfection before men, traces of which can be found in Ps 119:1 and Ezek 28:15.⁶⁰

In the structure of this expression, the most problematic thing seems to be the correct understanding of its first part: ותמים בכול דרכיו. Analysing this part of l. 3 leads us to pose the question: is it a biblical expression or a Qumran formulation? According to Dahmen, it is an example of a typical Qumran expression.⁶¹ A similar point of view is presented by Strawn, who takes as one of his main arguments the frequency of its use in texts classified as typical Qumran compositions.⁶² It is hard to disagree with the opinion of these exegetes, considering the context of the expression's application (תמים + דרך). Here, we should mention mainly the Community Rule (1QS II 2; III 9–10; IV 22; VIII 10; XVIII 21; IX 2.5.9), the War Scroll (1QM XIV 7; 4Q491 frag. 8–10 l. 5), and the Damascus Document

⁵⁷ For more on the division and structure of David's Compositions, see Biegas, "Division and Structure," 319–334.
⁵⁸ DCH VIII, 643–644.

⁵⁹ Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll*, 93.

⁶⁰ Dahmen, *Psalmen- und Psalter*, 254.

⁶¹ Dahmen, *Psalmen- und Psalter*, 254.

⁶² B.A. Strawn, "David as One of the Perfect of (the) Way: On the Provenience of David's Compositions (and 11QPsa as a Whole?)," *RevQ* 24/4 (2010) 615–622.

(MS A II,15–16; 4Q266 frag. 2 l. 4; frag 5 l. 19). In addition, this expression is attested in a number of other manuscripts belonging to the Essene works.⁶³ Using this expression with reference to David has the effect of presenting him as an idealised figure, which is also characteristic of the post-exilic biblical books. Even more light is shed by Ps 119:1, in which the author, speaking of people whose way is blameless and perfect (תמידי־דרך), calls them ‘happy’, and identifies them with those who walk in the law of the Lord (בתורת יהוה).⁶⁴ Therefore, having in mind Ps 119:1, containing identical words as l. 3 from ‘David’s Compositions’, we can risk stating that the author perceives David as a man who obeys the law of the Lord.⁶⁵ This interpretation is also confirmed by the general interpretative tendency after the Babylonian captivity, in which the figure of David became a standard against which all rulers were measured.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that בכול דרכיו לפני אל ואנשים may refer to the adjective תמים itself and may be associated with all the characteristics of David mentioned in דויד בן ישי חכם ואור כאור השמש וסופר ונבון (l. 2 and l. 3).

3. Early Jewish Writings

Traces of the image of David as a righteous man can be found in texts classified as early Jewish writings. By these, we mean *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, commonly known as Pseudo-Philo, *Antiquitates Judaicae* by Flavius Josephus, and *Apocalypse of Sophonias*.

3.1. Pseudo-Philo

Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum is the first source affirming the tradition about David. Pseudo-Philo is a pseudo-epigraphic work, originally written in Hebrew in the Palestinian territory, approximately in the time of Jesus. Later, the book was translated into Greek and from Greek into Latin. Its content can be described as a paraphrase of the biblical history from the creation of the world to the death of Saul in the battle of Aphek with the Philistines. The author combines biblical and halakhic materials by mixing speeches and prayers with genealogies and short stories.⁶⁶

In chapter 62 of *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*,⁶⁷ the author, continuing the retelling of events after David’s fight with Goliath, an obvious reference to 1 Sam 17, shows Saul’s

⁶³ Strawn, “David as One of the Perfect of (the) Way,” 619–620.

⁶⁴ S. Łach, *Księga Psalmów. Wstęp – Przekład z oryginału – komentarz – ekskursy* (PŚST 7/2; Poznań: Pallottinum 1990) 506–507.

⁶⁵ The Biblical places where a human way is blameless: Ezek 28:15; Ps 101:2, 6; Prov 11:20; 13:6; cf. Job 4:6.

⁶⁶ D.J. Harrington (ed.), *Pseudo-Philo* (OTP 2; New York: Doubleday 1985) 297–377; J. Dvořáček, *The Son of David in Matthew’s Gospel in the Light of the Solomon as Exorcist Tradition* (WUNT 2/415; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2016) 39.

⁶⁷ J. Zsengellér, “David in the *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*. Reshaping the Contemporary Cultural Memory,” *Figures Who Shape Scriptures, Scriptures that Shape Figures: Essays in Honour of Benjamin G. Wright III* (eds. G.G. Xeravits – G.S. Goering) (DCLS 40; Berlin – Boston, MA: De Gruyter 2018) 56–70.

intensifying dislike of David, which is manifested in his desire to kill Jesse's son. In the following verses, the author introduces a dialogue that took place between David and Jonathan. In this dialogue, in David's speech, we read:

Et nunc timeo ne interficiat me, ne perdat pro me vitam suam. Sanguinem enim iustum numquam effudi, et quare anima mea persecutionem patitur? Minimus enim inter fratres meos, fui pascens oves, et quare morte periclitor? Iustus enim sum et iniquitatem non habeo, et quare pater tuus odit me? Sed iustitia patris mei adiuvat me, ut in manus patris tui non incidam? Et cum sim iuuenis et mollis dierum, in vanum Saul invidet mihi.⁶⁸

Now I fear that he will kill me and on my account lose his own life. For he will never escape the shedding of innocent blood. Why is my soul pursued? For I, the youngest among my brothers, was tending sheep, and why should I be in danger of death? For I am just and have no wickedness, and why does your father hate me? But the righteousness of my father helps me that I not fall into the hands of your father. Since I am young and tender of age, Saul envies me for no reason (62, 5).⁶⁹

Speaking through David about the reason for Saul's envy, the author indicates that the main reason is the moral condition of Jesse's son. David is a righteous man, and there is no injustice in him. This hero is not corrupted by the court environment or through warfare, because – as v. 5 says – until now, being the youngest among his brothers, he has been pasturing his father's flock. The very information that David is the least among his brothers, and that he has tended the flock, refers to the motif and vocabulary present at the beginning of the Hebrew version of Ps 151, found in the last column of 11Q5. The words 'Iustus enim sum et iniquitatem non habeo, et quare pater tuus odit me?' are a paraphrase of David's words to Jonathan in 1 Sam 20:1.

3.2. Flavius Josephus

A significant text presenting David as a righteous man can be found in Josephus' *Antiquitates Judaicae*. In this quite large work, completed in 79–94 CE, the Jewish historian Josephus (37–100 CE) described in detail the historical events of the Jewish nation from its beginnings to the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans, directing his work both to gentiles and Hellenised Jews. Using the available sources, Josephus analysed them thoroughly in order to depict the main Jewish protagonists and religious groups in the light of Greek ideals.

In two chapters of Book 7, Josephus characterises David as a righteous man. The first mention of this trait of David appears in chapter 7, which contains a description of David's love for Bathsheba, who became pregnant, the death of Uriah, her husband, the parable of Nathan, the death of Bathsheba's child and the birth of Solomon. At the end of David's

⁶⁸ H. Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum with Latin Text and English Translation* (AGJU 31; Leiden: Brill 1996) 84.

⁶⁹ Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, 190.

conversation with Nathan, and before the description of the death of Bathsheba's first child, Josephus includes the following text:

Ταραχθέντος δ' ἐπὶ τούτοις τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ συσχεθέντος ἱκανῶς καὶ μετὰ δακρύων καὶ λύπης ἀσεβῆσαι λέγοντος, ἦν γὰρ ὁμολογουμένως θεοσεβὴς καὶ μηδὲν ἁμαρτῶν ὅλως περὶ τὸν βίον ἢ τὰ περὶ τὴν Οὐρίαν γυναῖκα, ὥσπερ ὁ θεὸς καὶ διαλλάττεται φυλάττειν αὐτῷ.⁷⁰

When the King was troubled at these messages, and sufficiently confounded, and said with tears and sorrow, that he lived ungodly: (for he was without controversy a pious man, and guilty of no sin at all in his whole life, excepting those in the matter of Uriah) God had compassion on him, and was reconciled to him (*Ant.* 7, 153).⁷¹

Another image of David in this light is found in chapter 15, which relates the time before his death. David gives admonitions to his son, Solomon: on how to keep the law and how to deal with his enemies and friends. Then, Josephus depicts David's death, briefly characterises his personality, gives the details of his funeral, and the later fate of his sepulchre. Just after the narrative about the king's death, he provides an account of David's character:

Νοῦσαι τε καὶ συνιδεῖν καὶ περὶ τῶν μελλόντων καὶ τῆς τῶν ἐνεστηκότων οἰκονομίας ἱκαῶτατος, σῶφρων ἐπιεικὴς χρηστὸς πρὸς τοὺς ἐνσυμφοραῖς ὑπάρχοντας δίκαιος φίλάνθρωπος, ἃ μόνοις δικαιοτάτα βασιλεῦσιν εἶναι προσήκε, μηδὲν ὅλως παρὰ τοσούτου μέγεθος ἐξουσίας ἁμαρτῶν ἢ τὸ περὶ τὴν Οὐρίαν γυναῖκα.⁷²

He was also of very great abilities in understanding, and apprehension of present and future circumstances, when he was to manage any affairs. He was prudent, and moderate, and kind to such as were under any calamities: he was righteous, and human. Which are good qualities peculiarly fit for Kings: nor was he guilty of any offence in the exercise of so great an authority, but in the business of the wife of Uriah (*Ant.* 7, 391).⁷³

3.3. *Apocalypse of Zephaniah (Apocalypse of Sophonias)*

The *Apocalypse of Sophonias* is a work attributed to the prophet Zephaniah. Its text was fragmentarily preserved in the Coptic language. It is an example of the early stage of apocalypticism, since it is dated between the first century BCE and the first century CE. According to various authors of studies dedicated to this work, there are certain similarities, in terms of its form and content, to the Ethiopian *Book of Enoch* (1 *En.*), the Slavic *Book of Enoch* (2 *En.*), the Greek *Apocalypse of Baruch* (3 *Bar.*), and the *Testament of Levi*.

The *Apocalypse of Sophonias* contains visions that take place during the heavenly journey which the visionary undertakes under the guidance of an angel. The structure of the text,

⁷⁰ <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0526.tlg001.perseus-grc1:7.7.3> [access: 2.01.2026].

⁷¹ L. Feldman, "Josephus' Portrait of David," *HUCA* 60 (1989) 159.

⁷² <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0526.tlg001.perseus-grc1:7.15.2> [access: 2.01.2026].

⁷³ Feldman, "Josephus' Portrait of David," 138–139, 148–151.

similarly to other compositions containing the motif of an extra-terrestrial journey, is based on short episodes with frequent sudden changes of the topic or place of events.⁷⁴

During his journey, the prophet experiences visions, staying in six different places, then he crosses a river and enters the land where the six heroes of the Old Testament are staying. There, he experiences four more visions, each accompanied by the sound of a trumpet.⁷⁵ In chapter 9, the author shows a great angel blowing a golden trumpet. Then he notes the angel's words spoken to the prophet, assuring him that he triumphed over the accuser and escaped from the abyss and Hades, and that his name is written in the Book of the Living. Then he mentions all the righteous men with whom the angel conversed: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Enoch, Elijah, and David. These outstanding heroes of the Old Testament were inscribed in the Book of the Living, and are participating in the angelic liturgy for the sake of their righteousness, being at the same time models encouraging other people to strive for communion with the six righteous men. Moreover, the author is convinced that the souls of the patriarchs and righteous men, who were brought out of Hades, can intercede for the souls of sinners.⁷⁶

Conclusion

Based on the above analysis of the presentation of David's righteousness in three interrelated groups of Jewish compositions, the following conclusions can be drawn. The image of David as a righteous man is presented in four Qumran manuscripts. The first textual witness showing David as a righteous man is 4QMMT, or more precisely, 4Q398, where the author emphasises these features of David that were worth imitating. The second Qumran manuscript where we can find David presented in this light is the Damascus Document. Its author, justifying David's polygamy, expressly states that all his deeds were righteous, except the killing of Uriah. In 1Q33, where the author shows God as the only source of might and strength in the eschatological war, David and his fair attitude serve as one of the four examples, taken from biblical literature, in which God's might and strength were revealed. Here the author recalls an episode known from 1 Sam 17, i.e., the fight of David with Goliath. David, who was righteous trusting in the holy name of God, won the battle that was doomed to end in his defeat. The next manuscript from Qumran, containing the information about David as a righteous man, is the Psalms Scroll from Cave 11 – 11Q5. In col. 27 (l. 2–11), containing the text of 'David's Compositions'. It consists of two parts. The first one (l. 2–3), including David's characteristics, his genealogy and attributes, contains the expression *תמים בכל דרכיו*, which points to the perfection, blamelessness and

74 A. Kuśmirek, "Apokalipsa Sofoniasza," *Pisma apokaliptyczne i testamenty* (ed. M. Parchem) (Apokryfy Starego Testamentu 2; Kraków: Enigma Press 2010) 141–142.

75 Kuśmirek, "Apokalipsa Sofoniasza," 144.

76 Kuśmirek, "Apokalipsa Sofoniasza," 147–148.

ideal life of David. In fact, these features are characteristic of a man who can be described as righteous.

Traces of David's image as a righteous man are also present in texts that create a group of early Jewish writings: *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, known as Pseudo-Philo, *Antiquitates Judaicae* by Flavius Josephus, and *Apocalypse of Sophonias*. In chapter 62 of *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, there is a text dealing with the subject of Saul's dislike for David, which is manifested in his attempt to kill Jesse's son, the main reason for such an action being the moral condition of David, who considers himself a righteous man. In Book Seven of *Antiquitates Judaicae*, Flavius Josephus clearly presents David as a righteous man. First, he does so in the context of David's conversation with Nathan after the death of Bathsheba's first child. Then, David's righteousness is shown by the author in a synthetic characterisation of his personality, immediately after the description of his death and funeral.

The author of the text entitled *Apocalypse of Sophonias*, describing the prophet's extra-terrestrial journey in chapter 9, lists righteous men whose names were written in the Book of the Living for their righteousness. These righteous men are: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Enoch, Elijah, and David.

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