

Was King David an Exorcist?

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ABSTRACT: This article analyses the image of David as an exorcist. The choice of the research topic has been inspired by the fact that in the literature, more specifically, in an article by Kenneth E. Pomykala, this issue is presented in a very general way, by indicating only texts where such an image of David can be found, without entering into their deeper interpretations. Also, no scientific article covering this topic in detail has been published to date. The paper is divided into three parts. The first part presents biblical texts in which – as Pomykala has proven – one can talk about this characteristic of David. In the second part, fragments of two Qumran manuscripts, 11Q5 and 11Q11, are analysed. Finally, an analysis of the literature of early Jewish writings, portraying David as an exorcist, is provided.

KEYWORDS: David, Exorcist, 11Q5, David's Compositions, 11Q11, Early Jewish writings

David is one of the most important biblical heroes extensively portrayed in the Old Testament. His formative years, rise to the throne and the establishment of a great dynasty are relayed by the Deuteronomist (1 and 2 Samuel, 1 Kings) and the Chronicler (1 Chronicles). Moreover, David's name has been associated with a number of Psalms, such as Ps 3–41; 51–70; 72; 138–145; and his figure is also found in prophetic literature (Isa 11:1; 16:5; Jer 23:5; Ezra 37:24–25; Amos 9:11), sapiential literature (Sir 47:10), Qumran manuscripts as well as the writings of Philo and Josephus.

A number of exegetes have emphasised the king's multifaceted personality; in their studies, based on source literature – both biblical and non-biblical materials – they show how David has been perceived.¹ Special attention should be drawn to the works of Kenneth

¹ Out of the rich literature on this topic, the following works should be mentioned: A.G. Auld – C.Y.S. Ho, "The Making of David and Goliath," *JSOT* (1992) 19–39; M. Biegas, "Postać Dawida w hebrajskiej wersji Psalmu 151 (11Q5)," *BibAn* 8/1 (2018) 5–28; W.H. Brownlee, "The Significance of David's Compositions," *RevQ* 20 (1966) 569–574; A. Campbell, "From Philistine to Throne (1 Sam 16:14–18:16)," *ABR* (1986) 35–41; C. Claude, "David à Qumrân," *Figures de David à travers la Bible* (eds. L. Desrousseaux – J. Vermeylen) (LD 177; Paris: Cerf 1999) 315–343; W.L. Coates, "A Study of David, the Thoroughly Human Man Who Genuinely Loved God," *RevExp* 99/2 (2002) 237–254; F.M. Cross, "David, Orpheus, and Psalm 151:3–4," *BASOR* 231 (1978) 69–71; M. Daly-Denton, "David the Psalmist, Inspired Prophet: Jewish Antecedents of a New Testament Datum," *ABR* 52 (2004) 32–47; C.A. Evans, "David in the Dead Sea Scrolls," *The Scrolls and the Scriptures. Qumran Fifty Years After* (eds. S.E. Porter – C.A. Evans) (JSPSup 26; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1997) 183–197; N. Fernandez-Marcos, "David the Adolescent: On Psalm 151," *The Old Greek Psalter. Studies in Honour of Albert Pietersma* (eds. R.J.V. Hiebert – C.E. Cox – P.J. Gentry) (JSPSup 332; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 2001) 205–217; P. Finney, "Orpheus-David: A Connection

E. Pomykala, who in one of his papers² has synthetically shown a portrait of this hero in biblical literature and its later interpretations originating in the Judaism of the Second Temple.³ As a result, he has presented 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,” “ideal ruler and king,” “psalmist,” “prophet,” “founder of the Jerusalem cult,” “a man of piety and righteousness” and David as “an exorcist.”⁴

This article aims to analyse the image of David as an exorcist. The choice of this research topic results from the fact that Pomykala has presented this issue in a very general way,⁵ indicating only texts where such an image of David can be found, without entering into their deeper interpretations. Also, no scientific article has been published to date covering this topic in detail. Therefore, the next logical step would be to undertake such a task.

The paper will be divided into three parts. The first part will present biblical texts where – as Pomykala has proven – one can talk about such a characteristic of David. In the second part, fragments of two Qumran manuscripts, 11Q5 and 11Q11, will be

in Iconography between Greco-Roman Judaism and Early Christianity?,” *JJA* 5 (1978) 6–15; J.A. Fitzmyer, “David, ‘Being Therefore a Prophet...’ (Acts 2:30),” *CBQ* 34 (1972) 332–339; P.W. Flint, “The Prophet David at Qumran,” *Biblical Interpretation at Qumran* (ed. M. Henze) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2005) 158–167; M. Kleer, *Der liebliche Sänger der Psalmen Israels. Untersuchungen zu David als Dichter und Beter der Psalmen* (BBB 108; Amsterdam: Philo 1996); J. Kugel, “David the Prophet,” *Poetry and Prophecy. The Beginnings of a Literary Tradition* (eds. R. Brooks – J.J. Collins) (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1990) 45–55; M. Marttila, “David in the Wisdom of Ben Sira,” *SJOT* 25 (2011) 29–48; J.L. Mays, “The David of the Psalms,” *Int* 40/2 (1986) 143–155; K.E. Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition in Early Judaism. Its History and Significance for Messianism* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars 1995); K.E. Pomykala, “Images of David in Early Judaism,” *Of Scribes and Sages. Early Jewish Interpretation and Transmission of Scripture* (ed. C.A. Evans) (JSPSup 50; London: Clark 2004) I, 33–46; J.J. Pudelko, “Dawid jako organizator kultu w Pochwale Ojców (Syr 47,8–10),” *BPTH* 10 (2017) 263–283; E. Puech, “Les Psaumes davidiques du rituel d’exorcisme (11Q11),” *Sapiential, Liturgical and Poetical Texts from Qumran. Proceedings of the Third Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies, Oslo 1998* (eds. D. Falk – F. García Martínez – E. Schuller) (STDJ 35; Leiden: Brill 2000) 160–181; H. Ramantwana, “David of the Psalters: MT Psalter, LXX Psalter and 11QPsa Psalter,” *OTE* 24 (2011) 431–463; J. Randall Short, *The Surprising Election and Confirmation of King David* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2010); R. Rendtorff, “The Psalms of David: David in the Psalms,” *The Book of Psalms. Composition and Reception* (eds. P.W. Flint et al.) (VTSup 99; Leiden: Brill 2005) 53–65; B. Sargent, *David Being a Prophet. The Contingency of Scripture upon History in the New Testament* (BZNW 207; Berlin: De Gruyter 2014); W.M. Schniedewind, “The Davidic Dynasty and Biblical Interpretation in Qumran Literature,” *The Dead Sea Scrolls Fifty Years after Their Discovery. Proceedings of the Jerusalem Congress, July 20–25, 1997* (eds. L. Schiffman – E. Tov – J. Vanderkam) (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society 2000) 82–91; M. Szmajdziński, “Orfeusz – Dawid – Jezus (Psalm 151),” *Orfizem i jego recepcja w literaturze, sztuce i filozofii* (ed. K. Kołakowska) (Kraków: Homini 2011) 123–130; A.C. Witt, “David, the Ruler of the Sons of His Covenant (וְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּבִן בְּרִיתוֹ): The Expansion of Psalm 151 in 11qPsa,” *JESOT* 3 (2014) 77–97; G. Xeravits, “The Reception of the Figure of David in Late Antique Synagogue Art,” *Figures who Shape Scriptures, Scriptures that Shape Figures. Essays in Honour of Benjamin G. Wright III* (eds. G. Xeravits – G.S. Goering) (Boston, MA: De Gruyter 2018) 71–90.

2 Pomykala, “Images of David,” 33–46.

3 Early Judaism and Second Temple Judaism are usually defined as the era spanning from 400 BC to 100 AD.

4 Pomykala, “Images of David,” 33–46.

5 In his article, Pomykala (“Images of David,” 45) dedicated only several sentences to this topic.

analysed. Finally, the literature of early Jewish writings, portraying David as an exorcist will be examined.

1. Biblical Texts

One of the texts portraying David in this specific way is 1 Sam 16:14–23,⁶ the key verse being 23. This fragment is part of a longer passage depicting the beginning of David's stay at Saul's court.⁷ The narration of 1 Sam 16:14–23 focuses on Saul, from whom – after David's anointment – the “spirit of YHWH” (רוח יהוה) was withdrawn, and who was tormented by an “evil spirit” (רוח רעה). The activity of this evil spirit in Saul's life is described using the verb בעת, meaning “to be terrified by something” (1 Sam 16:14; Isa 21:4; 2 Sam 22:5; Ps 18:5), “to terrify somebody” (Job 7:14; 9:34; 13:11, 21, etc.) and “be seized with sudden terror” (Dan 8:17; 1 Chr 21:30; Esth 7:6).⁸ Such a condition of the ruler results in the intervention of his servants, who urge him to bring a skilled man who plays well in order to ease his suffering when the evil spirit sent by God comes upon the king (1 Sam 16:16). In this conversation, 1 Sam 16:18, some servant mentions David, son of Jesse the Bethlehemite. He describes David using a few expressions: he is a skilled player (ידע נגן), a brave man and strong warrior (גבור חיל), a man of war (איש מלחמה), he speaks wisely (נבון דבר), is a good-looking man (איש תאר), enjoying the support of God (יהוה עמו).⁹ The text of 1 Sam 16:18 ends with the servant's words addressed to Saul: יהוה עמו – “Yahweh is with him.” This short sentence not only serves as a summary but also explains what was previously said about David. Consequently, one may venture to say that his musical skills, strength, courage, wisdom and appearance resulted from God's presence and grace in him. In addition, this phrase becomes a kind of leitmotif in the story of Saul and David.¹⁰

In the next part of the narrative (mainly 1 Sam 16:23), this feature of David is centred on ידע נגן – “he can play.” The Hebrew verb נגן usually means “to play a stringed instrument” (1 Sam 16:18; 18:10; 19:9; 2 Kgs 3:15; Isa 23:16; 38:20; Ps 33:3, etc.); in the Bible,

⁶ Pomykala (“Images of David,” 45) notes that: “The seed bed for the image of David as exorcist is the story in 1 Sam. 16.14–23, where David is recruited to play the lyre to relieve Saul from the evil spirit that tormented him”; B.J.M. Johnson, “David Then and Now: Double-Voiced Discourse in 1 Samuel 16.14–23,” *JSOT* 38/2 (2013) 201–215.

⁷ Johnson, “David Then and Now,” 201; P.K. McCarter, “The Apology of David,” *JBL* 99/4 (1980) 489–504.

⁸ *DCH* II, 244; O. Sergi, „Saul, David und die Entstehung der Monarchie in Israel. Neubewertung des historischen und literarischen Kontexts von 1Sam 9–2Sam 5,” *David in the Desert. Tradition and Redaction in the “History of David's Rise”* (eds. H. Bezzel – R.G. Kratz) (BZAW 514; Berlin – Boston, MA: De Gruyter 2021) 35–63.

⁹ K. Bodner (ed.), *1 Samuel. A Narrative Commentary* (Hebrew Bible Monographs 19; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press 2009) 172–173; A. Campbell (ed.), *1 Samuel* (FOTL 7; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2003) 176; R.W. Klein, *1 Samuel* (WBC 10; Waco, TX: Word Books 1983) 166; D.T. Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2007) 429–430.

¹⁰ P.K. McCarter, *1 Samuel. A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary* (AB 8; Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1980) 281; Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 430; Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 167–191.

the participle form of this verb (Qal – נָגַיִם) defines a musician who can play a stringed instrument (Ps 68:26).¹¹ In this pericope found at the end of chapter 16, the Deuteronomist indicates the instrument David played. We can read in v. 23 that when the evil spirit came upon Saul, David took an instrument defined as כִּנּוֹר. The analysis of various lexicographic studies allows a conclusion that this root designates one of the stringed instruments (chordophones) – lyre or harp (Gen 4:21; 31:27; 1 Sam 10:5; 16:16, 23; 2 Sam 6:5; 1 Kgs 10:12; Ezra 26:13; Ps 33:2; 43:4; 49:5; 57:9; 71:22; 81:3; 92:4, etc.).¹² In the past, some exegetes thought that the Hebrew כִּנּוֹר should be rendered as “harp.” However, this is not entirely consistent with the archaeological discoveries as the harp was known in Ur and Egypt, but no traces of this instrument were found in Syria and Palestine.¹³ Furthermore, the kinnor was used in various spheres of life of ancient Palestine, which is attested by biblical texts in which כִּנּוֹר occurred in a double context: as an instrument accompanying drinking bouts (Isa 5:12; Job 21:12) or an instrument used for cultic purposes, which is demonstrated by a considerably larger number of biblical verses in the OT (1 Chr 15:16; 25:1; 1 Macc 4:54; Ps 32:2; 43:4; 149:3).¹⁴

The text of 1 Sam 16:23 unambiguously shows that through his musical talent, manifested by his skill to play the kinnor, David helped to improve the health of Saul who was tormented by an evil spirit. It should be noted that in antiquity there was a belief that music had a calming, soothing or stimulating effect. This is why music was used to encourage warriors to fight against enemies, but also to relieve anxiety or even agitation. According to ancient common beliefs, music also had the power to ward off evil spirits. No wonder the servants advised the king to employ a musician at his court.¹⁵ The question that arises is whether the author, speaking of the soothing effect of David’s music on the tormented Saul, meant an apotropaic action, a kind of exorcism, or maybe a therapy aimed at improving the mood of the sick ruler. Was Saul – after the spirit of God left him and the evil spirit came over him – possessed or does the verse describe the king’s undefined depressive states, or certain mental disorders? In order to answer these questions, one should look at the figure of Saul in the First Book of Samuel, where the ruler is the leading protagonist of two large collections of traditions that make up the body of the said book,¹⁶ and at his behaviour, manifesting the temperament, emotions and psyche of the protagonist. This will allow us to form an opinion: either Saul was possessed – so David’s music would have

¹¹ DCHV, 607.

¹² DCHV, 435; HALOT, 484; FV. Reiterer, “Instrumenty muzyczne,” NLB, 272.

¹³ J. Łach, *Księgi Samuela. Wstęp – Przekład z oryginału – Komentarz – Ekskursy* (PŚST 4/1; Poznań: Pallottinum 1973) 208.

¹⁴ HALOT, 484; Reiterer, “Instrumenty muzyczne,” 273; G. Kubies, “Instrumenty muzyczne w Księdze Amosa,” BibAn 5/1 (2015) 81–94.

¹⁵ Łach, *Księgi Samuela*, 207.

¹⁶ The first tradition concerns the establishment of monarchy in Israel and is shown in 1 Sam 7:2–12:25; the other tradition speaks of the figure of Saul in the block of 1 Sam 16:1 – 2 Sam 5:5, describing David’s path to the throne.

an exorcistic effect, or he suffered from unspecified mental disorders – then playing an instrument would be a kind of psychological therapy.

The fundamental cause of Saul's torments should be sought in 1 Sam 10, containing the motif of seeking a king for Israel, confirmed by the prophet Samuel himself, by the local authorities and most importantly, by God; the sign of being chosen for the role was that the spirit of God came upon the anointed one (1 Sam 10:6, 10). The gift of the spirit was reserved for judges (Judg 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14), kings (1 Sam 10:6, 10; 16:13–14, etc.) and prophets. It meant God's support for the person who received it so that they would successfully fulfil the mission that was entrusted to them.¹⁷ Saul's loss of his gift would lead – at the later stage of his life – to a process of Israel's internal destabilization.

The first text showing Saul's irrational behaviour is a pericope about Saul's conflict with the Philistines, or more precisely, the fragment of 1 Sam 14:24–46, in which the king's son Jonathan consciously disregards his father's order to refrain from eating any food; violation of this order would result in an immediate death penalty, which Saul demands upon learning of any violation of the oath (1 Sam 14:38–39). In the context of this dramatic situation, both Saul and his son demonstrate an uncompromising manly attitude that borders on madness. Jonathan neither justifies himself nor pleads for mercy; Saul consistently – like a madman – wants to take his son's life to raise the morale of the army. As some exegetes claim, in the light of the passages of 1 Sam that are unfavourable to Saul, this episode has been interpreted as a manifestation of irrational and emotional madness, testifying to the king's inability to exercise power.¹⁸

Another example of Saul's mental problems can be found in two texts that share a similar historical context. Let us invoke 1 Sam 13:7–17 and 15:1–35, containing the motif of the king's military actions against the Philistines and the Amalekites, ending with the rejection of Saul by God.¹⁹ In both texts, Saul strives to fulfil his mission, bringing it to a successful end, which guaranteed God's favour and the applause of the nation. Meanwhile, unexpectedly, the king is condemned by Samuel for his disobedience and unfaithfulness to God. In both cases, Saul hears that the time of his reign will be shortened because God has chosen a better successor to the throne (1 Sam 13:13–14; 15:10, 22–23, 26, 28–29). The introduction of this motif to the narrative and its development, when Saul is confronted with David, is the last stage of Saul's tragic life, ending with his suicidal death after his defeat in the battle with the Philistines (1 Sam 31:1–13). It is in this part of the Books of Samuel, i.e. in the block of passages describing David's path to the throne (1 Sam 16:1 – 2 Sam 5:5), that Saul's unbalanced behaviour, resembling a mental disease or depression, turns into an aggressive form of paranoia.

Saul's unrestrained aggression is attested to in 1 Sam 16:2 developing the theme of Samuel's mission inspired by God and aimed at anointing a new king from among the sons of

¹⁷ D. Dziadosz, "Szaleństwo Saula, obłąd, opętanie czy polityczna intryga?," *Ethos* 28/2 (2015) 36–37.

¹⁸ Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 134–165; Dziadosz, "Szaleństwo Saula," 38–39.

¹⁹ N. Lohfink, "הָרֵם," *TDOT* V, 180–199; G. Robinson, *Let Us Be Like the Nations. A Commentary on the Books of 1 and 2 Samuel* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1993) 73–93.

Jesse, the Bethlehemite.²⁰ Saul's anger at Samuel stemmed from the prophet's earlier announcements that son of Kish would be deprived of royal power, which is expressed in 1 Sam 16:2 by וְשָׁמַע שָׂאוּל וְהָרַגְנִי – "Saul will hear of it and will kill me." This statement emphasises the fear of dethronement which haunted Saul. This fear also becomes a recurring theme in the following parts of the narrative in the First Book of Samuel.

Another example of Saul's aggression associated with jealousy and suspicion is the episodes related to David. First, it is necessary to mention the king's envious reaction after David's victorious fight with Goliath, depicted in 1 Sam 18:6–16. Here there are three indications of Saul's inner turmoil. Firstly, he is aggressively jealous of David who is praised by the women of Israel (vv. 8–9), which the MT expresses as וַיַּחַר לְשָׂאוּל מְאֹד – "Saul was very angry" and וַיִּהְיֶה שָׂאוּל עֹון אֶת־דָּוִד – "Saul looked at David suspiciously." These sentences emphasise Saul's anger and aggression, which were aroused and disproportionately exaggerated, and resulted from his paranoid jealousy of the position of a national hero. Secondly, the king's psychological imbalance seems to be evidenced by the message of vv. 10–11, according to which, after an evil spirit rushed upon the king, he fell into a frenzy, as shown by the syntagm וַיִּתְּנָבָא. As a consequence, he lost control of his emotions and, intending to kill David who was playing the kinnor, threw twice a weapon at him (v. 10). The weapon is defined by the Hebrew term הַנִּיט – "a spear."²¹ It can be said that this behaviour is psychologically understandable when, in a moment of depression, Saul wants to get rid of his rival.²² Thirdly, certain emotional disorders are emphasised in v. 12 and v. 15, where the Deuteronomist informs the reader about Saul's panic attack evoked by David's military success and – as the author himself evaluates it – the presence of God in his life. In these verses, his fear is expressed by two synonymous Hebrew verbs: the first one (v. 12) is יָרָא, which usually has the general meaning "to live in fear of someone" or "be scared," referring to God (cf. Gen 22:12; Exod 18:21, etc.) and to people (cf. Gen 32:12; Dan 1:10),²³ and the other verb גֹּר whose semantic field includes the meaning "to fear."²⁴

The later story of Saul is depicted in passages that provide evidence strengthening the hypothesis about the monarch's mental disorders. These are three dialogues between the king and his son Jonathan (1 Sam 19:1–7; 20:24–34) and David (1 Sam 24:1–23; 26:1–25). In all of these cases – according to the exegetes – the king exhibited a scale of extreme and uncontrolled reactions as well as changes of mood and attitude: from aggression, anger and attacks to humiliation, regret and reconciliation.²⁵

20 Bodner, *1 Samuel*, 169–170; Campbell, *1 Samuel*, 161–165; M.J. Evans, *1 and 2 Samuel* (NIBCOT 6; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson 2000) 80; P.K. McCarter, *1 Samuel. A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary* (AB 9; Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1980) 277; W. Dietrich, *Samuel. 1 Sam 13–26* (BKAT 8/2; Göttingen: Neukirchener Theologie 2015) 238–245.

21 DCH III, 271.

22 Łach, *Księgi Samuela*, 222.

23 DCH IV, 276–281.

24 DCH II, 336–337.

25 Dziadosz, "Szaleństwo Saula," 45–46.

Another example of Saul's mental and spiritual disorders that cause him to lose touch with the surrounding reality is the texts of 1 Sam 21:2–10 and 22:6–23. The first one recounts David's stay at Nob. Forced to flee, he had to leave the territories under Saul's reign. David went to the sanctuary at Nob, where the tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant were kept, and where the High Priest Ahimelech resided. The priest fed David and his companions with consecrated loaves of bread.²⁶ The consequences of these events are given in the other text – 1 Sam 22:6–23, describing Saul's mad decision to have all the priests murdered – by Doeg – in the sanctuary at Nob.²⁷ The paranoid and ruthless nature of this decision is also emphasised by the large number of murdered priests. According to the MT, Saul ordered to kill *שְׁמֹנִים וְחֲמִשָּׁה אִישׁ נֹשֵׂא אֶפֶוד בַּד* – “eighty-five men who wore the line ephod.” According to the LXX, the number of killed priests was even larger – as the Greek text says – *τριακκοσίους καὶ πέντε ἄνδρας* – “three hundred and five men.” Josephus mentions an even higher number, but in a slightly differing context: “he [Saul] ordered Doeg the Syrian to kill them. Accordingly, he took to his assistance such wicked men as were like himself, and slew Ahimelech and his family: who were in all three hundred and eighty-five.”²⁸ In 1 Sam 22:19, the next acts of Saul's paranoid anger are described. He extends his rage to the whole town of Nob killing all people and animals. This bloody massacre is highlighted in the entire verse 19 – the Deuteronomist notes one by one the groups put to the sword by the king: *אִישׁ* “men,” *אִשָּׁה* “women,” *עוֹלָל* “children,” *יוֹנֵק* “infants,” *נֹשֶׂר* “oxen,” *חֲמֹר* “donkeys” and *שֶׂה* “sheep.” The only escapee was a priest – Abiathar – one of Ahimelech's sons.

Saul's paranoid fear and deep depression were undoubtedly related to the unstable political situation of the country resulting from its wars with the Philistines and conflicts with the prophet Samuel and with David. They caused the king to feel alone and hopeless, which is evidenced by the ending of the First Book of Samuel: the narrative about the king's visit to the necromancer at En-Dor (1 Sam 28:3–25). This pericope shows the tragic situation of the king of Israel with regard to the campaign of the Philistines who were mustered against Israel. This is why Saul decides to consult the necromancer at En-Dor (vv. 3–11), at the foot of Mount Tabor. The emotionally unstable king breaks the prohibition against contact with the dead he himself has established (cf. 1 Sam 28:3) and orders the witch to conjure up the spirit of the dead Samuel (vv. 8–14). He talks to Samuel about his tragic situation (vv. 15–19) influenced by the Philistines who were waging on him (v. 15a) and about having been abandoned by God who no longer answers him either by prophets or by dreams (v. 15b),²⁹ which evidently emphasises Saul's spiritual and religious emptiness, intensifying his psychological and personal dilemmas. This dialogue – according to v. 15b – is

26 Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 528–534; Robinson, *A Commentary on the Books of 1 and 2 Samuel*, 114–117.

27 Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 541–549; Robinson, *A Commentary on the Books of 1 and 2 Samuel*, 120–123.

28 Josephus, *Ant.* VI, 12, 6; Łach, *Księgi Samuela*, 247–248.

29 Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 615–631; Robinson, *A Commentary on the Books of 1 and 2 Samuel*, 141–144.

the king's attempt to obtain advice that will ensure his victory in the inevitable war against the Philistines. The situation presented by Saul does not change Samuel's attitude, which cannot differ from God's judgement. Saul's mistake with the Amalekites brings on a punishment that will affect not only the king himself but also the entire royal family (which also rules out the establishment of a permanent dynasty), the army and even the nation of Israel as a whole (1 Sam 28:18–19). This negative experience – affecting the king's psyche – causes him to break down and despair as described in 1 Sam 28:20, where the Deuteronomist indicates that the king fell full length on the ground.

Finally, Saul's mental disorder is evidenced in the narrative describing the battle of Gilboa (1 Sam 31:1–13). This pericope shows the fulfilment of the words that Samuel spoke to Saul at the necromancer's place at En-Dor. First, his army is scattered (v. 1), then three of his sons are killed by the Philistines (v. 2), and finally, the Philistines surround him (v. 3), which ultimately confirms the realization of God's judgement. In this context, Saul takes a dramatic decision. As a king anointed by Yahweh he would not like to fall into his enemy's hands; fearing and trembling at the approaching Philistines, he orders his armour-bearer to draw his sword and run him through with it. However, the armour-bearer refuses to do so as he does not want to kill his king. Therefore, Saul resorts to a desperate action; he takes his own sword and throws himself on it, thus committing suicide, which the Bible shows as an action unworthy of a man, being proof of his complete failure and a sign that God abandoned him.³⁰

Reflecting on the image of Saul shown in these biblical passages, one can conclude that the king's behaviour does not bear any signs of demoniacal possession but rather of mental disorders. Although the Deuteronomist does not make any medical observations of the king's condition, he concentrates on the causes of his behaviour. In his opinion, the king's behaviour was caused by the will of God.³¹ In this context, the assumption that God would use such means, i.e. demoniacal possession, to punish Saul cannot be justified theologically.³² Thus, the key to understanding Saul's attitude, as well as, judging him is the Old Testament principle of retribution: God rewards or punishes people based on their deeds, in relation to their moral value. When God rejected Saul, which resulted from the king's disobedience in the conflict with the Amalekites (1 Sam 15:10–11, 22–29), and anointed David as the new king of Israel, the spirit of Yahweh left Saul and was given to the son of Jesse. According to the biblical text, Saul became the target of the evil spirit sent by Yahweh. This very moment causes problems related to Saul's personality, which – following the principle of retribution – lead to punishment for his infidelity and disobedience to God. In order to better understand the meaning of the principle of retribution as exemplified by Saul's life, it should be remembered that the historical books of the Old Testament do not yet know the dichotomous picture of the world functioning in the New Testament. In the oldest

30 Campbell, *I Samuel*, 276–293; Łach, *Księgi Samuela*, 309–310; Dziadosz, “Szaleństwo Saula,” 47–48; Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 649–656.

31 Dziadosz, “Szaleństwo Saula,” 46.

32 Łach, *Księgi Samuela*, 207.

OT texts, God Himself is considered the cause of everything that exists and happens in the world, hence Saul's mental disorders and madness are directly attributed to God.³³

This analysis of the figure of Saul leads to a conclusion that is the most important and relevant to this article. Since the first king of Israel suffered from mental disorders, the entire passage of 1 Sam 16:14–23, including the key verse, i.e. v. 23, cannot be regarded as a text confirming that the image of David as an exorcist is present in biblical literature. What is more, according to biblical scholars, the narrative of 1 Sam 16:14–23 does not exclude David's skill as an exorcist as shown by his triple image. The first image is that of the one who was gifted with musical talent; other biblical texts would depict him as a psalmist par excellence, and he would be credited with most of the psalms of Israel. Secondly, according to 1 Sam 16:14–23, he was a famous, brave warrior (גבור חיל; איש מלחמה), the founder of a future dynasty, enjoying the presence of Yahweh Himself. This picture seems to come to the fore since it explains the victory of the son of Jesse over Goliath (1 Sam 17) as well as his later military actions (e.g. 1 Sam 18). However, it should be noted that this image is not completely positive. His initial good reputation as a "man of war" (איש מלחמה) changes into a "man of blood" (איש הדמים), confirmed by 2 Sam 16:7, where Shimei curses the king using this phrase. In turn, the Chronicler mentions David's bloody deeds as the reason why the king cannot build a temple in Jerusalem (1 Chr 22:8).³⁴ The third element of David's image in 1 Sam 16:14–23 is his attractive appearance that – in the further part of the account – will be confirmed many times. One of the examples illustrating David's fair appearance is the attitude of Goliath, who – as evident in 1 Sam 17:42 – was filled with scorn since David was a red-haired lad and handsome in appearance (נער ואדמני עמ־יפה מראה). Another example can be Bathsheba, who is presented very similarly to David in 1 Sam 16:12; both are attractive (David – טוב ראי; Bathsheba – טובה מראה).³⁵

2. Qumran Scrolls

The foregoing analysis has shown that none of the authors of the Old and New Testament books attributed the role of exorcist to David. The next group of texts in which the topic of this paper should be examined to discover their main protagonist, David, as an exorcist, is the Dead Sea Scrolls. The analysis of all the contexts of the references to the Davidic figure³⁶ in the entire Qumran corpus has already allowed the present author to formulate an opinion that David's characteristics have been presented in two manuscripts: 11Q5 and 11Q11.

³³ Dziadosz, "Szaleństwo Saula," 50.

³⁴ Johnson, "David Then and Now," 210–215; McCarter, *I Samuel*, 281; Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 430; S. Japhet, *I Chronik* (HThKAT; Freiburg: Herder 2002) 362–364.

³⁵ M. Avioz, "The Motif of Beauty in the Books of Samuel and Kings," *VT* 59/3 (2009) 356–357.

³⁶ Pomykala, "Images of David," 45.

11Q5 = 11QP^a_s

The first text where the image of David as an exorcist can be found is the Psalms Scroll from cave 11 (11Q5 = 11QP^a_s) comprising 49 compositions, seven of which have been preserved in fragments that were separated from the scroll (A, B, C, D, E, F),³⁷ while the rest survived in 11Q5, in columns I–XXVIII. This manuscript is the best preserved and longest scroll containing psalms. According to the official critical edition, it measures 4 m and 11.2 cm in length,³⁸ and considering its additional fragments, it could measure – as claimed by Ulrich Dahmen – between 5.30 and 5.60 m in length.³⁹

The palaeographic analysis of the scroll shows that the individual compositions reflect the transitional script between the early and late Herodian era, which allows to date 11Q5, following James Sanders's analysis, to the first half of the first century AD. Dahmen shares these conclusions, narrowing the palaeographic dating to 30–50 AD.⁴⁰

All the compositions, with the exception of Ps 119 written stichometrically, were written in prose. Of the 49 compositions that make up the sequence of the manuscript, 39 are biblical psalms, but arranged in a different order than in the Hebrew Bible. Of the remaining ten pieces, one appears in the Hebrew Bible (2 Sam 23:7)⁴¹; five are known from ancient translations: Ps 154 and 155 – from the Syriac translation, Ps 151 and Sir 51:13–30 – from the Greek and Latin translations, while four psalms were unknown until the discovery of 11Q5: “Plea for Deliverance,” “Apostrophe to Zion,” “Hymn to the Creator” and “David’s Compositions.”

In the penultimate column XXVII, a hitherto unknown work has survived, which the author of the critical edition entitled “David’s Compositions.”⁴² It should also be noted that 11Q5 is the only manuscript in which the text of these compositions has been preserved. The text of David’s Compositions is found between 2 Sam 23:7 and Ps 140:1–5, occupying 10 of the 15 lines of the entire column. Viewing the place of this fragment in 11Q5 more broadly, one can see that 2 Sam 23:7 is preceded by the text of the “Hymn to the Creator” (col. XXVI), while Ps 140:1–5 is immediately followed by the texts

37 J. Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll of Qumran Cave 11 (11qPsa)* (DJD 4; Oxford: Clarendon 1965) 18–49; A slightly different order is presented in Dahmen’s reconstruction: U. Dahmen, *Psalmen- und Psalter-Rezeption im Frühjudentum. Rekonstruktion, Textbestand, Struktur und Pragmatik der Psalmenrolle 11qPsa aus Qumran* (STDJ 49; Leiden: Brill 2003) 62–98; U. Glessmer, “Reconstructions of the great Psalms Scroll 11Q5,” *QC* 28–29 (2020–2021) 65–122.

38 Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll*, 4.

39 Dahmen, *Psalmen- und Psalter*, 25.

40 Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll*, 6–9; J. Sanders, “Variorum in the Psalms Scroll (11qPsa),” *HTR* 59 (1966) 83–85; Y. Yadin, “Another Fragment (E) of the Psalms Scroll from Qumran Cave 11 (11QPs),” *Text* 5 (1966) 2–3; F. García-Martínez *et al.* (eds.), *Qumran Cave 11. II. 11Q2–18 & 11Q20–31* (DJD 23; Oxford: Oxford University Press 1998) 29; P.W. Flint, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls and the Book of Psalms* (STDJ 17; Leiden: Brill 1997) 39; Dahmen, *Psalmen- und Psalter*, 26.

41 In col. XXVII, only one verse of the passage, defined as “David’s last words” has been preserved fragmentarily (see 2 Sam 23:1–7).

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

of Ps 134:1–3 and Ps 151A and B (col. XXVIII).⁴³ The text of “David’s Compositions” and its translation are as follows⁴⁴:

Table 1. The Hebrew text and its translation (11Q5 col. XXVII, 2–11)⁴⁵

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

Two fundamental parts can be distinguished in this text. The first one constitutes the content of the entire l. 2 and l. 3, except the last word: the syntagm ויתן indicates – syntactically – the beginning of a new sentence. In this part (l. 2–3), there appears a sequence of words describing the person of David, who is assigned positive features and supernatural gifts in his life.⁴⁶ David’s first attribute is defined by the adjective חכם – a “wise, skilled,

⁴³ Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll*, Pl. XVI and Pl. XVII.

⁴⁴ The previous paper by the author of this article is dedicated to the literary form and structure of “David’s Compositions”: M. Biegas, “The Division and Structure of ‘David’s Compositions’ (11Q5),” *BibAn* 13/2 (2023) 319–334.

⁴⁵ Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll*, 48; Dahmen, *Psalmen- und Psalter*, 97.

⁴⁶ E. Mroczek, “דויד,” *ThWQI*, 655–657.

smart, experienced⁴⁷ man. The next attribute is expressed by ואור כאור השמש, whose first element can be understood as the adjective of the noun – “enlightened,”⁴⁸ which has been indicated in the translation. According to another interpretation, this form can be understood as the noun “light,” and hence, it can be rendered as “light like the light of the sun,” which is possible as attested in biblical texts (cf. 2 Sam 23:4) and shown in the context of ancient Near East that referred to kings in this way.⁴⁹ At the end of l. 2, David is described by the classical Hebrew participle in Qal – סופר, meaning not only a scribe, a literate person but also an expert in the Law, a scholar who can interpret Scripture.⁵⁰ Here the appearance of this participle is – firstly – deliberate: thanks to it the second part of David’s Compositions becomes understandable; and secondly, the author – by idealizing the figure of David – by emphasising David’s reading and writing skills wants to distinguish him from other ancient rulers, who were often illiterate. Another feature of David is shown in the first word of l. 3: נבון, through which the author depicts him as a rational man, characterised by the virtue of prudence (cf. Gen 41:33, 39; 1 Kgs 3:12).⁵¹ The last word portraying David in the first part of David’s Compositions is the adjective תמים, usually meaning “perfect,” “complete,” “ideal,” “without blemish” or “without fault.”⁵² Moreover, this adjective is connected with the further content of l. 3, including the expression אל ואנשים בכל דרכיו – “in all his ways before God and men,” which can refer to the very adjective תמים and can be related to all the other expressions describing David in l. 2 and l. 3. The connection between this expression and the person of David clearly specifies his image as an idealised figure, which is typical of post-exilic literature. This interpretation is also confirmed by the general interpretative tendency after the Babylonian exile: the figure of David became the measure used for evaluating all rulers.⁵³

The sequence of David’s positive features is immediately followed by the theme of his supernatural gifts from God: the gift of the spirit, which is confirmed by the expression ויתן לו יהוה רוח נבונה ואורה – “a discerning and enlightened spirit.” The author of David’s Compositions undoubtedly wants to show the main protagonist as someone gifted with the charism of prophecy; this interpretation is justified by the entire content of l. 11, in which the noun נבואה – “prophecy” is the most important word, coming, as indicated in l. 11, “from before the Most High” – מלפני העליון.

At the end of l. 4, the narrator shows the idealised portrayal of the protagonist – as an author of a number of compositions, which is confirmed by the syntagm of the inverted *imperfectum* ויכתוב – “he wrote.” The list of his works is as follows:

47 HALOT, 314.

48 DCH I, 160.

49 P.K. McCarter, *II Samuel. A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary* (AB 9; Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1984) 484.

50 HALOT, 767.

51 Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll*, 93; Dahmen, *Psalmen- und Psalter*, 253.

52 DCH VIII, 643–644.

53 F.V. Reiterer – R. Unfried, “Dawid,” *NLB*, 140; B.A. Strawn, “David as One of the ‘Perfect of (the) Way’: On the Provenience of David’s Compositions (and 11 QPsa as a Whole?),” *RevQ* 24/4 (2010) 615–622.

1. 3,600 psalms (תהלים);
2. 364 songs (שיר) to be sung over the perpetual offering of every day, for all the days of the year;
3. 52 songs (שיר) to be sung for the sabbath offerings;
4. 30 songs (שיר) to be performed for the offerings of the new moon and for all the days of the festivals, and for the Day of Atonement;
5. 4 songs (שיר) to be performed over the possessed;
6. The total: 4,050.⁵⁴

From the viewpoint of the author of this paper, the most important information is that David composed four songs to be performed over the possessed, which is explicitly shown by the last word of l. 9 and the first half of l. 10, directly after the first subtotal (446 songs): ושיר לנגן על הפגועים ארבעה. Mentioning these four songs, the author speaks of a group which he defines as פגועים. This nominalised passive participle derives from the root פגע, which has a wide semantic field. Its verbal form means “to meet, to come on” (Exod 23:4; 1 Sam 10:5), “to come to” (Gen 28:11), “to light upon anything or anyone” (Amos 5:19), “to cause to supplicate” (Jer 7:16), “to invade, to attack” (Judg 8:21; 1 Chr 2:32), “to kill, to execute, to slay” (1 Chr 2:25, 29, 31, 34; 1 Sam 22:18) and “to reach” in the sense of defining the area of some territory (Josh 17:10; 19:34).⁵⁵

Clines interprets the passive participle (פגועים) in David’s Compositions as a noun. In his opinion, it means a person who has been touched, stricken and possessed by a demon.⁵⁶ This interpretation – accepted in this paper – has been confirmed by two factors. The first one is the content and construction of the entire sentence, ושיר לנגן על הפגועים ארבעה, in which first comes the verb נגן – “to play (a stringed instrument)” or “to accompany with a stringed instrument”⁵⁷ followed by the preposition על – “over” referring to a group defined by the noun פגועים – “possessed.” The other argument for interpreting the noun פגועים as referring to the possessed comes from some Qumran scrolls, which include this form,⁵⁸ namely, 4Q468k l. 4, 4Q511 11,8 and 11Q11 V,2.⁵⁹ Their contents allow one to argue that they are exorcistic and refer to relieving people from evil spirits. Consequently, this interpretation of the noun פגועים clearly testifies to the exorcistic character of

⁵⁴ J. VanderKam, “Studies on ‘David’s Compositions’ (11QPsa 27: 2–11),” *Erlsr* 26 (1999) 214–220; Brownlee, “David’s Compositions,” 569–574; N. Vered, “The Origin of the List of David’s Songs in ‘David’s Compositions,’” *DSD* 13 (2006) 134–149; Strawn, “David as One of the ‘Perfect of (the) Way,’” 607–626; B.Z. Wacholder, “David’s Eschatological Psalter (11QPsalms),” *HUCA* 59 (1988) 23–72.

⁵⁵ *DCHVI*, 648–649.

⁵⁶ *DCHVI*, 649.

⁵⁷ *DCHV*, 607.

⁵⁸ *DCHVI*, 649.

⁵⁹ S. Pfann et al., *Qumran Cave 4. XXVI. Cryptic Texts and Miscellanea. 1. Miscellaneous Texts from Qumran* (DJD 36; Oxford: Clarendon 2000) 420–421; M. Baillet, *Qumran Grotte 4. III. (4Q482–4Q520)* (DJD 7; Oxford: Clarendon 1982) 227–228; García-Martínez, *11Q2–18 & 11Q20–31*, 198–201; P.S. Alexander, “The Demonology of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years. A Comprehensive Assessment* (eds. P.W. Flint – J. VanderKam) (Leiden: Brill 1999) II, 331–353.

the composition of David's four songs. Adequately, their author, David, is – in the light of the text under discussion – an exorcist. Moreover, ascribing to David the skill to compose apotropaic songs, intended to be performed during exorcistic rites, indirectly suggests the possibility of his belonging to the group of sages called “maskilim.” These people, as promoters of the transmission of wisdom, possessing intellectual competences that significantly exceeded those of other people, were also able to recognise and interpret supernatural signs and realities, going beyond sensual cognition and touching the supernatural world.⁶⁰

At this point, it seems reasonable to reflect on the number “four.” According to William H. Brownlee, it should be understood, like all other numbers in David's Compositions, in the context of the 364-day calendar. So “four” can correspond to the “four” days that were added to complete the 360-day year, after each trimester so that the total number of all days of the year was 364.⁶¹ In turn, Ben Zion Wacholder proposes to relate these four songs composed for exorcistic purposes to the songs that David performed for Saul, playing the kinnor when the king was tormented by an evil spirit (1 Sam 16:16–23).⁶² In support of his position, Wacholder referred to manuscript 11Q11, containing texts to be used in exorcisms.⁶³ Some time later, Émile Puech, in one of his articles, combined the information from 11Q5 about the four songs David sang over the possessed with 11Q11, which – in his opinion – could have contained these songs.⁶⁴

Assessing these opinions, it should be concluded that Brownlee's claims are better justified since in the second section of David's Compositions, all the numbers, except for the first subtotal, refer to the 364-day calendar. In this case, the numeral four is related to 360, the multiplication of which gives the total number of all David's psalms to be 3,600⁶⁵ and should be understood as an analogy to the four additional days with which the number 360 was completed.

Although the four songs, composed to be performed during exorcistic rituals, should be related to the question of the calendar, it is important to pay attention to the genre of exorcistic songs. Defining their identity, members of the Qumran community saw themselves as a group that constantly waged battles with Belial and his servants. The battles were of a purely spiritual nature, expressed during prayers by external signs and gestures as well as properly selected incantations, the recitation of which created a spiritual defence around the community itself and around the possessed.⁶⁶ According to the beliefs of the Qumran community, the human heart is engaged in an unending struggle between darkness and light, the realities led by Belial and Michael respectively, and hence the imperative to invoke

60 N. Amzallag – S. Yona, “What Does ‘maskil’ in the Heading of a Psalm Mean?,” *ANES* 53 (2016) 41–57; B. Wold, *4Q Instruction. Divisions and Hierarchies* (STDJ 123; Leiden: Brill 2018) 64–94.

61 Brownlee, “David's Compositions,” 570; VanderKam, “Studies on ‘David's Compositions,’” 218.

62 Wacholder, “David's Eschatological Psalter,” 40.

63 Wacholder, “David's Eschatological Psalter,” 40.

64 Puech, “Les Psaumes davidiques,” 160.

65 VanderKam, “Studies on ‘David's Compositions,’” 218.

66 Alexander, “The Demonology of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 344.

the name of God who is the Healer and Lord of life. Invoking the divine name means having the power of God over both the evil spirit and the spirit of truth, in accordance with the Treatise on the Two Spirits (1QS I–IV), which was the reason why the Essenes were often considered healers.⁶⁷

The practice of performing exorcistic rituals is attested by texts which were composed specifically for this purpose and which have survived in several manuscripts. The first text is “Songs of the Maskil,” preserved fragmentally in 4Q510 and 4Q511.⁶⁸ The next text is the aforementioned manuscript 11Q11, which, in Puech’s opinion, could have included four psalms sung over the possessed⁶⁹; interestingly, the canonical Psalm 91 in 11Q11 is a text that was exactly intended for these purposes. We should also add 4Q560, originating possibly from outside the community and containing the remnants of a book of amulets written by a professional exorcist for some individual recipient. Whatever the case, these fragments represent a group of compositions recited during an exorcistic liturgy by a man called “Maskil,” who was considered the spiritual mentor and guardian of the entire community. Through his actions – especially apotropaic prayers – he stopped all demoniacal attacks.⁷⁰ The curses directed against Belial and the sons of darkness were to fight evil and to avert it; apparently, they were recited communally, not individually, as reflected in such manuscripts as 1QS II 4–10, 4Q280, 4Q286 II 1–10 and 1QM XIII 4–5. Importantly, hearing the words of the Maskil’s apotropaic prayers, which primarily emphasise the majesty and greatness of God, the demons felt fear and were confused – references to this can be found in 4Q510 1,4–8.

Considering the tendency to idealise the person of David in the very text of David’s Compositions and the existence of exorcistic practices in the Qumran community, it should come as no surprise that David – composer of four songs to be sung over the possessed – is presented as a protagonist and teacher of actions aimed at freeing the possessed from influences of evil spirits.

11Q11 = 11Q PsAp^a

As analysed by Pomykala,⁷¹ another Qumran scroll that allows David to be seen as an exorcist is 11Q11.⁷² Its formal, Late Herodian script makes it possible to date this manuscript to

67 E. Puech, “Manuskrypty znad Morza Martwego a Nowy Testament. Nowy Mojżesz, czyli o kilku praktykach Prawa,” *Qumran. Pomiędzy Starym a Nowym Testamentem* (eds. H. Drawnel – A. Piwowar) (ABLu 2; Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL 2009) 213.

68 Alexander, “The Demonology of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 344.

69 Puech, “Les Psaumes davidiques,” 161–181.

70 Alexander, “The Demonology of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 344; P.S. Alexander, “‘Wrestling against Wickedness in High Places’: Magic in the World View of the Qumran Community,” *The Scrolls and the Scriptures. Qumran Fifty Years After* (eds. S.E. Porter – C.A. Evans) (JSPSup 26; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1997) 321; J.L. Angel, “Maskil, Community, and Religious Experience in the Songs of the Sage (4Q510–511),” *DSD* 19 (2012) 2.

71 Pomykala, “Images of David,” 45.

72 García-Martínez, *11Q2–18 & 11Q20–31*, 181–205.

50–70 AD.⁷³ 11QPsAp^a contains six columns with four compositions: fragments of three songs against demons; the last, fourth one, written at the end of the scroll, is a version of Ps 91, which in some rabbinic texts is defined as שִׁיר שֶׁל פְּגָעִים – “song for the stricken.”⁷⁴

It should be noted that a number of motifs and topics included in 11Q11 are parallel to the message of 4Q510 and 4Q511⁷⁵ known – as indicated above – from “Songs of the Maskil.”⁷⁶ These mostly fragmentary manuscripts, dated paleographically to the late first century BC or the early first century AD, contain various songs directed against demons.⁷⁷ Interestingly, Maurice Baillet, author of the critical edition of 4Q510 and 4Q511, has identified – like Puech – those four pieces are the songs which are spoken of in David’s Compositions. However, these compositions are understood better as texts composed by the Maskil than by David.⁷⁸

For the purposes of this paper, the most important text is in col. V 11Q11, especially the beginning of l. 4.

Table 2. Hebrew text and its translation (11Q11 col. V, 1–14)⁷⁹

Hebrew text	Line	Translation
][]ד[] []	1	[] [] []
אשר[] הפגוע[ים]	2	which [] possessed one[s]
נדבי א[] רפאל שלמ[ם] אמן אמן סלה[] <i>vacat</i>	3	the volunteers of []aphael has healed [them. Amen, amen. Selah.] <i>vacat</i>
לדויד ע[] ל[] חש בשם יהו[ה] קרא בכו[ל] עת	4	Of David. A[gainst] an incanta]tion in the name of Yhw[h. Invoke at a]ny time
אל השמ[ים] כי יבוא אליך בלי[לה] וא[ם] מרתה אליו	5	God of heav[ns. When] he comes upon you in the nig[ht, you will sa]y to him:
מי אתה [הילוד מ] אדם ומזרע הקד[ושי]ם פניך פני	6	Who are you, [offspring of m]an and the seed of the ho[ly]ones? Your face is like a face of
[שן] וקרניך קרני חל[ו]ם חושך אתה ולוא אור	7	[delus]ion and your horns are horns of d[rea]m, you are darkness and not light
[עו]ל ולוא צדקה[] שר הצבא יהוה [יוריד]	8	[injus]tice and not justice [] the chief of the army, Yhwh [will strike] you

73 García-Martínez, *11Q2–18 & 11Q20–31*, 181–205.
74 García-Martínez, *11Q2–18 & 11Q20–31*, 182–183; U. Dahmen, “Authoritative Scriptures: Writings and Related Texts,” *T&T Clark Companion to the Dead Sea Scrolls* (eds. G.J. Brooke – C. Hempel) (London: Clark 2019) 275–276; 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) 36–38.
75 Alexander, “Wrestling against Wickedness,” 325.
76 Baillet, *Qumran Grotte 4*, 215–262.
77 Alexander, “The Demonology of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 344; García-Martínez, *11Q2–18 & 11Q20–31*, 183.
78 García-Martínez, *11Q2–18 & 11Q20–31*, 183.
79 García-Martínez, *11Q2–18 & 11Q20–31*, 198.

Hebrew text	Line	Translation
[לשאור] ל תחתית [ויסגור דל] תי נחושת ב[אלה לו] א	9	[to] the lower [Sheo]l, [and will shut two gates of bronze, through [which n]o
אור ולוא [יאיר לך ה] שמש אש[ר יזרח] [יעבור]	10	light [penetrates] and the sun, whi[ch rises, will not shine on you],
[על ה] צדיק לה [ו] אמרתה ה	11	[upon the ju]st lb[and] you will say b[:
[הצ] דיק לבוא [הרע לו ש] ד	12	[the ju]st man to come [] so that de[mon] does evil
[א]מת מח [אשר הצ] דקה לו	13	[t]ruth from [because] he has [jus]tice [
[ול] [ל] [ה]	14	[] and l[]/l[]

There is no doubt that this fragment belongs to the group of works of an exorcistic nature, which is supported by its content and such expressions as *אמן סלה* or *הפגועים*. In the exegetes' opinions, this understanding of the text is especially confirmed by *אמן סלה*. This formula does not occur in the canon of biblical books but was commonly used in various Jewish amulets.⁸⁰ It was usually written in the longer form (as in the text above) or was abbreviated to *ס א א*.⁸¹ Moreover, this understanding of the text is supported by l. 6, in particular the question about the identity, i.e. name, of the evil spirit: *מי אתה* – “Who are you?,” which was often used in exorcisms. The question thus constructed, in the light of the Semitic culture, resulted from the belief that by knowing a demon's name one could have power over that demonic figure and as a consequence, he could cause the release of the possessed.⁸²

Assuming the Davidic origin of this text, which is confirmed by the *genetivus periphrasticus* *לדוריד* in l. 4, its author appears to be someone who has the knowledge and skill to fight demonic supernatural beings. He gives instructions on how to deal with a person who is tormented or possessed by an evil spirit. This is suggested by the particle *על* in l. 4, which besides its standard meaning “over” can convey – as in this text – the meaning “against.” Directly after this particle, there is a gap in the manuscript.⁸³ The authors of the critical edition – hypothetically – suggest that the particle *על* could have been followed by the noun *רוח* – “spirit” or another noun with a three- or four-consonant root referring to evil spirits, e.g. *שטן* or *שדים*. Supposing that the particle *על* means “over,” the reconstructed next word

⁸⁰ Alexander, “Wrestling against Wickedness,” 326; I. Fröhlich, “Magical Healing at Qumran (11Q11) and the Question of the Calendar,” *Studies on Magic and Divination in the Biblical World* (eds. H.R. Jacobus – A.K. de Hemmer Gudme – P. Guillaume) (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias 2013) 45–46.

⁸¹ García-Martínez, *11Q2–18 & 11Q20–31*, 204.

⁸² Dvořáček, *The Son of David*, 38.

⁸³ García-Martínez, *11Q2–18 & 11Q20–31*, PL. XXIV.

can allow the insertion of the nominalised participle פגועים, which would lead to the same verbal construction as in David's Compositions על פגועים (11Q5 XXVII, 10).⁸⁴

Beginning with l. 5, the author (David) instructs the recipient or the reader about steps that should be taken during demoniacal attacks and says to whom to turn for strong support. For the sage (David), God is the one whose power is to be summoned by the tormented or by the exorcist himself. Thanks to God, it is possible to expel and defeat the evil spirit who will be cast down to the depths of Sheol. The encouragements to call the name of Yahweh, בשם יהוה (l. 4), result from biblical tradition. The name of God was considered an effective remedy for all kinds of pain and danger, which is also confirmed by fragments of sapiential literature, e.g. Ps 20:2; 118:10 and Prov 18:10.⁸⁵

Significantly, this sage has knowledge of the appearance and identity of particular demons, which is evidenced by l. 6–8, depicting in detail the figure of the demon – its face – horns as well as its identity as an unjust being, filled with darkness, and what is most important, a being with a divine-human element.⁸⁶ The last part of the description, – הילוד מאדם ומזרע הקדושים – “offspring of man and the seed of the holy ones,” seems to correspond to the tradition of *1 En.* 6–7: the myth of the fallen angels.⁸⁷ The myth itself is a reinterpretation of Gen 6:1–4. This short pericope of the Book of Genesis contains themes that cannot be identified in other passages of the entire Old Testament. The sons of God (בני אלהים) saw that the daughters of humans (בנות האדם) were good (טבת), i.e. fair, and took them as wives for themselves. The daughters bore brave warriors (הגברים). The text of Gen 6:4 also contains the information that in those days there were the *Nephilim* (הנפילים) on the earth. These verses from the Book of Genesis represent a mythical story that exegetes place both in the context of the Ancient Near East and in the context of the entire Old Testament. Similar mythical stories were sometimes shown in ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt and Greece, where the gods – supernatural beings – came into relationships with humans (women), and offspring were born to them. However, one cannot unambiguously prove that these myths had some impact on the narrative of Gen 6:1–4.⁸⁸ Despite the similarities between the Book of Genesis and the Book of Enoch, as some exegetes claim, the entire description of the demon's appearance in 11Q11 most probably reflects a later tradition. For example, the Mishnaic treatise *Pesaḥim* (mPes 111b) provides the following description of demons: some of them have no eyes, some look like spoons revolving around in a jug and others have horns like a goat.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ García-Martínez, *11Q2–18 & 11Q20–31*, 200.

⁸⁵ García-Martínez, *11Q2–18 & 11Q20–31*, 200.

⁸⁶ Fröhlich, “Magical healing at Qumran (11Q11),” 41–44.

⁸⁷ H. Drawnel, “1 Enoch 6–11 Interpreted in Light of Mesopotamian Incantation Literature,” *Enoch and the Synoptic Gospels. Reminiscences, Allusions, Intertextuality* (eds. L.T. Stuckenbruck – G. Boccaccini) (EJL 44; Atlanta, GA: SBL Press 2016) 245–284.

⁸⁸ Drawnel, “1 Enoch 6–11,” 245–284; J. Lemański, *Księga Rodzaju. Rozdziały 1–11. Wstęp, Przekład z oryginału, Komentarz* (NKB.ST 1/1; Częstochowa: Edycja Świętego Pawła 2013) 333–345; G. Fischer, *Genesis 1–11* (HThKAT; Freiburg: Herder 2018) 366–392.

⁸⁹ García-Martínez, *11Q2–18 & 11Q20–31*, 201.

3. Early Jewish Writings

Traces of the portrayal of David as an exorcist can be found – as claimed by Pomykala⁹⁰ – in texts classified as early Jewish writings. He means a work titled *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, commonly known as Pseudo-Philo, and *Antiquitates Judaicae* by Flavius Josephus.

Pseudo-Philo

Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum is the first example affirming the tradition about David and his son, Solomon, as exorcists. Pseudo-Philo is a pseudo-epigraphic work, originally written in Hebrew in the Palestinian environment, more or less in the time of Jesus. Later the book was translated into Greek and from Greek into Latin. It is a kind of 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.⁹¹

In chapter 60 of *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, a psalm can be found, which – as the text says – David played on his lyre for Saul in order to cast away the evil spirit that tormented the king. This exorcistic psalm contains David's words directed to the evil spirit: "Arguet autem te metra nova unde natus sum, de qua nascetur post tempus de lateribus meis qui vos domabit," which can be translated as "but that new womb, whereof I was born, shall rebuke you, of whom shall subdue you after a time, he that shall be born of my loins." In this verse, David prophesises that his offspring will defeat the demon and will dominate over demons. The exegetes' opinions about the figure ruling over evil spirits are narrowed down to three possible options: Jesus, the Jewish Messiah (the figure who, according to the Testament of Levi, "will bind Belial and give to his children authority to trample the evil spirits") and Solomon. In each of these cases, the figure of David is an ancestor, a progenitor who in the light of this text is seen as an exorcist. The text itself says clearly that David's offspring will be endowed with even greater power over evil spirits than David himself. Moreover, such an interpretation is supported by the message found at the very beginning of chapter 60 of *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, where the author evidently indicates – referring to the narrative of 1 Sam 16:14–23 – that David played the lyre in the night so that the evil spirit might depart from Saul. David also had knowledge of the origin of the evil spirit and thus, in accordance with the practices of those days, he could exorcise the king (*Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* 60,2–3).⁹²

In conclusion, it can be said that the author of Pseudo-Philo used a tradition that attributed to David's descendant extraordinary power over demonic forces, authority much more powerful than that of David himself. Essentially, according to *Liber Antiquitatum*

⁹⁰ Pomykala, "Images of David," 45.

⁹¹ D.J. Harrington (ed.), "Pseudo-Philo," *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. J.H. Charlesworth) (New York: Doubleday 1985) II, 297–377; Dvořáček, *The Son of David*, 39.

⁹² Dvořáček, *The Son of David*, 40; E. Koskeniemi, *The Old Testament Miracle-Workers in Early Judaism* (WUNT 2; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2005) 219–223.

Biblicarum 60,3, the authority over the world of demons is the main attribute of the figure that will be born of “David’s loins.”

Flavius Josephus

A significant text presenting David as an exorcist can be found in Josephus’ *Antiquitates Judaicae*. In this quite large work completed in 79–94 AD, the Jewish historian Josephus (37–100 AD) described in detail the historical events of the Jewish nation from its beginnings to the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans, addressing his work both to pagans and to Hellenized Jews. Using the sources that were on hand, Josephus analysed them thoroughly in order to depict the main Jewish protagonists and religious groups in the light of Greek ideals.

Book VI, which begins with the episode of the ark that the Philistines took to the temple of Dagon, for which misfortunes fell on Ashdod and other Philistine cities, and ends with Saul’s death, has 14 chapters corresponding to the narrative from 1 Sam 5:1 to 1 Sam 31. In chapter 8, the historian mentions events that were parallel to the narrative of 1 Sam 15–16. He recounts the story of Samuel going to Bethlehem to anoint Jesse’s son as king, then he mentions the anointing itself and reports on Saul’s illness, which causes David to be brought to the royal court. Describing Saul, Josephus writes that “the divine power departed from Saul, and moved to David, who upon this passing of the divine spirit to him began to prophecize. But as for Saul, some strange and demoniacal disorders came upon him: and brought upon him such suffocations, as were ready to choke him. For which the physicians could find no other remedy but this; that if any person could charm those passions by singing, and playing upon the harp, they advised them to enquire for such a one: and to observe when these demons came upon him, and disturbed him; and to take care that such a person might stand over him, and play on the harp, and recite hymns to him” (*Ant.* 8.166). Then Josephus depicts the process of finding David in Jesse’s house stating that David had skills of an exorcistic nature: “when he was come, Saul was pleased with him, and made him his armour-bearer: and had him in very great esteem: for he charmed his passion, and was the only physician against the trouble he had from the demons, whensoever it was that it came upon him; and this by reciting of hymns, and playing upon the harp, and bringing Saul to his right mind again” (*Ant.* 8.168).

The quoted excerpts from chapter 8 of Book VI show that Josephus makes an obvious connection between the figure of King David and the function of an exorcist. While Pseudo-Philo emphasised the power over evil spirits in the descendant who would be of David’s loins and assigned this function to David indirectly, Josephus leaves no doubt and gives a strong argument for concluding that such an image of David functioned in early Jewish writings.⁹³

93 Pomykala, “Images of David,” 45.

Conclusion

This article aimed – by building on the ideas of Pomykala who presented David on eight general levels – to expand the understanding of David with an additional level that includes the image of him as an exorcist. Both biblical and historical texts of varying ages and authorship have depicted David's intent at exorcistic activities.

The above article, which has been divided into three parts, is an attempt to answer the research problem posed in the title. In the first part, devoted to the biblical texts, the passage of 1 Sam 16:14–23 was analysed. According to various interpreters, the figure of David is presented in the context of Saul being tormented by an “evil spirit.” Particular attention was paid to the content of v. 23. The analysis of this fragment prompted an analysis of texts in which there was a description of Saul's actions, temperament, emotions and psyche. This made it possible to say unequivocally that Saul was not so much possessed as suffering from an unspecified mental illness. On the other hand, if he had been possessed, David's music would bear the hallmarks of an exorcism. Therefore, playing the instrument was – according to 1 Samuel 16 – a kind of mental therapy.

Then, in the second part, fragments of two Qumran manuscripts, i.e. 11Q5 and 11Q11, were analysed, which, for the first time, clearly indicate the figure of the second king of Israel as an exorcist. In the third part, the analysis of the texts included in the canon of literature of early Jewish writings revealed that their authors reveal an image of David identical to that portrayed in Essene literature.

These ideas originate from 1 Sam 16:14–23, including its key verse – v. 23 – where it is recounted that the first king of Israel, Saul, who suffers from mental disorders, is calmed by David playing the kinnor and this more literal interpretation cannot be recognised as a textual witness of the image of David as an exorcist. Even with this passage in mind – in biblical literature – there is no fragment whose author would attribute the role of an exorcist to David, but rather credits David with musical talent, which was believed to have wider health and societal effects than in our modern era.

A stronger picture of David performing the function of an exorcist is drawn in two Qumran manuscripts. The first textual witness depicting David in this role is in the Psalms Scroll from Cave 11, 11Q5 = 11QPs^a, strictly speaking, in col. XXVII, 2–11, entitled “David's Compositions” by the author of its critical edition. It is clearly indicated by the last word in l. 9 and the first half of l. 10 of David's Compositions, directly after the first summation (446 songs), that David composed four songs: *ושיר לנגן על הפגועים ארבעה*, to be performed over a group defined as *פגועים*. The form of the passive participle *פגועים*, which Clines interprets as a noun, defines a person who is afflicted, tormented and possessed by a demon.

The other Qumran scroll presenting David in the role of an exorcist is 11Q11 = 11QPsAp^a. In col. V 11Q11 (l. 1–14), a text can be found – fragmentally preserved – whose beginning, namely l. 4, is the most meaningful. Assuming the Davidic origin of this text, which is confirmed by the *genetivus periphrasticus* *לדוד* in l. 4, its author appears as

the one who has the knowledge and skills to fight supernatural demonic creatures. He gives instructions on how to deal with a tormented or possessed person. He teaches the recipient, the reader, what steps he should take seeing demoniacal attacks and from whom he should seek strong support.

Beyond fragments in the Qumran scrolls and murky indications in the Old Testament, traces of David's image as an exorcist are supported in early Jewish writings: *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, known as Pseudo-Philo, and *Antiquitates Judaicae* by Flavius Josephus. Chapter 60 of *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* contains a psalm which – as the text says – David played on his kinnor before Saul to set him free from the evil spirit that tormented the king. Moreover, the psalm contains words David used to announce to the evil spirit the coming of a descendant that would overcome the powers of evil by his authority. Finally, in Book VI of *Antiquitates Judaicae*, Josephus unambiguously portrays David as the one who had skills of an exorcistic character: “when he was come, Saul was pleased with him, and made him his armour-bearer: and had him in very great esteem: for he charmed his passion, and was the only physician against the trouble he had from the demons, whensoever it was that it came upon him; and this by reciting of hymns, and playing upon the harp, and bringing Saul to his right mind again” (*Ant.* 8.168).

Therefore, based on the analysed texts, it can be said that, among many different roles attributed to David by the tradition, he was not presented as an exorcist in the period of editing the books of the Old Testament. The discussed texts that are part of the story of Saul, are clearly more about the mental illness of the first king of Israel than about possession and exorcism. A different approach is adopted in the later literature (Qumran etc.). It is there that one can find interpretive traditions attributing the role of an exorcist to David. So it can be said that this is the actual time and literature in which this in fact new (and extra-biblical) “role” of David was assigned to him. This visibly shows that such an image of David emerges quite late, i.e. in the period when the biblical books had already been edited. This, actually, results from the tendency to idealise the person of David, the beginning of which can be seen in the chronicle, and the growth of which was observed at the end of Second Temple Judaism. It was then that the figure of this ruler of Israel began to be perceived also as a prophet, sage, and exorcist, of which the text of “David's Compositions” cited above, containing a clear reference to these functions, is the best example. This suggests a certain cohesion between the texts from the Qumran community, cited in the article, and early Jewish texts, such as *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* or *Antiquitates Judaicae*.

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