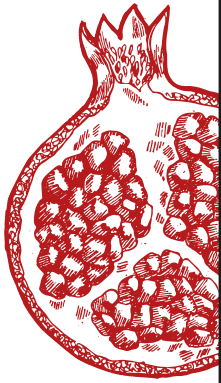
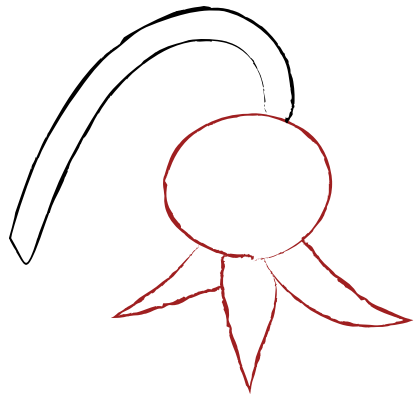


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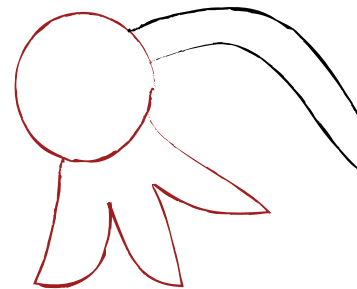


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ADVANCES IN ANCIENT BIBLICAL
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*Categories
and Boundaries
in Second Temple
Jewish Literature*



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**BLURRING BOUNDARIES:
THE FIGURE OF DAVID AS PROPHET, PRIEST,
AND KING**

David Z. Blackwell

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2, no. 2 (December, 2022), 77–112

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Keywords: Reception of David, royal, prophetic, priestly, Psalms,
Messiah, Second Temple period

Abstract

This article shows that while the figure of David is most commonly recognized as an ideal king whose heir will have an eternal kingdom (2 Sam 7), priestly and prophetic portraits of David are woven throughout Second Temple Jewish literature. While David never held the vocational role of prophet or priest, he is described in these terms or at least portrayed in the trappings of these positions. This article shows how these three categories are blurred in the person of David by tracing how various authors portray David, not only in royal terms but also in priestly and prophetic terms. David's role as king bleeds over into priestly and prophetic categories. This appears to stem from his musical prowess and role as temple preparer and psalmist. David's Psalms are frequently referred to as David's prophecies. While prophetic and royal portraits of David have been considered, few have explored David's portrait as priest. This article outlines the ways that David has been presented as priest. Despite the prophetic and priestly aspects of David's life, these depictions of David do not erase his regal representation, throughout the literature of the Second Temple period.



La figure de David est le plus habituellement présentée comme un roi idéal dont l'héritier possédera le royaume éternel (2 Sam 7). Cet article montre cependant que des portraits sacerdotaux et prophétiques de David sont présents dans toute la littérature juive du Second Temple. Même si David n'a jamais tenu le rôle associé à la vocation de prophète ou de prêtre, il peut être décrit en ces termes ou à tout le moins dépeint avec les atours de ces positions. Cet article montre comment ces trois catégories sont mélangées dans la personne de David en s'appuyant sur les différentes descriptions de David, non seulement en termes royaux mais aussi en termes sacerdotaux et prophétiques. Le rôle de David en tant que roi rejoint les catégories sacerdotales et prophétiques qui semblent liées à ses prouesses musicales, à son rôle de préparateur du temple et de psalmiste. Fréquemment, les psaumes de David sont identifiés comme prophéties de David. La recherche a produit des portraits prophétiques et royaux de David, mais le portrait de David comme prêtre n'a que peu été travaillé. Cet article s'intéresse aux façons dont David a été présenté comme prêtre. Malgré les aspects prophétiques et sacerdotaux de la vie de David, ces descriptions de David n'effacent pas la représentation royale, présente dans toute la littérature de la période du Second Temple.



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BLURRING BOUNDARIES: THE FIGURE OF DAVID AS PROPHET, PRIEST, AND KING*

David Z. Blackwell



Introduction

David is rightly remembered as a king of Israel and the founder of a dynasty. However, if one looks closely, David is also depicted in both priestly and prophetic terms, if not clearly in the Hebrew Bible [HB] at least in its reception. In the narratives of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, David is never explicitly called a prophet (Kugel 1990, 45). If there is a dearth of evidence that David is depicted as a prophet, there is even less evidence calling him or referring to him as a priest.

* This paper was first presented at the 2021 Categories and Boundaries in Second Temple Jewish Literature Conference. I am indebted to the other participants and organizers for the feedback I received, in particular Professor George J. Brooke. Additionally, the comments offered by the reviewers and editors of *AABNER* significantly sharpened this work.

Nevertheless, starting in the HB and expanding through the reception of Davidic traditions, David is represented not only in royal terms, but his Psalms are also viewed as prophesy, and he becomes the originator of the temple priesthood and founder of Israel's worship practices. This should not be seen as a linear expansion into each role, but at various points in time for a variety of reasons, interpreters blur David's role as king with portrayals of him as a prophet or a priest.

George J. Brooke and Hindy Najman (2016) explore ways David is surprisingly remembered throughout the Second Temple period: "David as inspired man of God, poet, and scribe; David as prophet of a Temple that he did not see; and David as penitent" (113).¹ The present study seeks to build on the work of Brooke and Najman and evaluate and expand it in a few ways. Brooke and Najman are interested in showing the transformation of David as a biblical king into an ideal messianic figure but emphasize this is a less common change than popularly thought. They summarize this point as follows, "the figure of David persisted throughout our chosen period, but not always with the prominence that some have assumed, nor necessarily in the ways that might strike some today as the most obvious" (2016, 111). In their conclusion, Brooke and Najman state,

perhaps a majority, preferred to re-clothe him as a prophet, scribe, or poet, to associate him closely with that sacred space, the temple that he himself had never been allowed to build. Others, perhaps a minority, re-clothed him with his royal lineage and projected that (sometimes also including themselves incorporated collectively into the Davidic ideology) into the messianic future; for some that was an immediate future in the present now. His place was not so much the temple as the palace throne room, and for Christians the throne room for the Christ was in heaven. (2016, 127)

Perhaps one unintended consequence of focusing on the limited role of messianism in connection with David is that the broader portrayal of David as king is diminished in Brooke and Najman's essay. The

¹ See Brooke and Najman (2016) for a list of secondary literature covering the reception and use of David in the Second Temple period (112 n. 2).

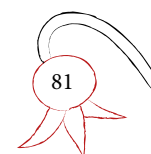


remembrance of David as king is more widespread than Brooke and Najman (and Blenkinsopp 2013, 9) indicate. While this essay argues for the expansion of David's remembrance into prophet or priest, it does not replace the memory of David as king but expands it. David continues to be remembered as Israel's king, frequently as an ideal figure and noble man, but this does not always mean he is being portrayed in connection with the messiah.

Other studies have effectively described David's prophetic portrayal,² but less explored is David's portrait as priest. This aspect is a major difference between the interpretive approach of Brooke and Najman and the present study. I hope to accomplish two primary goals in this study: first, to show the blurring of the three categories in the figure of David in the earliest texts that describe his life as well as texts from the Second Temple period; second, to outline ways David is presented as priest during the same time period.

Because the present study argues for the fluidity of the categories of prophet, priest, and king, a few comments about methodology and terminology are needed here. In a similar study of Balaam, Michael S. Moore disregards titles to prioritize actions. Moore (1990) writes, "In other words, a 'diviner' is a 'diviner' in this study only if he/she enacts the *role* of 'diviner,' regardless if he/she holds the *title* or *position* of 'diviner' in a given cultural configuration" (18–19). Jacqueline Vayntrub (2019) suggests Moore disregards the importance of titles and states, "We should equally evaluate the inclusion or exclusion of any description of a character in the text including the title used" (112). The present study will look for both explicit locations where titles are used to refer to David as well as David's actions in light of the surrounding context. The titles of the offices of king, prophet, and priest experience some fluctuation throughout the First and Second Temple periods, so a few comments about each term will be useful here.

When Israel asks Samuel for a king in 1 Sam 8:11–17, future kings are juxtaposed with the previous leaders in Israel's history who apparently did not lay claim to such rights as the kings would. Samuel



² Brooke and Najman 2016; Kugel 1990; Pomykala 2004, among others.

anoints Saul as the first king, and then David as his replacement. Here kings are God's anointed who rule and lead the nation in battle against its enemies. While there is some disagreement about what makes one a king, David is clearly identified as king. He is anointed, explicitly called king, carries out the actions of a king, and is described by many as the ideal king.

James L. Kugel (1990) provides a useful definition for prophets during this period. "Prophets, that is messengers sent by God of Israel with some divine commission, are dispatched *to* kings with words of divine reproach, encouragement, or advice; sometimes they are out-and-out enemies of the king, as Elijah is to Ahab and Jezebel" (45). Reinhard G. Kratz states that the Former Prophets (*Nevi'im Rishonim*) and the Latter Prophets (*Nevi'im 'Aharonim*) "are seen as teachers of the law who call the people of Israel to obey their God and warn of the consequences of disobedience" (4). During the monarchic period one of the roles of a prophet was to be a kingmaker and to bless the ruling dynasty as well as to denounce disobedient and unfaithful kings.³ There is disagreement over which prophetic texts and prophetic individuals fit the category "Prophets" (*Nevi'im*). The HB includes Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings) in addition to the Latter prophets (Isaiah through Malachi), while the Septuagint [LXX] includes the Former Prophets with the Historical Books and adds Daniel (and the additions) and Lamentations to the Prophetic books which were in the Writings in the HB.⁴ Kratz (2015) distinguishes between priests and prophets as "different classes of cultic officials" (19). Prophetic acts included dramatic activities, speaking for God, teaching, anointing kings, and many prophets engaged in scribal activities.

Joseph Blenkinsopp (1995) describes the role of priest as follows, "The priest therefore exists in the first place to *facilitate* the carrying out of ritual.... Cultic acts serve to meet these needs, and the priest exists to facilitate the carrying out of such acts. The emphasis is consequently on the *act*, not the person as the mediating agent, a fundamental

³ On this point, see Kratz 2015, 21; Gentry and Wellum 2012, 392.

⁴ Daniel is also listed as a prophet in the Vulgate (so too Baruch and Lamentations) and at Qumran in 4QFlorilegium (4Q174). See Kratz 2015, 2–3, 80.



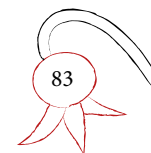
distinction between priest and prophet” (81). In the HB, priests as a delineated office are restricted to the tribe of Levi. The other offices do not have such formal restrictions.⁵ Consequently, identifying cultic acts rather than specific titles will be particularly important in examining the portrait of David as priest. There is a more inherent overlap between the category of prophet and priest. Of this relationship Lester L. Grabbe (2004) writes, “the ostensibly separate roles of priest, prophet, diviner, and the like were often entangled in real life (e.g. the same individual might have more than one role)” (4).⁶

As will be seen, there is not a linear expansion of these roles. Certain texts emphasize prophetic aspects of David’s life, while other texts emphasize him as priestly figure. Nearly all of them depict, imply, or assume his role as king, to which we will now turn.

David: The Ideal King

A. David as King in the Hebrew Bible

Though there are other ways David is remembered, perhaps the most common portrait of David in the HB is as an ideal ruler and king.⁷ David became the founder of a dynasty and is promised by God an heir on the throne forever.⁸ When Jeremiah refers to kings of Judah, he calls them *the one sitting on David’s throne*.⁹ After David’s death, Judah and its kings are spared destruction because of God’s promise to David.¹⁰ David becomes the standard to which subsequent kings



⁵ Some traditions surrounding the covenant with David point to a restricting of the office of king to descendants of Judah/David.

⁶ See Grabbe 2004b, 79–97.

⁷ Other examples include David as shepherd boy, musician, exorcist, warrior, usurper, psalmist, angelic figure, among many others. See Brooke and Najman 2016, 223; Dan et al. 2011, 675–77; Dietrich 2020, 103; Kugel 1990; Mroczek 2015a; Pomykala 2004.

⁸ 2 Sam 7:1–17; 1 Kgs 2:45; 9:5; 11:36; 15:4; 28:4, 7; 1 Chr 17:10–15; 2 Chr 6:15–16; 13:5; 21:7; 23:3; 33:7; Isa 9:7; 16:5; 55:3; Jer 17:25; 33:14–17, 21; Ezek 34:23–24; 37:24–25; Amos 9:11; etc.

⁹ Jer 13:13; 17:25; 22:2, 4, 30; 29:16; 33:17, 21.

¹⁰ 1 Kgs 11:12–13, 32, 34; 2 Kgs 8:19; 19:34; 20:6; 2 Chr 21:7; Isa 37:35.

are compared.¹¹ The majority of these comparisons with David center around proper worship of Israel's God. A given "wicked king" is said to have not followed the Lord as his father David had done. During exile and occupation, the nation was forced to wrestle with promises of an eternal heir and the present realities of an empty throne. This is the backdrop which led to an awaited Davidic heir to return.¹² Many of these passages simply emphasize the perpetual nature of God's promise to David to have an heir on the throne. Some texts use the language of raising up David himself to be king/shepherd.¹³ Others depict David as the progenitor of the messiah.¹⁴ Brooke and Najman (2016) point to two places in the later centuries of the formation of the texts that became the HB where Davidic ideology is maintained: the growth of the book of Zechariah, which was aware of Davidic aspects of Amos 9, Num 24, and Gen 49, and the "less future-oriented-books of chronicles which seek to subordinate the Davidic king under priestly control" (119). Their study, however, primarily focuses on the eschatological aspects relating to the Davidic dynasty and emphasizes that there is a gap between Davidic texts which point to a messiah. There are many passages from the HB, some of them later, which look forward to a Davidic royal individual or which emphasize the promise of an eternal throne.¹⁵ Though the Chronicler may be "less future-oriented," the remembrance of an eternal covenant is hardly the "long silence of the David theme" Blenkinsopp (2013, 9) describes. Nevertheless, remembrance of David as king persists throughout the entire HB and its reception.



¹¹ 1 Kgs 1:37, 47; 3:3, 14; 8:25–26; 9:4; 11:6, 33, 38; 14:8; 15:3, 11; 2 Kgs 14:3; 16:2; 22:2; 2 Chr 7:17; 11:17; 21:12; 28:1; 29:2; 30:26; 34:2; Sir 49:4; 1 Macc 2:57. On David as the king *par excellence* in Chronicles, see Sacchi 2004, 183.

¹² 2 Sam 7:8–17; 23:1–7; Ps 89:27–37; Isa 9:2–7; 11:1–9; 55:1–5; Jer 17:25; 23:5; 33:14–22; Ezek 34:23, 24; 37:24, 25; etc. For a discussion of 2 Sam 7:8–17; 23:1–7; Ps 89:27–37; Isa 55:1–5, see Blenkinsopp 2013, 59–62.

¹³ Jer 23:5; 30:9; Ezek 34:23, 24; 37:24, 25; etc.

¹⁴ Pomykala 2004, 33–34. 2 Sam 7:11–16; Ps 89; Isa 11:1–10; Jer 33:14–16; see also Blenkinsopp 2013, 115–60.

¹⁵ 2 Chr 7:18; 21:7; 23:3; Ps 89:20–29; Isa 55:3; Jer 23:5; 30:9; Ezek 34:23, 24; 37:24, 25; Zech 9–12.

B. David as King in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

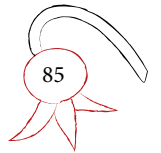
David appears with some frequency in the Apocrypha. In 1 Esdras, David is identified as king.¹⁶ The only two other uses of his name reference his descendants (1 Esd 5:5; 8:29). Of the six times 1 Maccabees uses David's name, four of them refer to the city of David (1 Macc 1:33; 2:31; 7:32; 14:36). In other instances, David is remembered for being merciful and inheriting an eternal kingdom (2:57) and for slaying Goliath (4:30). David's name occurs once in 2 Maccabees (2:13). Here Nehemiah is recalled as founding a library with "books about the kings and prophets and the writings of David and letters of kings about votive offerings" (τὰ περὶ τῶν βασιλέων βιβλία καὶ προφητῶν καὶ τὰ τοῦ Δαυιδ καὶ ἐπιστολὰς βασιλέων περὶ ἀναθεμάτων).¹⁷ David's books are placed between two collections of writings about kings, which, given the general context of David's life, seems to emphasize his role as king here, though it could also point to an inclusion of his role as prophet.¹⁸ Sirach 44–49 provides a hymn honoring the fathers of Israel's history. In Sir 45:35; 47:1–11, David is envisioned as an ideal king who is given a covenant of kingship. Hezekiah is also honored for keeping firmly to the ways of David (Sirach 48:16, 22). Sirach 49:4 emphasizes the point, "Except for David and Hezekiah and Josiah, all of them [the kings] were great sinners, for they abandoned the law of the Most High; the kings of Judah came to an end" (Πάρεξ Δαυιδ καὶ Εζεκιου καὶ Ιωσίου πάντες πλημμέλειαν ἐπλημμέλησαν· κατέλιπον γὰρ τὸν νόμον τοῦ ὑψίστου, οἱ βασιλεῖς Ιουδα ἐξέλιπον).

There is not space here for a comprehensive exploration of David in the Pseudepigrapha, but a brief look at David in the Psalms of Solomon is necessary. Psalms of Solomon 17 is an important text because it

¹⁶ 1 Esdras 1:3, 4; 5:57.

¹⁷ All translations are from NRSVUE unless otherwise noted.

¹⁸ Daniel R. Schwartz notes, "Although there is no other evidence for the claim that Nehemiah founded a library, the reference to kings and prophets, and the writings of David sounds like a way of referring to the latter two parts of the Hebrew canon" (*The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version* 2010, 245).



records a clear Davidic messianic tradition.¹⁹ On the significance of Pss. Sol. 17, Kenneth E. Pomykala (1995) says, “after the late sixth century BCE, hopes for a Davidic messiah are not expressed until the first century BCE in Psalms of Solomon 17” (33).²⁰ Similarly, Brooke and Najman (2016) state, “it seems as if it is only with the anti-Hasmonean Psalms of Solomon from the second half of the first century BCE that an explicit role for David in an eschatological context emerges” (119). The clearest point is found in Pss. Sol. 17:21, “Look, O Lord, and raise up for them their king, a son of David, to rule over your servant Israel in the time that you know, O God” (Ἴδέ, κύριε, καὶ ἀνάστησον αὐτοῖς τὸν βασιλέα αὐτῶν υἱὸν Δαυιδ εἰς τὸν καιρὸν, ὃν εἶλου σύ, ὁ θεός, τοῦ Βασιλεῦσαι ἐπὶ Ἰσραηλ παῖδά σου).²¹ Pomykala (2004) also points to 4 Ezra 12, where “a cosmic eschatological redeemer who will destroy the enemies of God and usher in the age to come is said to come from the posterity of David” (34).²² Though more explicit eschatological descriptions of a Davidic figure are better attested from this point forward, the broader depiction of David as king is not replaced and should not be overshadowed.



C. David as King in the Dead Sea Scrolls

Various portraits of David are preserved in the Dead Sea Scrolls [DSS]. Only a few of them can be briefly mentioned here. David’s name frequently occurs in connection with psalms; he is identified as the psalmist, and his name is included in superscriptions of individual psalms.²³ When discussing “the five hundred manuscripts from the Qumran caves that represent general Jewish literature of the period,” Brooke and Najman (2016) state, “there are virtually no references to David as king in those compositions, let alone eschatological references”

¹⁹ For messianism in Pss. Sol. 17, see R.B. Wright 1983; *The Psalms of Solomon: Language, History, Theology* 2015; Abel 2016; Zacharias 2008; Atkinson 1999; Johnson 2017a.

²⁰ See also Pomykala 1995, 159–70; Brooke and Najman 2016, 119.

²¹ *The Psalms of Solomon: A Critical Edition of the Greek Text* 2007, 187.

²² See also Pomykala 1995, 216–29.

²³ See 4Q177 I, 7; 4Q177 IV, 7; 11Q5 XXVII, 2; XXVIII, 13; 11Q11 V, 4; 11Q13 II, 10 among others. For connections between David and the Psalms, see Flint 1997.

(122) except for perhaps the fragmentary Text Mentioning Descendants of David (4Q479). Brooke and Najman also differentiate between the earlier stage of sectarian messianic thought which tended not to be very Davidic and the later stage which became increasingly Davidic. This is used to support their argument that David is not primarily remembered as a messianic figure. In framing the discussion this way, it gives the impression that the portrait of David as king is being erased. On the contrary, when David is mentioned in the scrolls, fragmentary as they may be, David is regularly called king or implied to be king.²⁴ David is connected with a royal messianic figure in multiple texts.²⁵ Pomykala (2004) points to four texts from Qumran that articulate expectations of a Davidic messiah, and elsewhere Pomykala (2019) notes that in 4Q285 5 1–6 a Davidic messiah secures a final victory, executing the king who in context is the king of the Romans.²⁶ Brooke and Najman (2016) may be right in noting, “it seems appropriate to point out that in general the sectarian ideology was closer to the spirit-filled prophetic David, than to the histories of Davidic kings and rulers” (121). However, this prophetic aspect should not be seen as replacing the royal portrait of David but as an expansion of how King David came to be remembered in some traditions.



D. David as King in Philo

David is not a significant figure for Philo, so a brief note here will suffice. The name David (Δαβίδ) occurs only once in Philo (*Conf.* 149).²⁷ It refers to the sons of the hymnist, David, who are depicted in the books of Kings. David is identified here for his role as song writer. Nevertheless, the text seems to imply or at least assumes that David and his sons were kings.

²⁴ 1QM XI, 1–3; 4Q398 11–13, 1; 4Q457b II, 2; see also CD-A V, 2–4; VII, 16.

²⁵ 4Q161 8–10, 18; 4Q174 1 I, 21; 2, 7, 11–13; 4Q252 V, 4; 4Q285 5, 2; 4Q522 9 II, 3; 4Q504 1–2 IV, 6.

²⁶ 4QpGen^a, 4QFlor, 4QIsa^a, 4Q285 in Pomykala 2004, 34; Pomykala 2019, 498–99. See also Pomykala 1995, 171–216.

²⁷ *The Complete Works of Philo of Alexandria: A Key-Word-In-Context Concordance* 2005, 1252.

E. David as King in the Josephus

Josephus identifies David as king in numerous texts²⁸ and even calls him the richest of all the kings (*J.W.* 1.60; *Ant.* 7.391) who comes from simple origins but is elevated by God (*J.W.* 5.337) and anointed as king (*J.W.* 6.164–165).²⁹ In the latter text, Josephus outlines the kind of king God desired David to be: a righteous and obedient king who overthrows the Philistines and other nations and who conquers, survives, and fights. If David did these things, his house would be of great splendor and celebrated, and David and his descendants would enjoy a glorious name.

F. David as King in the New Testament

David is remembered throughout the New Testament [NT] particularly in the Gospels and Acts. He is often recalled in his role as king, but most of the time context implies this, rather than offering outright references to him as King David.³⁰ By the time of the NT, overt examples of Davidic messianism are found with direct links between David and an eschatological messiah.³¹



²⁸ Josephus, *Ant.* 1.226; 5.336; 6.163–165; 7.61–77, 78–95, 130–146, 162–182, 276–277, 293, 294–300, 311–314, 318, 319, 322, 323, 327, 330, 332, 334, 335, 338, 339, 344, 347, 349, 351, 353, 354, 355, 360, 361, 362; 8.1, 12, 197, 200, 207, 219, 221, 270, 276, 315; 9.44, 96, 140, 145, 155, 166, 196, 280, 282; 10.49, 67, 143; 11.73, 112; 13.249; *Ag. Ap.* 2.132; *J.W.* 5.137, 143; 6.439; etc.

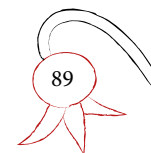
²⁹ See also Höffken 2002.

³⁰ David is explicitly called king in the following texts: Matt 1:6(2x); 13:22. The title “Son of David” is used: Matt 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30, 31; 21:9; 21:15; Mark 10:47, 48; 12:35; Luke 1:32; 18:38, 39; 20:41. In the following, contexts points to David’s role as king whether generally or in connection with a messianic lineage: Matt 1.1, 17 (2x), 20; 12:3; 22:42, 43, 45; Mark 11:10; 12:36, 37; Luke 1:27, 69; 2:4, 11; 3:32; 20:42, 44; John 7:42 (2x); Acts 2:25, 29, 34; 13:22; 15:16; Rom 1:3; 2 Tim 2:8; Rev 3:7; 5:5; 22:16.

³¹ For various studies on David, the messiah, and the New Testament see Bartlett 2017; Bird 2012; *Paul and the Gospels: Christologies, Conflicts and Convergences* 2011; Choi 2011; Juel 1992; McCaulley 2019; Novakovic 2003; Piotrowski 2015; Porter 2007; Strauss 1995; Willitts 2007; Zolondek 2013; Baxter 2006; Levin 2006; Johnson 2017b, 2018; Novenson 2009; Shavit 2020; among many others.

G. Summary of David as King

Brooke and Najman (2016) state, “the close connection that both Jews and Christians are apt to draw between David and the messianic redeemer appears very explicitly only late in Second Temple period” (113). As has been shown, this statement must not be interpreted in a way that downplays the examples that can be seen in the HB. There are future-oriented passages with a Davidic king in various traditions in the HB³² and DSS³³ among other texts.³⁴ Depending on how late one dates these writings, the gap between extant texts containing Davidic messianism may be briefer than Blenkinsopp suggests. If one includes texts that describe an eternal Davidic throne, many more examples are found. Notwithstanding, the messianic examples, the broader point here is simply that David continues to be remembered primarily as king. Although David is frequently described in other roles, these depictions are often blurred with his portrait as king. Perhaps it is in this light that we should see David’s connection with the messiah—extending from the memory of David as ideal king but not replacing it.



David: The Unlikely Prophet

A. David as Prophet in Hebrew Bible

Kugel (199) writes, “David is a most unlikely candidate for the title of prophet. He is, after all, a king, indeed, the founder of the great and enduring Davidic dynasty; and kings are in some sense the prophets’ opposite number” (45). As Kugel alludes, David’s story is intertwined with three important prophets (1 Chr 29:29).³⁵ Kugel emphasizes the separate roles between Nathan and David, “Nathan is *David’s prophet*;

³² Jer 23:5; 30:9; Ezek 34:23, 24; 37:24, 25; Zech 9–12; etc.

³³ 4QpGen^a, 4QFlor, 4QIsa^a; 4Q161, 4Q174, 4Q285, 4Q479; etc.

³⁴ Pss. Sol. 17:21; 4 Ezra 12, Matt 12:23; 21:9; 22:21–46; Mark 11:10; 12:35–37; Luke 2:11; 20:41–44; John 7:42; 2 Tim 2:8; Rev 3:7; 5:5; 22:16; etc.

³⁵ First, Samuel anoints David to be Saul’s replacement (1 Sam 16). Second, Nathan is sent by God to rebuke David for striking down Uriah and taking Bathsheba to be his own wife (2 Sam 12:9). Third, Gad is sent to David by the LORD to relay God’s judgment after David issued the census (1 Chr 21:9–27).

the division of the roles, and of powers, could not be clearer in the narratives of Samuel and Kings” (Kugel 1990, 45).

The last words of David, recorded in 2 Sam 23:1–7, appear to be the strongest portrayal of David as prophet in the Hebrew scriptures:

The oracle of David, son of Jesse,
the oracle of the man whom God exalted,
the anointed of the God of Jacob,
the favorite of the Strong One of Israel:
The spirit of the Lord Speaks through me;
his word is upon my tongue.
The God of Israel has spoken;
the Rock of Israel has said to me... (2 Sam 23:1–3a)³⁶

In this text David is offering an oracle, the spirit of the Lord is speaking through him, and God is speaking to him. Kugel notes that such a description “must have encouraged, if not led straight to ‘David the prophet,’ even if this particular phrase is not found in the Hebrew Bible” (Kugel 1990, 48).

The best source of David as prophet in the HB comes from the psalm headings which connect the Psalms to David. Kugel states, “David the poet almost inevitably becomes David the prophet, for how else was one to interpret the tradition of the Davidic authorship of psalms (for example, Ps 137) that seem to be set in a period far more recent than David’s—how else but that their author, David, a true prophet of God, was able to foresee conditions centuries, nay ages, after his own time? The Christian evocation of David the prophet...was only an expansion of an interpretive track that was certainly much older” (Kugel 1990, 50).

While it is true that “David as prophet” becomes quite clear in Christian documents like Acts, Kugel (1990) rightly notes it “is not merely an ad hoc Christian invention” (46). There are overt as well as subtle examples in Jewish texts. Outside of Christian texts or texts influenced by Christians, the clearest examples are found at Qumran and in Josephus.

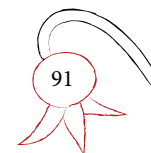
³⁶ See also Kugel 1990, 48.



B. David as Prophet in the Dead Sea Scrolls

The clearest connection between David and prophecy in the DSS is found in the Psalms scroll found in cave 11, the largest extant Psalms scroll at Qumran. This scroll includes some writings that are not found in the Hebrew Scriptures. *David's Compositions* (11QPs^a XXVII) contains a venerating portrayal of David and records an extended description of all the psalms David composed, all of which are said to be written through prophecy. The full text is worth quoting here:

And David, son of Jesse, was wise, and a light like the light of the sun, and learned, and discerning, and perfect in all his paths before God and men. And the YHWH gave him a discerning and enlightened spirit. And he wrote psalms: three thousand six hundred; and songs to be sung before the altar over the perpetual offering of every day, for all the days of the year: three hundred and sixty-four; and for the sabbath offerings: fifty-two songs; and for the offerings of the first days of the months, and for all the days of the festivals, and for the <Day> of Atonement: thirty songs. And all the songs which he spoke were four hundred and forty-six. And songs to perform over the possessed: four. The total was four thousand and fifty. All of these he spoke through (the spirit of) prophecy which had been given to him from before the Most High. (*The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* 1998, 1179)³⁷



As the number of psalms attributed to David here has grown from those attributed to him in HB, so has his role expanded from king to include prophet (or at least to associate him with prophecy). Eugene Ulrich says, “The fact that these poetic works were considered prophecy harmonizes well with the existence of *pesharim* on parts of *Psalms*, as well as the New Testament’s use of the *Psalms* as prophecy” (Ulrich 2000, 119). As we will see shortly, Philo also viewed the Psalms as prophecy. Peter W. Flint, however, cautions against seeing David as a prophet at Qumran:

³⁷ All Citations quotations and transcriptions are cited from DSS come from DSSSE.

Although it has been claimed that David was regarded as a ‘prophet’ at Qumran, caution seems advisable... The evidence seems to suggest that at Qumran David was associated with prophecy, but falls short of identifying him as an actual prophet. Such caution seems justified in view of the apparent distinction between ‘the books of the Prophets’ and ‘David’ in MMT^c. (Flint 2020, 180)

Flint suggests this because 11QPsalms^a says, “all of these works he composed through prophecy,” not explicitly “he is a prophet,” and cites MMT as evidence. The quote Flint is referring to in MMT (4Q397 14–21, 10) says, “the book of Moses [and] the book[s] of the Pr[o]phets and Davi[d...].” ([כתב]נו אליכה שתבין בספר מושה [ו]בספר [י]הנ[ו]) [...ד].³⁸ Contrary to Flint, I wonder if MMT actually does the opposite of what he is suggesting. David is set alongside Moses and the prophets. Deuteronomy 34:10 says, “Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses” (ולא-קם נויא עוד בישראל כמשה) (אשר ידים אל-פנים). Daniel K. Falk suggests Moses is the quintessential prophet and is frequently recorded at Qumran as foretelling the sins and punishments of Israel (Falk 2000, 577).³⁹ At Qumran, David is not only a king, his words are placed alongside those of Moses and the prophets. As a whole, the scrolls should be seen as expanding and elevating the role that David played. Nevertheless, this is not the strongest example in Second Temple Judaism.



C. The Psalmist Prophesying in Philo

Philo clearly identifies the psalmist as a prophet. In *Her.* 290, Philo calls the psalmist “a man of prophetic gifts” (τις προφητικὸς).⁴⁰ In *Agr.* 50, Philo quotes from Ps 23(22):1 and refers to the psalmist by saying, “The authority for this ascription is not any ordinary one but a prophet, whom we do well to trust” (τούτου δὲ ἐγγυητῆς οὐχ ὁ τυχῶν

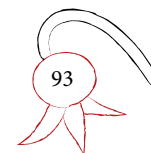
³⁸ Flint 2020, 179.

³⁹ Falk provides the following lists of references: 4Q504 1–2 III, 11–14; cf. 1QS I, 3; 4Q397 14–21; 4Q398 14–17 I–II, 11–13 C; Words of Moses 1Q22 1.7–11; Commentary on Genesis A 4Q252 I IV, 2; Florilegium 4Q174 1–3.1, 2–3 and 1–3 II, 2–3; Jub.^a 4Q216 1–4.

⁴⁰ All texts and translations for Philo are from the Loeb Classical Library.

ἀλλα προφήτης ἐστίν, ᾧ καλὸν πιστεύειν). In *Conf.* 39, Philo says of the psalmist, “Such a one is the disciple of Moses...” (καὶ τῶν Μωσέως γνωρίμων τις ἐν ὕμνοις εὐχόμενος εἶπεν).⁴¹ Philo, who sees Moses as a prophetic figure, identifies the the psalmist as his disciple.

Some have questioned whether Philo sees David as the psalmist. In her helpful study “Paul and Philo on Psalms,” Maren R. Niehoff states, “Unlike the author of MMT from Qumran, Philo does not speak of David as the author of the Book of Psalms, but names only Moses as the author of Torah” (Niehoff 2020, 394). While it is true that Philo does not mention David by name as he introduces Psalms quotations, in one text he does identify David explicitly as the psalmist. In *Conf.* 149, Philo writes, “I bow, too, in admiration before the mysteries revealed in the books of Kings, where it does not offend us to find described as sons of God’s psalmist, David (υἱοὶ τοῦ τὸν θεὸν ὑμνήσαντος Δαβίδ).” Nevertheless, Philo calls the psalmist a prophet and in one text identifies the psalmist as David. Although it would be surprising if Philo did not attribute the Psalms to David, it could be more explicitly stated. As time progresses David’s authorship tends to expand.⁴²



D. David Prophesying in Josephus

Josephus emphasizes David’s role as psalmist and prophet and perhaps has the clearest statements outside the NT and later texts about David as a prophet. Louis H. Feldman notes that Josephus expands on biblical descriptions of David to include prophetic activity in three places (Feldman 1998, 561). First, Josephus writes of the Lord’s spirit leaving Saul (1 Sam 16:13) and going to David, “the Deity abandoned Saul and passed over to David, who, when the divine spirit had removed to him, began to prophesy” (πρὸς δὲ τον Δαβίδην μεταβαίνει τὸ θεῖον καταλιπὸν Σαοῦλον. Καὶ ὁ μὲν προφητεύειν ἤρξατο τοῦ θείου πνεύματος εἰς αὐτὸν μετοικισαμένου) (Josephus, *Ant.* 6.166 [Thackeray]).⁴³ Second, Josephus records “an extrabiblical addition where David uses the word ‘temple’ in connection with the site of

⁴¹ For discussion, see Niehoff 2020, 401.

⁴² See the inscriptions in the LXX and *David’s Compositions* in 11QPs^a.

⁴³ See also Daly-Denton 2000, 92.

Araunah's threshing floor (2 Sam. 24:24 and 1 Chron. 22:1 vs. *Ant.* 7.334); whereupon Josephus, in an editorial comment remarks that David accurately (εὐστόχως) predicted the future, and that G-d thus sent him as a prophet to foretell that his temple would be built by his son" (Feldman 1998, 561). Third, Josephus says that after Solomon "constructed the Temple, that most of the future events that G-d has revealed (1 Kings 8:15 says merely 'promised') to David have already come to pass and that the rest will follow (*Ant.* 8.109)" (Feldman 1998, 561). Joseph A. Fitzmyer suggests that at both Qumran and in Josephus the descriptions of David functioning as a prophet might come from the view of anointing being connected not only with royalty but prophecy. It is in the context of David's anointing that Josephus describes him as prophesying (Fitzmyer 1972, 338). This is one of the rarer instances where David is stated as prophesying and a psalm is not directly being quoted, but it is in the context of playing the lyre, so the general psalm activity could be what Josephus has in mind. Kugel notes that elsewhere in the HB prophets play the lyre to bring about their visions (1 Sam 10:5 and 2 Kgs 3:14–16); so, "David the divine musician could also urge in the direction of David the prophet" (Kugel 1990, 48). The passage that Josephus records immediately follows David's anointing. On the day David was anointed, the HB says (1 Sam 16:13), "and the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward" (ותצלח רוח־יהוה אל־דוד מהיום ההוא ומעלה). Similarly, when Saul was anointed the spirit of the Lord came upon him. In Saul's case, 1 Sam 10:10b clearly states, "and the spirit of God rushed upon him [Saul], and began prophesying in the midst of them [the prophets]" (ותצלח עליו רוח אלהים ויתנבא בתוכם).⁴⁴ Josephus makes overt what is subtle in Samuel. The prophetic power of the spirit of God abandoned Saul and went to David.



E. David the Prophet in the New Testament

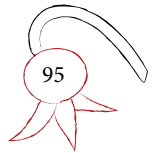
By the time of the NT, it is not unprecedented to refer to David in prophetic terms. Matthew and Mark both introduce a quotation of Ps 110:1 with a statement about David speaking by the spirit.

⁴⁴ The translation is my own.

Matthew 22:43 reads, “How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord?” (Δαυίδ ἐν πνεύματι καλεῖ αὐτὸν κύριον;)⁴⁵ Mark 12:36 reads, “David himself, by the Holy Spirit, declared...” (Δαυίδ εἶπεν ἐν τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ). Luke 20:42 leaves out the note about the spirit, “For David himself says in the book of Psalms” (αὐτὸς γὰρ Δαυίδ λέγει ἐν βίβλῳ ψαλμῶν).

Acts 1:16, 20 provides some indication of how David is viewed as a prophet. “It was necessary for scripture to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit told beforehand through the mouth of David... For it is written in the book of Psalms, ‘May his property be deserted; let there be no one who dwells in it,’ and, ‘let another take his position’” (ἔδει πληρωθῆναι τὴν γραφὴν ἣν προεῖπεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον διὰ στόματος Δαυίδ... γέγραπται γὰρ ἐν βίβλῳ ψαλμῶν· γενηθήτω ἡ ἔπαυλις αὐτοῦ ἔρημος καὶ μὴ ἔστω ὁ κατοικῶν ἐν αὐτῇ, καὶ τὴν ἐπισκοπὴν αὐτοῦ λαβέτω ἕτερος).

The two quotes come from Ps 69:25 and Ps 109:8. The Psalms here are attributed to David only as a mouth piece for the Holy Spirit, much in line with the “Thus sayth the Lord” so commonly found in the prophets. Acts 2:29–30 records perhaps the strongest statement portraying David as a prophet. “David...since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne.” (Δαυίδ...προφήτης οὖν ὑπάρχων καὶ εἰδὼς ὅτι ὄρκῳ ὤμοσεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς ἐκ καρποῦ τῆς ὀσφύος αὐτοῦ καθίσει ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον αὐτοῦ).⁴⁶ Acts 2:31 continues with a quotation of Ps 16:10, “Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the messiah, saying, ‘He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption’” (προϊδὼν ἐλάλησεν περὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὅτι οὔτε ἐγκατελείφθη εἰς ἄδην οὔτε ἡ σὰρξ αὐτοῦ εἶδεν διαφθοράν). Acts 2:34 continues with a description of David and a quotation of Ps 110:1, “For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool”’” (οὐ γὰρ Δαυίδ ἀνέβη εἰς



⁴⁵ On this connection, see Fitzmyer 1972, 332.

⁴⁶ The “prophecy” in question is an allusion to LXX Ps 132:11. See also Kugel 1990, 45.

τοὺς οὐρανοὺς, λέγει δὲ αὐτός· εἶπεν ὁ κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ μου κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου).

In Acts 4:24–26 David as prophet again speaks the words of creator God by the Holy Spirit.⁴⁷ The quotation in vv. 25–26 comes from Ps 2:1–2 LXX. In other places, namely Heb 11:32, “David is closely linked with ‘Samuel and the prophets’” (Fitzmyer 1972, 332 n. 2). The texts offered here depict David as a prophet by recording him performing prophetic acts—prophesying or speaking for the Lord—as well as using the title “prophet.”

F. Summary of David as Prophet

It is clear that David’s portrayal as prophet is connected with his role as Psalmist because when he is both called prophet and depicted as prophesying, it is almost always in connection with the Psalms. David’s role in composing the Psalms expands as years pass. He is attributed greater authorship in the LXX and DSS. Eventually, for many, David comes to mean the Psalter. The psalms both in and outside the HB are said to be composed of prophecy (see Josephus and 11QPs^a). This has many implications, the full extent of which cannot be discussed here.

Perhaps the most obvious implications have to do with how the Psalms were read. Christians were not the only people who were reading the Psalms in a prophetic manner. The community at Qumran, Philo, and possibly Josephus each read the Psalms this way. Kugel’s suggestion that David as prophet stems from wrestling with the titles is well received. Beyond this lies the question as to what ancient readers believed they were reading/hearing in the Psalms. Ultimately, referring to David as prophet speaks to the belief of many that when they were

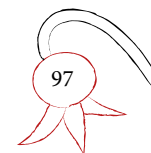


⁴⁷ Acts 4:24–26 reads: “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth, the sea, and everything in them, it is you who said by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant: ‘Why did the gentiles rage and the peoples imagine vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers have gathered together against the Lord and against his Messiah’” (ἐσποτα, σὺ ὁ ποιήσας τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτοῖς, ὁ τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου στόματος Δαυὶδ παιδός σου εἰπών· ἵνατί ἐφρῦαξαν ἔθνη καὶ λαοὶ ἐμελέτησαν κενά; παρέστησαν οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς καὶ οἱ ἄρχοντες συνήχθησαν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ κατὰ τοῦ κυρίου καὶ κατὰ τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ).

engaging with the words of the Psalter, they were engaging with the words of the spirit of God. Kugel's study focuses solely on King David as prophet, but some of the data he surveyed seems to point to a blurring (which he does not consider) of David as priest.

David: An Unlikely Priestly Portrayal

David's portrayal as "priest" is the most subtle and implicit of the portrayals considered in the present study. As some have sought to describe the various roles in which David is remembered (including a variety of roles beyond king), his role as priest tends to be overlooked.⁴⁸ Some explicitly reject the idea of David as a priest.⁴⁹ Others have noted the priestly role that Judean kings (including David) have played in the HB.⁵⁰ However, the majority of these examples are brief notes or support for a different figure such as Melchizedek rather than a study



⁴⁸ For examples see the following: Brooke and Najman 2016, 223; Dan et al. 2011, 675–77; Dietrich 2020; Kugel 1990; Mroczek 2015a; Pomykala 2004; J. L. Wright 2014, 1. Brooke and Najman (2016) consider David as Man of God, poet and scribe, prophet of a temple he did not see, and penitent. Dan et al. (2011) consider David's rise, foreign policy, state structure, domestic policy, succession, dynasty, future hopes, royal ideology, as an artist, as psalmist, as an exemplar and fallible, and his challenges and preservation. Dietrich (2020) identifies David as a farm boy, usurper, mercenary, head of a group of bandits/militia, a raider, king of Judah, king of Israel, a skilled networker, colonizer, ruler of a middle-level realm, fighter, conqueror, persecuted, threatened, husband to numerous wives, and father of at least sixteen difficult and ambitious children, and an icon of Jewish and Christian literature as well as every form of the arts. Kugel (1990) considers David as prophet. Mroczek (2015a) considers how in addition to David's royal, messianic portrait he is also presented as an "angelic, heavenly visionary." Pomykala (2004) examines eight portraits of David: progenitor of the messiah, victorious warrior, ideal ruler and king, psalmist, prophet, founder of the Jerusalem cult, a man of piety and righteousness, and exorcist. Wright (2014) identifies David as king, shepherd boy, warrior, singer, killer, lover, dancer, and saint.

⁴⁹ Freeman 2012, 393; Mroczek 2015b, 532; etc.

⁵⁰ Blenkinsopp 1995, 76; Bowker 1967; Brueggemann 2000, 46; Cargill 2019, 9; Cogan and Tadmor 1988, 189; Dietrich 2007, 209; Emadi 2016, 95–182; 2019, 69–72; James 1959, 67; Knohl 2009, 257–58; Rowley 1950, 470; and many others.

of the blurring of the roles in the life of David. Though many have commented on the priestly aspects in passing, when it comes to studies of David's roles, the priestly aspect is missing. This section will explore the many ways David is presented as a priestly figure in the HB and beyond.

A. David a Priestly Figure in the Hebrew Bible

Brooke and Najman state, “[the Chronicler’s] priestly agenda is for portraying any Davidic king very much in his limited and right place under priestly control” (2016, 119). While this may be true of subsequent kings in the Davidic line, the present study seeks to show the emphasis within Chronicles and elsewhere to depict David’s authority and control over the priests and temple. As mentioned above, Kugel points out the connection between David the divine musician and David the prophet. While examples of prophets as divine musicians appear, it is the priests who are sanctioned by David as divine musicians. This highlights the blurred boundaries between prophets and priests. There is also precedence in the HB for prophets who were themselves priests (Samuel [1 Chr 6:33]; Jeremiah [Jer 1:1]).⁵¹

Kings too are often presented as performing priestly activities (Bowker 1967, 35). Firstly, the kings of Judah and Israel are seen offering sacrifices (particularly at important cultic moments) and ordering the priests to offer sacrifices on their behalf throughout the cultic calendar.⁵²

In 1 Sam 13:9–10 Saul offers the burnt offering instead of Samuel the priest and is reprimanded (v. 11), but there are other times when kings of Judah and Israel officiated inaugural ceremonies and are not met with rebuke. Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor identify examples related to David (2 Sam 6:17–18), Solomon (1 Kgs 8:63), Jeroboam



⁵¹ Samuel is considered by some to be both a priest and prophet and by others to be only a prophet and not a priest (see Dietrich 2007, 255, 343). Jeremiah the prophet is identified as coming from priestly descent in Jer 1:1, but he is never shown to perform priestly activities and perhaps never functioned as a priest (see Bright 1965, lxxxviii).

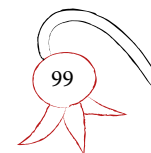
⁵² Dietrich 2007; James 1959, 68.

(1 Kgs 12:32), and Ahaz (2 Kgs 16:12–16), and write, “All of these were inaugural, not every day, sacrifices—hence the king assumed what appear to be priestly functions” (Cogan and Tadmor 1988, 189). Additionally, Solomon sacrificed burnt and fellowship offerings on an altar he built, as well as burning incense on them to fulfill the temple obligations (1 Kgs 9:25). Furthermore, when Adonijah sought to claim power, 1 Kgs 1:9 describes him as sacrificing “sheep, oxen, and fattened cattle.” It should be noted that there are other places where it does not seem to be inaugural cultic moments when kings offer sacrifices. Solomon is contrasted with his father David because Solomon offered sacrifices and made offerings at the high places, apparently with great frequency (1 Kgs 3:3–4). In his commentary on 1 and 2 Kings, Walter Brueggemann writes, “Solomon’s behavior is not unusual. Because kings in that ancient world ruled at the behest of the gods and were taken to be the primary servants of the gods, it was important to be seen in devotion to one’s god, thus enhancing royal legitimacy” (Brueggemann 2000, 46).⁵³ Similarly, Robert R. Cargill writes, “we should not overlook the possibility that early Israel—despite the later dictates set forth in the biblical text—experienced kings who also served in cultic roles, at least for annual holidays and special occasions, including David and Solomon, and perhaps even as late as Hezekiah” (Cargill 2019, 9).

Secondly, David and Solomon are depicted performing other cultic acts such as pronouncing blessings upon the nation.⁵⁴ Numbers 6:22–27 describes the Lord’s command to Moses and Aaron that he and his sons should bless the people of Israel. This is described again in 1 Chr 23:13: “Aaron was set apart to consecrate the most holy things, so that he and his sons forever should make offerings before the Lord and minister to

⁵³ Brueggemann also writes, “The statement in our verse simply recognizes that prior to the temple, other kinds of places were used for worship. The text on its own terms seems to regard this as normal and acceptable. In other stands of the Old Testament, references to ‘high places’ is polemical, regarded as an aberration and departure from Yahwism... Most likely no such polemic is intended or to be inferred here, except that given the negative judgement to be given on Solomon in Chapter 11, it is not impossible that this ‘innocent’ text is placed to prepare for the way for the later polemic” (Brueggemann 2000, 46).

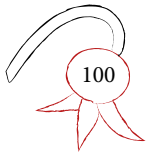
⁵⁴ See Dietrich 2007, 96.



him and pronounce blessings in his name forever” (ויבדל אהרן להקדישו) (קדש קדשים הוא־ובניו עד־עולם להקטיר לפני יהוה לשרתו ולברך בשמו עד־עולם). However, 1 Kgs 8:14 describes Solomon offering the blessing over the people of Israel, and 1 Kgs 8:64 describes Solomon consecrating the middle of the court that was before the temple.⁵⁵ Additionally, David is also seen as offering the blessing after making sacrifices (2 Sam 6:18).⁵⁶ Though this precedes the temple, it inaugurates Jerusalem as the place of worship.

This scene is of particular importance for the HB’s portrait of David the priest because he performs numerous priestly actions. First, David directs the priests rather than an official chief priest figure. When David commanded that the ark of the covenant be brought to Jerusalem, he gathered the Levites and the sons of Aaron (1 Chr 15:4) and instructed them to sanctify themselves (1 Chr 15:12). David also appointed them as singers and musicians (1 Chr 15:16). Second, David wears priestly clothing. David is described as participating and dressing in the same linen ephod as the Levites who were carrying the ark and the singers (Exod 28:4–43; 2 Sam 6:14; 1 Chr 15:27).⁵⁷ The ephod is connected with David four other times. Each time it is the high priestly garment that is used in connection with inquiring of the Lord. As mentioned above, this has connections with David as prophet. Third, David eats priestly food. David eats the bread of the presence that was consecrated and proper for priests alone to eat (1 Sam 21:1–6).⁵⁸

In an earlier scene, God sends a plague when David calls for a census after a great military conquest. The angel of the Lord commands David to “erect an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.” Interestingly, it is David and not a designated priest or prophet performing this task. It is through this offering that David gets the idea to build a temple here (1 Chr 21:28–22:1). The LORD prevents David from building the temple himself (1 Chr 22:8–10; 28:3) because he has waged too many wars and shed too much blood, so David takes



⁵⁵ On this point, see Bowker 1967, 35.

⁵⁶ See Dietrich 2007, 209.

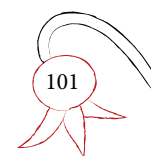
⁵⁷ See Dietrich 2007, 205.

⁵⁸ See Dietrich 2007, 63.

it upon himself to prepare the materials for Solomon to complete the temple. The Chronicler recounts the instructions and provisions David made for Solomon to build the temple (1 Chr 22; 28–29). In 1 Chr 23:1 David makes Solomon king and calls the leaders of Israel, the priests, and the Levites (23:2–32). Again, it is David rather than a high priest that organized them into divisions and gives instructions to the priests and Levites as to their responsibilities in the temple. In 1 Chr 25, David sets apart the temple musicians: “David and the officers of the army also set apart for the service...who should prophesy with lyres, harps, and cymbals.” David carries out all of the preparations for the temple so that Solomon’s role is to simply follow David’s directions.⁵⁹

David’s commands for the temple extend into the period after the reign of Solomon. Subsequent kings who carry out these instructions are still said to be carrying out David’s commandment for the temple and the Levites.⁶⁰ In 2 Chr 29:30, “King Hezekiah and the officials command the Levites to sing praises to the LORD with the words of David and of the seer Asaph. They sang praises with gladness, and they bowed down and worshiped.” David is parallel with Asaph, a Levite (Ezra 3:10) who is described as a seer. David’s words are the lyrics of the priestly songs. In Jer 33:21–23, the covenant with David is paralleled with the covenant with the Levites.

It is the accumulation of this evidence that points towards seeing David as a priestly figure. Though it does not call David a priest, the HB itself records David performing priestly acts, and David’s sons are explicitly called “priests” (2 Sam 8:17–18).⁶¹ Despite this evidence one question remains: How does the HB view kings who offer sacrifices? In 1 Sam 13:9–10, when Saul offers the sacrifice, it is clearly an offense. Brueggemann (2012) writes, “Saul, however, is not authorized to offer sacrifice (cf. 9:13). He is authorized to act as judge and warrior, but not to act as a priest. That crucial social role has been retained by Samuel for himself” (99). Samuel rebukes Saul for offering sacrifices, and offers this as the reason why he will not have an enduring kingdom; rather,



⁵⁹ See De Vries 1988, 631; Mroczek 2015b, 531.

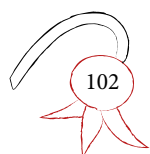
⁶⁰ 2 Chr 23:18; 29:25; 35:4, 15; Neh 12:24; 1 Esd 1:5, 15; 5:60; 8:49.

⁶¹ See Blenkinsopp 1995, 78; Dietrich 2007, 205.

that it will be taken from him and be given to a man after God's own heart, namely David (1 Sam 13:13–14). If Saul's kingdom is taken from him and given to David because Saul offered sacrifices, why David is said to perform the same acts with no criticism and to receive an eternal kingdom? Bowker points to Ps 110 as a possible rationale that explains the behavior of David and his heirs. Of Ps 110, Bowker writes, "Ps. cx specifically says that the person addressed is a priest of a strange and different sort, 'a priest after the order of Melchizedek.' Is it not possible to understand the Psalm as an attempt to justify the way in which David (and his successors) performed priestly acts in the cult?" (Bowker 1967, 35).

Much ink has been spilled over the figure of Melchizedek. He is the clearest example of an explicit priest-king in the HB, but the scarce details that Gen 14 and Ps 110 provide are debated.⁶² H. H. Rowley (1950) wrote, "if Ps 110 is addressed to David as is held by most, then David was both king and high priest, as Melchizedek had been" (471). Rowley, however, rejected this view and advocated that Zadok should be seen as the priesthood in question here. Bowker (1967) was not convinced, but cautiously suggested that because of the long history of transmission, it is rash to say whether David was or was not addressed in Ps 110. Additionally, Bowker said there is enough evidence to say that Ps 110 may have an early origin, possibly in connection with David (41).

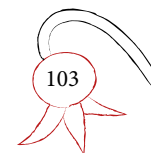
Even with this Melchizedekian connection, this does not mean that the division of priest and king is completely erased, for David still recognized the limits of his role as king and a Judahite. 1 Chronicles 15:2 says, "Then David commanded that no one but the Levites were to carry the ark of God, for the Lord had chosen them to carry the ark of the Lord and to minister before him forever" (אז אמר דויד לא לשאת את־ארון האלהים כי אִם־הַלֹּוִים כִּי־בָם בַּחַר יְהוָה לְשֵׂאת אֶת־אֲרוֹן יְהוָה וּלְשֵׂרְתוֹ (עַד־עוֹלָם)). David's reverence perhaps stems from God striking down Uzzah who reached out and caught the ark when the oxen stumbled. David became afraid of the ark (2 Sam 6:9–10), but after he saw that the



⁶² For a few of the debates, see Rowley 1950; Bowker 1967; Rowley 1967.

ark was a blessing to Obed the Edomite, he had it brought to the City of David and sacrificed a bull and fattened calf while wearing a linen ephod (2 Sam 6:12–15). This example highlights the porousness of the boundary between David as king and priest.

While recognizing the boundaries, David takes charge and establishes the priestly duties for the temple cult. David can offer sacrifices, wear the priestly garments, choose the location of the temple, build altars, offer the priestly blessing, and eat consecrated bread. The priests and Levites are organized according to David's commands and sing his songs as well as play on instruments he commissioned in a temple for which he provided the resources and plans. Most commenters discussing David's relationship with the temple and the priesthood focus on David's prohibition to build the temple, but there is an abundance of evidence of David's priestly activity. The argument here is not that the boundaries of what it means to be a priest are completely erased, or that everyone is priest.⁶³ There is some fluidity in the boundary of the category of priest in the Jewish Scriptures and their reception, particularly as it relates to David and other kings.



B. David as a Priestly Figure in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

Sirach records David's role in establishing the temple. Sirach 47:8b–11 says,

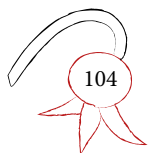
He sang praise with all his heart, and he loved his Maker. He placed singers before the altar, to make sweet melody with their voices. He gave beauty to their times throughout the year, while they praised God's holy name, and the sanctuary resounded from early morning. The Lord took away his sins and exalted his power forever; He gave him a covenant of kingship and a glorious throne.⁶⁴

Sirach depicts David as the leader of Israel's worship and says his power is exalted forever.

⁶³ One should note, however, the common language of Israel as a priestly nation: Exod 19:6; Isa 61:6; 1 Pet 2:9; Rev 1:6.

⁶⁴ For the Greek text and critical edition, see *Sapientia Iesu Filii Sirach* 1965.

1 Esdras, mentions David seven times. Each time it is in the context of the temple or priests. In 1 Esd 1:4, Josiah orchestrates the temple “in accordance with the directions of King David of Israel and the magnificence of his son Solomon” (κατὰ τὴν γραφὴν Δαυὶδ βασιλέως Ἰσραὴλ καὶ κατὰ τὴν μεγαλειότητα Σαλωμῶν τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ).⁶⁵ 1 Esdras 1:14 notes that the sons of Asaph, who are the temple singers, are placed as David arranged. Again in 1 Esd 5:57–58, “The priests stood arrayed in their vestments, with musical instruments and trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, praising the Lord and blessing him, according to the directions of King David of Israel; they sang hymns, giving thanks to the Lord” (καὶ ἔστησαν οἱ ἱερεῖς ἐστολισμένοι μετὰ μουσικῶν καὶ σαλπίγγων καὶ οἱ Λευῖται υἱοὶ Ἀσάφ ἔχοντες τὰ κύμβαλα ὑμνοῦντες τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ εὐλογοῦντες κατὰ Δαυὶδ βασιλέα τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ἐφώνησαν δι’ ὕμνων ὁμολογοῦντες τῷ κυρίῳ). Lastly, 1 Esd 8:46–48 states, “And by the mighty hand of our Lord they brought us competent men of the descendants of Mahli son of Levi, son of Israel, ...and of the temple servants, whom David and the leaders had given for the service of the Levites, two hundred twenty temple servants; the list of all their names was reported” (καὶ ἤγαγον ἡμῖν κατὰ τὴν κραταιὰν χεῖρα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν ἄνδρας ἐπιστήμονας τῶν υἱῶν Μοολὶ τοῦ Λευὶ τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ... καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἱεροδούλων, ὧν ἔδωκεν Δαυὶδ καὶ οἱ ἡγούμενοι εἰς τὴν ἐργασίαν τῶν Λευιτῶν, ἱερόδουλοι διακόσιοι εἴκοσι· πάντων ἐσημάνθη ἡ ὀνοματογραφία). In each of these occurrences, David is the leader and director of the Levites.



C. *David a Priestly Figure in the Dead Sea Scrolls*

The case for David as a priestly figure is not as strong in the DSS as is found in other traditions, yet there is still an expansion of Davidic authorship in the Psalter and emphasis of David’s role in establishing the liturgy for temple worship. As quoted above, *David’s Composition* in 11QPs^a records this well. David is the author of 3,600 psalms which are to be used in the temple with the sacrifices, for the festivals, for the Sabbath, and for each day of the year. David’s psalms are written

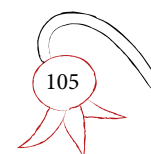
⁶⁵ The Greek text for 1 Esdras comes from *Esdrae liber I* 1991.

for the sacrificial system and temple activities. David is also associated with a sacrificial calendar in 11QPsalms^a, where he is credited with composing 4,050 psalms.⁶⁶

D. David a Priestly Figure in Josephus

Josephus (*Ant* 1.226) says Abraham took his son, “to that mount whereon king David afterwards erected the temple” (εἰς τὸ ὄρος, ἐφ’ οὗ τὸ ἱερόν Δαυίδης ὁ βασιλεὺς ὕστερον ἰδρύεται) (Josephus, *Ant.* 1.226 [Thackeray]). In his translation, William Whiston adds a footnote here that there is “a plain error in the copies, which say that king David afterwards built the temple on this mount Moriah, while it was certainly no other than king Solomon who built that temple.”⁶⁷ However, Josephus also says David built the armory in the temple as well (*Ant.* 9.148). Rather than being mistaken, it seems more likely that Josephus knows it was built during Solomon’s reign and is attributing the credit to the director instead of the executor.⁶⁸ This does not mean that Josephus identifies David as priest here; rather, it shows the furthest reaches of David’s authority in connection with the temple.

Elsewhere, Josephus (*Ant.* 7.305) describes the songs and hymns of David in the style of Greek poetry, describes instruments David made, and notes that David “taught the Levites to sing hymns to God, both on that called the Sabbath day, and on other festivals” (ἐδίδαξε πρὸς αὐτὰ τοὺς Ληουίτας ὑμνεῖν τὸν θεὸν κατὰ τε τὴν τῶν καλουμένων σαββάτων ἡμέραν καὶ κατὰ τὰς ἄλλας ἑορτάς). Moses established the worship and tabernacle system, but David is described in this position with the temple. The former was responsible for the sacrificial system led by the Levites and the later responsible for the music (Sarna 1979, 281–300; Ramantswana 2011, 451). Being of a priestly family himself, Josephus states in *Ant.* 20.226 that only a member of Aaron’s blood can hold the office of high priest and not even kings can attain this office, but while rejecting kings that act as priests, he idealizes the Hasmoneans who are priests that become kings (Fletcher-Louis



⁶⁶ See Mroczek 2015b, 530.

⁶⁷ *Works of Josephus* 1869, 112 n. b.

⁶⁸ See also Mroczek 2015b, 531.

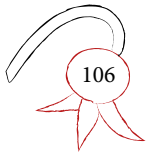
2006, 172 n. 66). Josephus (*Ant.* 13.299; *J.W.* 1.68) identifies John Hyrcanus as the only person given three gifts of the government, the high priesthood, and prophecy.⁶⁹ Josephus extends David's authority and role in establishing the temple more than the HB but delineates boundaries between priest and king, nuancing rather than erasing them.

E. David a Priestly Figure in the New Testament and Beyond

Mark 2:23–28 recalls the account of David going to Abiathar the high priest and eating the bread of Presence “which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions” (οὐς οὐκ ἔξεστιν φαγεῖν εἰ μὴ τοὺς ἱερεῖς, καὶ ἔδωκεν καὶ τοῖς σὺν αὐτῷ οὔσιν).⁷⁰ Matthew 12:5–6 adds, “Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and yet are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here” (ἢ οὐκ ἀνέγνωτε ἐν τῷ νόμῳ ὅτι τοῖς σάββασιν οἱ ἱερεῖς ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ τὸ σάββατον βεβηλοῦσιν καὶ ἀναίτιοί εἰσιν; λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν ὅτι τοῦ ἱεροῦ μείζον ἐστὶν ὧδε). Jesus of course does not use this text explicitly to say that David was a priest. The purpose is *the Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath; so the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath*. Nevertheless, David is repeatedly remembered as doing things only priests do, and Jesus justifies David's actions by comparing him to the priests.

F. Summary of David as Priest

David as a priestly figure is certainly not as strong as David as king or even David as prophet. Despite a lack of explicit use of the title “priest” for David, he is clearly associated with the priesthood by partaking in priestly activities and preparing for and establishing the temple cult.



⁶⁹ See also Charles 1908, 64.

⁷⁰ Mark 2:26.

Conclusion

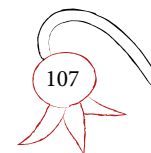
James (1959) perhaps goes too far when he writes:

In Israel king, priest and prophet had been inseparably bound together. From the time of Saul onwards kings offered sacrifice, wore the ephod and prophesied in their royal capacity as heads of the priesthood, the anointed of Yahweh and his accredited messenger (*melek*). But the covenant with the House of David had a wider significance than the monarchy, and was independent of the earthly throne since behind it lay the covenant of Yahweh with the nation as a whole. (68)

Not all the kings of the House of David fulfilled such roles, as many of subsequent kings were not faithful to God and are contrasted with David. However, as has been shown, David and other kings at turning points in Israel's cultic history embody his comments.

The sections above have pointed towards other figures who also experience such a blurring to different extents. Philo can write of Moses, "Such was the life and such was the death of the king, and lawgiver, and high priest, and prophet, Moses, as it is recorded in the sacred scriptures" (Τοιοῦτος μὲν ὁ βίος, τοιαύτη δὲ καὶ ἡ τελευτὴ τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ νομοθέτου καὶ ἀρχιερέως καὶ προφήτου Μωυσέως διὰ τῶν ἱερῶν γραμμάτων μνημονεύεται) (*Moses* 2, 292).⁷¹ In addition to other examples, Jeremiah and Samuel are priests and prophets. Josephus can identify John Hyrcanus as the only person to be a prophet, priest and king. Each of these figures point to the porous nature of these categories, without erasing the distinctions of each role.

David is remembered primarily for the vivid stories that surround his life as Israel's king. He is the shepherd boy, the slayer of Goliath, the friend of Jonathan, the military king, a flawed man, and "a man after God's own heart." Through examining the reception and memory of David, the present study has shown that the boundaries of the three offices of prophet, priest, and king are not as clearly demarcated as is often supposed. This initial attempt to outline David's priestly activities is not a comprehensive study. Continued exploration of David's

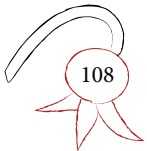


⁷¹ See also *Moses* 2, 2–3, 187.

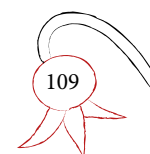
subsequent reception—for instance into the rabbinic literature or church fathers—may provide further insights.

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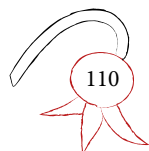
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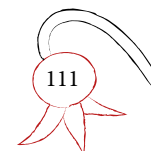
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