

David Napiwodzki

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw

ORCID 0000-0002-4352-5515

David as a Prophet in the Targum Jonathan to the Books of Samuel¹

Abstract: The main purpose of this article is to portray King David as a prophet in the Targum Jonathan to the Books of Samuel. We first analyze the question where and how David's prophetic character is shown implicitly in the texts of the Hebrew Bible. We also ponder when the concept of David as a prophet was born. Against this background, the paper analyzes the pericopes in the Targum Jonathan to the Books of Samuel that explicitly mention David as a prophet (TgJ 2 Sam 18:3; 22:1–5; 23:1–7). The targumist's alteration of the Masoretic Text was intended not only to portray David as a prophet, but also to reinforce the authority and stature of his statements.

Keywords: David, prophet, targum, Targum Jonathan

David belongs to the most prominent characters of the Old Testament. In the Hebrew Bible, the name David (דָּוִד, דָּוִד) appears 1,075 times and is the most often appearing name (other than God's Name YHWH, which occurs 6,828 times).² It mostly appears in 1–2 Samuel (576). In addition, it is repeatedly mentioned in 1–2 Chronicles (261), 1–2 Kings (96) and the Book of Psalms (88).³ Biblical research of David or pericopes related to him has involved many studies, primarily in foreign-language literature.⁴ Yet, on the ground

¹ Translated from Polish by Maciej Górnicki.

² Jenni – Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 1436.

³ See: Tab. 1.

⁴ Among those who wrote about kind David were Bassler, "A Man for All Seasons," 156–169; Dietrich, *The Early Monarchy in Israel*; Gunn, *The Story of King David*; Halpern, "The construction of the Davidic state," 44–75; McKenzie, *King David*; Miura, *David in Luke–Acts*; Noll, *The Faces of David*.

of Polish scholarship, the figure of David appears infrequently, and primarily in the context of the biblical pericopes associated with him.⁵ David appears as an ideal king, a victorious warrior, but also as a poet (author of psalms), or a sage and religious authority.

In early Judaism, on the other hand, he is also referred to as a prophet. The concept of David as a prophet is also outlined in the pages of the New Testament, where the inspired and prophetic character of the Psalms attributed to him is emphasized (cf. Matt 22:43; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42; Acts 1:16; 2:24, 34; 4:25; Rom 4:6; 11:9). David's prophetic status is clearly seen in early rabbinic thought, especially in the Targum of Jonathan.

In this paper, we will analyze David's implicit prophetic status in the Hebrew Bible (MT), indicate when the concept of David as a prophet emerged, and look at the pericopes from Targum Jonathan to Books of Samuel that speak of David as a prophet.

Tab. 1. Occurrence of the word David (דָּוִד, דָּוִד) in the Hebrew Bible (MT)

	דָּוִד	דָּוִד	דָּוִד + דָּוִד
Ruth	2		2
1 Sam	291		291
2 Sam	285		285
1 Kgs	75	3	78
2 Kgs	18		18
1 Chr		187	187
2 Chr		74	74
Ezra		3	3
Neh		8	8
Ps	87	1	88
Prov	1		1
Eccl	1		1
Cant		1	1

⁵ Polish scholars who dealt with David or pericopes associated with him include: Biegas, "Postać Dawida," 5–28; Brzegowy, "Prorok Natan," 7–19; Dziadosz, "Dawid i jego synowie," 39–63; Dziadosz, "Przymierze Dawidowe," 29–51; Dziadosz, "2 Sm 21–24 teologicznym kluczem," 5–39; Lemański, "Dawid i Goliat," 77–121; Linke, "Spis ludności," 139–166; Łach, "Walka Dawida," 280–290; Łach, *Proroctwo Natana*, 55–71; Nawrot, "Lamentował Dawid," 23–44; Parchem, *The "New" Picture*.

	דוד	דויד	דויד + דוד
Sir			
Isa	10		10
Jer	15		15
Ezek	3	1	4
Hos	1		1
Amos		2	2
Zech		6	6
TOTAL	789	286	1075

1. The Implicit Prophetic Status of David in the Hebrew Bible

In the Masoretic Text, David is never explicitly mentioned as a prophet. However, there are several texts that implicitly suggest David's prophetic status. David's prophetic character is implicitly portrayed in some Old Testament texts. One of the most important is David's last words (2 Sam 23:1–7), where they are introduced as an oracle: *The Oracle* (נאום) of David, son of Jesse, the oracle (נאום) of the man who was raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the sweet psalmist of Israel (v. 1). The use of the word oracle (נאום) here is fundamentally different from its use in introductions to prophetic statements. In prophetic literature, it refers to the prophet uttering the oracle of the Lord, while here it refers to the oracle of David. It should also be emphasized that David says: *The Spirit of the Lord* (רוח יהוה) speaks by me, and His word is upon my tongue (v. 2), which suggests its prophetic character.⁶

In the Books of Chronicles, the process of idealization of King David is noticeable, especially through a number of prophetic elements with which he is characterized. We find his resemblance to Elijah in worship and prayer, which resulted in fire from heaven: "And David built there an altar to the Lord and presented burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the Lord, and he answered him with fire from heaven upon the altar of burnt offering" (1 Chr 21:26). He is one who, like other prophets, receives God's direct instructions and passes them on to his people: "All this he

⁶ Pomykala, "Images of David," 40.

made clear by the writing from the hand of the Lord concerning it, all the work to be done according to the plan” (1 Chr 28:19). He is also mentioned on a par with other prophets, including Gad and Nathan: “And he stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, harps, and lyres, according to the commandment of David and of Gad the king’s seer and of Nathan the prophet; for the commandment was from the Lord through his prophets” (2 Chr 29:25). He is also called a “man of God” (אִישׁ־הָאֱלֹהִים) and compared to Moses (cf. 2 Chr 8:13–14).⁷

Moreover, David’s prophetic status as a “man of God” (אִישׁ־הָאֱלֹהִים) was linked to temple worship through the songs of praise and thanksgiving he commanded (cf. Neh 12:24), as well as the Psalms. Later addition of titles with David’s authorship to the Psalms was intended to enhance their authority and prophetic character, since the author was regarded not only as a courageous warrior and wise king, but also as a prophet (cf. Ps 70; 92; 95–96; 136). This is particularly evident in ancient Greek translations of the Hebrew text.⁸

2. The Concept of David as a Prophet

Pseudo-Philo’s *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* (LAB 59:4–5) emphasizes David’s ability to compose Psalms and foretell future events, which implicitly is to suggest his new, prophetic status. However, a clear concept depicting David as a prophet can be found in texts from Qumran (11Q5), but also in the works of Flavius Josephus (*Antiquitates*) and Philo of Alexandria (*De Agricultura*). In 11Q5, David’s new status related to his anointing is emphasized, and he clearly prophesies through the Psalms, combining the ability to compose them and foretell future events (cf. LAB 59:4–5; 60:3). Flavius Josephus also links David’s prophetic status to his anointing (*Ant.* 6.166). However, it is linked to political strategy (*Ant.* 7.391), not prophecy in the strict sense. Philo of Alexandria, using the Psalms

⁷ Miura, *David in Luke–Acts*, 128–129; cf. Pomykala, “Images of David,” 40–41; Mays, “David,” 150.

⁸ Miura, *David in Luke–Acts*, 130.

as a theological argument concerning the Torah, ascribes prophetic status to David as the author of the Psalms (*Agr.* 50). This is to strengthen his authority to be equal with that of Moses.⁹

A question therefore arises: when did the concept of David as a prophet first clearly emerge? Joseph A. Fitzmyer indicates that David began to be called a prophet in the tradition of Palestinian Jews as evidenced by 11Q5 and Josephus' *Antiquitates*.¹⁰ James L. Kugel, on the other hand, takes Philo of Alexandria into account, in line with the tradition of Alexandrian Jews, that the concept of David as a prophet already existed before the writings of Qumran, or the writings of Philo.¹¹ Kugel's argument seems more likely, as the concept was formed in the process of a long Jewish tradition. The concept of David as a prophet could have already existed before the birth of Christ. However, David as a prophet does not appear clearly until Philo of Alexandria (early first century AD) and the last period of the Qumran community (first half of the first century AD). The concept, therefore, in a strict sense belongs to extra-biblical tradition.

3. Prophetic Awareness of David in the Targum Jonathan

Targum Jonathan (תרגום יונתן בן עוזיאל) is a targum to the Prophets, of which Jonathan ben Uzziel is identified as the author.¹² The origin of this text was commonly assumed to be between the 3rd and 7th century, but based on linguistic analysis, it is believed that this targum was written in a Palestinian environment in the Judean area, no later than ad 135.¹³

⁹ Miura, *David in Luke–Acts*, 129.

¹⁰ Fitzmyer, "David," 338.

¹¹ Kugel, "David the Prophet," 54.

¹² More about targums and the Targum Jonathan, see: Flesher – Chilton, *The Targums*; Harrington – Saldarini, *Targum Jonathan*; Levine, *The Aramaic Version*; Mędala, *Wprowadzenie*; Rosik – Rapaport, *Wprowadzenie*; Smolar – Aberbach, *Studies in Targum Jonathan*; Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic*, II–III; Wróbel, *Wprowadzenie*.

¹³ Wróbel, *Wprowadzenie*, 157–158.

At first let us look at the occurrence of the words *prophet* (נבי), *prophecy* (נבואה) and *to prophesy* (נבי) in the Targum Jonathan to the Books of Samuel, which directly characterize a person's prophetic status.¹⁴ The noun *prophet* (נבי) occurs here 11 times, and in as many as six cases refers to a *prophet* of the LORD (TgJ 1 Sam 2:7; 9:6–8, 10), and once generally to a prophet as a *seer* (TgJ 1 Sam 9:9). Directly, the term prophet is attributed to Samuel (TgJ 1 Sam 2:1), Gad (TgJ 1 Sam 22:5) and Nathan (TgJ 2 Sam 7:2; 12:25), while David is not addressed in this way. Another noun is *prophecy* (נבואה), which occurs a total of 16 times, including in the compounds: *word of prophecy* (פתגם נבואה), *spirit of prophecy* (רוח נבואה) and *prophetic vision* (חזיון נבואה). It refers to Anna (TgJ 1 Sam 2:1), Samuel (TgJ 1 Sam 3:15, 20; 15:20), Saul (TgJ 1 Sam 10:6, 10), Gad (TgJ 2 Sam 24:11), Nathan (TgJ 2 Sam 7:4, 17), and David (TgJ 2 Sam 22:1; 23:1–2), among others. In turn, the verb *to prophesy* (נבי) occurs only six times. In four instances it refers to Anna (TgJ 1 Sam 2:2–5), and once to *the prophet of the LORD* (TgJ 1 Sam 9:6) and David (TgJ 2 Sam 23:1).

Tab. 2. Occurrence of the words: *prophet, prophecy* and *to prophesy* in TgJ 1–2 Sam

	TgJ 1 Sam	TgJ 2 Sam	Total
<i>prophet</i> (נבי)	9	2	11
<i>prophecy</i> (נבואה)	10	6	16
esp.:			
<i>word of prophecy</i> (פתגם נבואה)	3	3	6
<i>spirit of prophecy</i> (רוח נבואה)	5	1	6
<i>prophetic vision</i> (חזיון נבואה)	1		1
<i>to prophesy</i> (נבי)	5	1	6

The paraphrases of the Masoretic Text in the Targum Jonathan to the Books of Samuel show a rather literal translation with regard to the prose.¹⁵ In the case of David's two poetic statements (2 Sam 22:1–51; 23:1–8), we deal with a Midrashic interpretation of them as

¹⁴ Cf. Tab. 2. More on Targum Jonathan to the Books of Samuel, see: van Staaldouine-Sulman, *The Targum of Samuel*.

¹⁵ Cf. van Staaldouine-Sulman, *The Targum of Samuel*, 134–136.

oracles.¹⁶ The most important feature of these songs of David is that they already contain elements of the following principle: *Everything David said in his Book of Psalms applies to himself, to all Israel and to all ages* (Midr. Tehillim 18:1).¹⁷

The Targum presents a new conception of David's prophetic hymns, as well as of himself as a prophet. Here we have the definition of David's psalms as prophecy (TgJ 2 Sam 22:1; 23:1). This procedure gives them authority and allows them to go beyond their immediate poetic context. The king prophesies about past and future historical events both in relation to himself and Israel. It should be emphasized that prophecy here is synonymous with a theological interpretation of Israel's and David's past and future.

In the first song (TgJ 2 Sam 22:1–51) a clear targumist intervention in the original Masoretic Text can be seen already in the first verse:

Hebrew text (MT):

וידבר דוד ליהוה את־דברי השירה הזאת ביום הציל יהוה אתו מכף כל־איביו ומכף שאול 22:1

And David spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul. (KJV)

Targum Jonathan to 2 Sam:

ושבח דויד בנבואה קדם יי ית פתגמי תשבחתא הדא על כל יומיא דשיזיב יי ית ישראל מיד כל בעלי־דבביהון ואף לדויד שיזיביה מחרבא דשאול 22:1

*And David praised in prophecy before the LORD the words of this worship because of all the days when the LORD delivered Yisrael [Israel] from the hand of all his enemies, and also David from the sword of Shaul [Saul].*¹⁸

David did not so much *utter words of song in praise of the Lord* (2 Sam 22:1), as a kind of prayer, as *praised in prophecy before the LORD the words of this worship* (TgJ 2 Sam 22:1). So, we deal here not with a prayer based on one's own history and the history

¹⁶ Miura, *David in Luke–Acts*, 102.

¹⁷ Cf. van Staaldoune-Sulman, *The Targum of Samuel*, 643.

¹⁸ Kušmirek – Parchem, *Targum Jonatana*, 564–565.

of one's nation, but with a prophecy which is to emphasize the value of the entire king's statement. He prophesies both about the historical and the eschatological David/Messiah. His prophecy also encompasses matters regarding the history and future of the chosen nation. So, the conception of David's prophecy is interchangeable with his interpretation of both past and future historical events concerning Israel and David himself.¹⁹

Here we have an interpretation of the history of the patriarchs, as well as the Exodus from Egypt (cf. Jos. *Ant.* 3.315), in light of his own experiences. One of the characteristics of prophecy is to describe future events and persons in relation to the past, so David interprets future events through his own experiences.²⁰ As a result, the voice of David (TgJ 2 Sam 22:4, 7, 21) becomes the voice of Israel and the eschatological David-Messiah through parallel experiences between David, Israel and the Messiah. Therefore, by attributing the status of prophecy to the hymn, the voice of the king becomes simultaneously the voice of Israel and the Messiah.²¹

Also in the introduction to the second song (TgJ 2 Sam 23:1–7) we deal with evident insertions and purposeful transformations of the Masoretic Text done by the targumist, which look as follows:

Hebrew text (MT):

ואלה דברי דוד האחרנים נאם דוד בן־ישי ונאם הגבר הקם על משיח אלהי יעקב ונעים
זמרות ישראל 23:1

Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said (KJV)

רוח יהוה דבר־בי ומלתו על־לשוני 23:2

The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. (KJV)

Targum Jonathan to 2 Sam:

¹⁹ Miura, *David in Luke–Acts*, 105–106; van Staaldoune-Sulman, *The Targum of Samuel*, 715; cf. Brown, “Prophet,” 87; Meyer, “προφήτης,” 817.

²⁰ Kaiser, “What About the Future,” 151–152.

²¹ Miura, *David in Luke–Acts*, 106.

ואלין פתגמי נבואת דויד דאתנבי לסוף עלמא ליומי נחמתא דעתידין למיאי אמר דויד בר
 ישי ואימר גברא דמרבא למלכו משיח במימר אלהיה דיעקב ותקין לממני בחיך בסימ
 תשבחתיה דישראל

And these are the words of David's prophecy, which he prophesied about the end of the world, about the days of consolation that will come. Said David the son of Yishai [Jesse], and this is the utterance of the man who was anointed king, the Messiah, by the word of God Yaaqob [Jacob]. And it is good to praise Yisrael [Israel] with a sweet palate.

אמר דויד ברוח נבואה קדם יי אנה ממליל אלין ופתגמי קדשיה בפומי אנה סדר
*David said: "In the spirit of prophecy before the LORD I speak these things, and the words (of) His holiness I arrange in my mouth."*²²

The Targum Jonathan notes that *these are the words of David's prophecy, which he prophesied* (TgJ 2 Sam 23:1), while the Masoretic Text says: *these are the last words of David. The oracle of David* (2 Sam 23:1). The targumist emphasizes that the king prophesies when he speaks, which also authorizes his utterance. This gives the song an inspired character. Here we have a characteristic combination of the historical and eschatological David. Some point out that he prophesies about the eschatological Messiah, and the Messiah would be himself.

An additional motivation for the prophetic interpretation of this hymn is the mention of the Spirit of God (2 Sam 23:2), which in the Targum Jonathan is associated with prophecy and rendered as *the spirit of prophecy*. It should be noted that the targumist, in order to also emphasize David's prophetic self-consciousness, puts these words in his mouth: *In the spirit of prophecy before the LORD I speak these things, and the words* (TgJ 2 Sam 23:2).²³ However, it is also possible to see here the exclusion of direct contact between God and man, characteristic of targumism, since in the Masoretic Text we have the problematic and ambiguous phrase: *The Spirit of the LORD speaks through me* (2 Sam 23:2).²⁴

Moreover, we find David in the Targum Jonathan as a prophet through his performing a prophetic function, which is a prayer for

²² Kušmirek – Parchem, *Targum Jonatana*, 574–575

²³ Cf. van Staaldoune-Sulman, *The Targum of Samuel*, 668, 672.

²⁴ Cf. Kušmirek, "Zjawisko targumizmu," 235.

the combating people: *it would be good if you could pray for us for help from the city* (TgJ 2 Sam 18:3). This is a clear targumic insertion, which can be compared with the Masoretic Text as follows:²⁵

Hebrew text (MT):

וַיֹּאמֶר הָעָם לֹא תֵצֵא כִּי אִם־נָס נָנוּס לֹא־יִשְׁמָו אֲלֵינוּ לֵב וְאִם־יָמְתוּ חֲצִינוּ לֹא־יִשְׁמָו אֲלֵינוּ לֵב
כִּי־עַתָּה כַּמְנוּ עֶשְׂרֵה אֲלָפִים וְעַתָּה טוֹב כִּי־תִהְיֶה־לָנוּ מַעִיר לְעֹזֹר

But the people answered, Thou shalt not go forth: for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us: but now thou art worth ten thousand of us: therefore now it is better that thou succour us out of the city. (KJV)

Targum Jonathan to 2 Sam:

וְאָמַר עֲמָא לֹא תְפֹק אַרְי אַם מַעַרְק נַעְרוּק לֹא יִשׁוּן עֲלֵנָא לֵב וְאִם יִתְקַטְלוּן פְּלַגְנָא לֹא יִשׁוּן
עֲלֵנָא לֵב אַרְי כַּעַן אַתְּ יָכִיל לְמַסְעֵד כּוֹתְנָא עֶסְרָא אֲלָפִין וְכַעַן טַב אַרְי תְּצַלִי עֲלֵנָא מִקְרָתָא
לְמַסְעֵד

*But the people said: "You should not set out, because if we run away, they will not pay attention to us. Also if half of us are killed, they will not pay attention to us. And you are able to come to the aid of tens of thousands like us, and it would be good if you could pray for us to get help from the city."*²⁵

The aim here is to highlight David's prophetic authority by making him resemble Moses and other prophets. The targumic addition (TgJ 2 Sam 18:3) explains the intention of the people by referring to prayer. The importance and usefulness of prayer is emphasized, since through it David was able to act like ten thousand soldiers. He is more of an intercessor in prayer before God, who saves, than in military weapons.²⁶

Summary

We find implicit David's prophetic character in some texts of the Hebrew Bible (2 Sam 23:1–7; 1 Chr 21:26; 28:19; 2 Chr 8:13–14; 29:25). David as a prophet is mentioned directly in the literature of the Second Temple period (including 11Q5, Josephus' *Antiquitates*, Philo's *De Agricultura*). The concept of David as a prophet appeared

²⁵ Kušmirek – Parchem, *Targum Jonatana*, 540–541.

²⁶ Cf. van Staaldouine-Sulman, *The Targum of Samuel*, 593.

even before the birth of Christ. In targumic circles, David's prophetic status was emphasized. He is directly referred to as a prophet in the Targum Jonathan to the Books of Samuel, not so much by the term *prophet* (נְבִי), but by what he does – *prophesying* (נְבִי) and what he utters – *prophecy* (נְבוּאָה). Two songs (TgJ 2 Sam 22:1–51; 23:1–7) show David as a prophet whose prophecy interprets the historical events of Israel from the patriarchs to eschatological times. He becomes the voice of Israel and the Messiah (TgJ 2 Sam 22:1–51). Through his experiences, he speaks with the voice of Israel about its past and future events. Likewise, through his own experiences and image (external features and status, as well as internal characteristics), he speaks of the Messiah with the voice of the Messiah. David, in the authority of a prophet, simply prophesies about the Messiah, through proclamation (TgJ 2 Sam 23:1–7).²⁷

Dawid jako prorok w Targumie Jonatana do Ksiąg Samuela

Abstrakt: Głównym celem artykułu jest ukazanie króla Dawida jako proroka w Targumie Jonatana do Ksiąg Samuela. W pierwszej kolejności analizujemy problem, gdzie i w jaki sposób *implicite* w tekstach Biblii Hebrajskiej jest ukazany proroczy charakter Dawida. Pochylamy się także nad tym, kiedy narodziła się koncepcja Dawida jako proroka. Na tym tle w pracy analizujemy perykopy w Targumie Jonatana do Ksiąg Samuela, które wprost mówią o Dawidzie jako proroku (TgJ 2 Sm 18,3; 22,1–51; 23,1–7). Zmiana tekstu masoreckiego przez targumistę miała nie tylko ukazać Dawida jako proroka, ale wzmocnić autorytet i rangę jego wypowiedzi.

Słowa kluczowe: Dawid, prorok, targum, Targum Jonatana

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²⁷ Miura, *David in Luke–Acts*, 109.

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