David in the Wisdom of Ben Sira

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1. Introduction

David is one of the most significant figures in the Hebrew Bible. His story is told in 1 Sam 16-1 Kgs 2, and in a heavily rewritten form in 1 Chr 11-29. In addition to these narratives, David is often mentioned in the superscriptions of psalms (especially in the three Davidic subcollections: Pss 3-41; Pss 51-72; Pss 138-145). The concept of David as the father of the Israelite psalmody stems from the episode told in 1 Sam 16,14-23. According to this story, David was assigned to play harp at Saul's court and thus alleviate Saul's bad mood. It is also noteworthy that the editors put into David's mouth a lamentation – The Song of the Bow – over Saul and Jonathan after the battle in Gilboa (2 Sam 1,18-27). Later on, the image of David as a great musician and an organizer of the cult was put forward by the Chronicler. Several times David is also mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament, notably in the prophetic works. Many of these references are future-orientated expectations that the throne of David will be established (e.g. Isa 16,5; Jer 23,5; Ezek 37,24-25; Amos 9,11). In the Book of Amos, words of doom are addressed to those self-assured inhabitants of Zion and Samaria who play the harp and pretend to be like David by improvising music (Amos 6,5). This is a humorous reference to the widely spread image of "David the Musician".

We cannot honestly speak about only one picture of David transmitted by the Old Testament because there are many pictures. David is king, shepherd, composer, harp player, soldier and much more. None of the texts related to David in the Hebrew Bible derive from David's own era, but are the work of later centuries. The figure of David has been given the colouring and emphasis that the editors and theologians in different periods have endeavoured to give him. External evidence concerning David is meagre because we have only two inscriptions from the ninth century B.C.E. – the stele of Mesha and the inscription of Tel Dan – which mention David, and both of these inscriptions are debatable to a certain extent.[1] If we cannot grasp the historical

[1] To be precise, both of these inscriptions speak of *the house of David*, not of David as a person. The stele of Mesha stems from Moab, and there has been a vehement scholarly controversy over whether the consonants DWD actually refer to a proper noun because there is a possessive suffix attached to this word. Apparently, it seems that it was possible to use suffixes in connection with names, and the reference to the house of David is thus plausible; see André Lemaire, "La stèle de Mésha et l'histoire de l'ancien Israël," in D. Garrone and F. Israel (eds), *Storia e tradizioni di Israele. Scritti in onore di J. Alberto Soggin* (Brescia: Paideia, 1991), pp. 143–169. The inscription of Tel Dan also stems from the ninth century. In this text, Hazael – the king of Damascus – boasts of his victories and says that he killed

David with the sources at our disposal, we can at least examine how later authors portrayed David in their own times.

Below I shall focus on the way in which Ben Sira depicted David. Ben Sira was a sage who lived in Hellenistic Palestine. It is usually assumed that Ben Sira wrote his wisdom work slightly before the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. This would mean a date around 180 B.C.E.[2] Ben Sira was well aware of the biblical traditions that preceded him. This is indisputably conveyed when we look at the largest textual unit in his book called "The Praise of the Ancestors" (Sir 44-50). In this survey, Ben Sira goes through the history of the Chosen People. As sources he has used most of those books that form the Hebrew Bible.[3] It is now time to turn to the Wisdom of Ben Sira and find out the most important aspects in the picture that he gives of David.

2. David in Sir 47,1-12

In fact, the first occurrence of David in the Praise of the Fathers can be found in connection with Phinehas (45,25). This reference to David disturbs the chronological order that Ben Sira here otherwise follows. In this passage, Ben Sira underlines that God made an everlasting covenant with Phinehas: his descendants were allowed to serve as priests forever. Priesthood to Ben Sira meant hereditary Aaronite priesthood. As an analogy Ben Sira refers to David, son of Jesse, whose kingship passed only from son to son. Ben Sira stresses that a covenant was established with David, and this covenant comprised the promise of the royal dynasty.

Before entering into an exegesis of Sir 47,1-12 I shall offer a translation of the passage with text-critical notes.[4] At those points where the Hebrew text is fragmentary the English translation is based on the Greek text. In v. 9, the reconstruction of the Hebrew text is facilitated by the notes that are written in the margin of the manuscript B (MsB).

Ahaziahu son of Jehoram, king of the House of David. There are some obscurities concerning the discovery of the Tel Dan inscription, but even such a critical scholar as Israel Finkelstein seems to accept its reliability. He concludes: "The question we must therefore face is no longer one of David and Solomon's mere existence." Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed. Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts* (New York, N.Y.: Touchstone, 2002), pp. 129-130.

[2] Patrick W. Skehan and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (AB 39; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1987), p. 16.

[3] Alexander A. Di Lella, "Ben Sira's Praise of the Ancestors of Old (Sir 44-49): The History of Israel as Parenetic Apologetics," in N. Calduch-Benages and J. Liesen (eds), *History and Identity: How Israel's Later Authors Viewed Its Earlier History* (DCL, Yearbook 2006; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), pp. 151-170 (esp. p. 152), writes aptly: "Indeed, for the source of Ben Sira's many references to Israel's history we need look no farther than the earlier books of the OT."

[4] The following text editions are consulted: For the Hebrew: Pancratius C. Beentjes, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew: A Text Edition of All Extant Hebrew Manuscripts and a Synopsis of All Parallel Hebrew Ben Sira Texts* (Atlanta, Ga.: SBL, 2006); and for the Greek: Joseph Ziegler, *Sapientia Iesu Filii Sirach* (vol. XII/2 of *Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Societas Litterarum Gottingensis editum*; 2nd edition; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980).

(1) וגם אחריו עמד נתן להתיצב לפני דוד
(2) כי כחלב מורם מקדש כן דויד מישראל
(3) לכפירים שחק כגדי ולדובים כבני בשן
(4) בנעוריו הכה גבור ויס[.....]לם
בהניפו ידו על קלע וישבר ת[..]רת גלית
(5) כי קרא אל אל עליון ויתן בימינו עז
להדף את איש יודע מלחמות ולהרים את קרן עמו
(6) על כן ענו לו בנות ויכנוהו ברבבה
בעטותו צניף נלחם ומסביב הכניע צר
(7) ויתן בפלשתים ערים ועד היום שב[.] ק[…]
(8) בכל מעשהו נתן הודות לאל עליון [….]בוד
בכל לבו אוהב עושהו ובכל [……]
(9) נגינות שיר ל[……] וק[.]ל […….]לים תיקן
(10) [….]ל[……..] [……..]שנה
{מקדש}
בהל[..]ת שם קדשו לפני בק[.] יריין משפט
(11) [..] ויי העביר פשעו וירם לעולם קרנו
[..]תן לו חק ממלכת וכסאו הכין על ירושלם
(12) [.]בעבורו עמד אחריו בן [.]שכיל שכן לבטח

(1) After him Nathan rose up to serve in the presence of David. (2) As the fat is set apart from the sacred offering, so was David set apart from the Israelites. (3) He played with lions as though they were young goats, and with bears as though they were lambs of the flock. (4) In his youth he slew a hero, and to[ok away the disgrace of the peop]le, when he swung his hand on the sling and struck down the p[ri]de of Goliath. (5) For he called on God, the Most High, and he gave strength to his right arm to blow away a skilled warrior, and to exalt the horn of his people. (6) Therefore women glorified him and gave him an honourary name because of tens of thousands (he conquered). When wrapped with a diadem, he fought and humbled the enemy on every side. (7) He campaigned against the Philistinean cities; he crus[hed their] h[orn] till this day. (8) In all that he did he gave thanks to God, the Most High, [proclaiming his gl]ory; with all his heart he loved his Maker, and [daily had his praises sung]. (9) [He organized] string music [before the altar], and [made the] vo[ic]e in harmony with the harps. (10) [He gave beauty to the festivals, and arranged their times throughout the] year, while they pra[is]ed God's holy name, and the sanctuary resounded from early morni[ng]. (11) [Also], the Lord took away his sin, and exalted his horn forever; [he ga]ve him a decree of kingship and established his throne over Jerusalem. (12) Because of his merits, after him a [w]ise son rose up and lived in security.

2.1. Text-critical Notes

V. 1 The Hebrew text portrays Nathan's ministry by using the verb **יצב** (hitp.) which basically means "to take one's position", "to stand firm". Such a brief mention of Nathan indicates that Ben Sira endeavours to emphasize the prophetic succession that began with Samuel. The Greek translation makes this issue more explicit by adopting the verb προφητεύειν.

V. 3 The expression **בני בשן** (literally: "sons of Bashan") has caused many problems for scholars. Frequently, these words are read **בני צאן** ("lambs of the flock"),[5] which is based upon the reading of the Septuagint (ὡς ἐν ἄρνασιν προβάτων). This reading would fit well into the parallelistic structure of the sentence: to balance out the bears, a mention of some tame and timid animals is expected at this point. On the other hand, retaining the Hebrew as it stands in MsB is also possible.[6] The territorial name "Bashan" is often connected with bulls or cows (cf. Deut 32,14; Ezek

[5] Thus, for instance, Skehan and Di Lella, *Wisdom*, pp. 522, 524.
[6] Johannes Marböck, "Davids Erbe in gewandelter Zeit (Sir 47,1-11)," in I. Fischer (ed.), *Gottes Weisheit unter uns. Zur Theologie des Buches Sirach* (Herders biblische Studien 6; Freiburg: Herder, 1995), pp. 124-132 (esp. p. 125) translates: "…und mit Bären wie mit jungen (Stieren) von Baschan". Similarly, Georg Sauer, *Jesus Sirach/Ben Sira* (ATD Apokryphen 1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), p. 319.

39,18; Amos 4,1; Ps 22,13). But is playing with bulls much more secure than playing with bears? The anticipated contrast between the bears and the latter animals does not work, if the reading of MsB is followed. There is still another option for solving this riddle. Some dictionaries suggest that the word בשׂן means "serpent".[7] Once again the analogy suffers, because playing with serpents is definitely as dangerous as playing with bears, but as a whole this sentence could be an allusion to Isa 11,6-9, where the other three animals (גדי, כפיר and דב) that also occur in Ben Sira's description are mentioned. Isa 11,8 states that a small child shall play over the hole of the asp and put his hand on the adder's den. However, the word בשׂן is not used in Isa 11,8, and therefore this Isaianic passage does not offer us enough help for understanding the meaning of Sir 47,3. Because of the most fluent parallelism I am inclined to favour a reading that is compatible with the Septuagint.

V. 4 The Hebrew text refers to Goliath as a military hero (גבור). This Hebrew word does not mean "giant", though many commentators favour such a translation. It was the Greek translator who chose the word γίγας. MsB seems to presuppose the word עולם at the end of v. 4a, but that is corrupted from עם.[8]

V. 7 The literal translation of MsB at this point is astonishing: "He (David) gave/built cities for the Philistines." This hardly makes any sense, even though David dwelled in Ziklag among the Philistines for some time (1 Sam 27,5-7). The most reasonable solution is to read ויחן instead of ויתן. These two forms resemble each other considerably in the square script, and a copyist could easily confuse them. The verb חנה means "to encamp", "to pitch a camp", including in a military sense, which would fit with the context of Sir 47,7.

V. 8 The latter parts of the stichoi are corrupt in the scroll, and therefore the translation must lean on the Greek text. Lines c and d seem to be in reverse order in the Septuagint.

Vss 9-10 MsB is badly damaged concerning these lines, and the translation must mainly follow the Greek text. The last word of v. 10 – משׂפט – should be replaced by מקדשׁ, as the copyist himself or some revisor has pointed out by adding this correct word between the lines.

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[7] William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament. Based upon the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner* (Tenth corrected impression; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1989), p. 51.
[8] Skehan and Di Lella, *Wisdom*, p. 524.

V. 11 The missing Hebrew word at the beginning of the sentence is probably גם (cf. 2 Sam 12:13).

2.2. Interpretation

Alhough it was Samuel who anointed David as king, Nathan played an important role in David's life, too. Nathan delivered the divine promise of the unceasing Davidic dynasty on the throne of Israel (2 Sam 7). This promise was a source of comfort in times of distress, and Ben Sira returns to this oracle a couple of times in his Praise of the Ancestors when he describes situations of national crisis. A critical moment was faced after Solomon's death when the kingdom was divided. When Ben Sira refers to this sad incident, he reminds his audience that God does not withdraw his commitment, nor does he uproot the posterity of his chosen ones (Sir 47,22). God's promise is always open towards the future. Another reference to the abiding nature of Nathan's oracle can be seen in the manner in which Ben Sira discusses the downfall of the Northern Kingdom. Even though the divine punishment was severe because of the continual sins of Israel, Judah remained, a tiny people with a ruler from the house of David (Sir 48,15). Ben Sira's message is clear: God will remain faithful and he will show mercy on the descendants of David. In Ben Sira's mind, the best conceivable combination was a king closely consulting with a righteous prophet. David did fine with Nathan, and later Hezekiah succeeded because he had Isaiah as his adviser: "For Hezekiah did what was right and held fast to the paths of David, as ordered by the illustrious prophet Isaiah, who saw the truth in visions" (Sir 48,22).[9] When a king obeys a prophet's instructions, it will bring a blessing upon an entire people. But biblical traditions are also full of examples of things not following this kind of pattern. Ben Sira, for instance, refers to the fate of Jeremiah, who was disdained and abused by the Judean kings (Sir 49,6-7). Nathan's appearance in 47,1 aims at forming an *inclusio* with 47,11, which says that David's sin was taken away. Although Ben Sira does not mention Nathan in this connection, the prophet had a significant role in the process that led to David's penitence, punishment and forgiveness (cf. 2 Sam 12). In this respect, Ben Sira adheres to the historiography of the Deuteronomistic editors, since the Chronicler is silent about David's adultery, and accordingly the role of Nathan is diminished by him (Nathan is only introduced as the transmitter of the dynasty oracle in 1 Chr 17).

In 47,2, Ben Sira shows his exemplary knowledge of the Scriptures by making use of the verbal root רום (Hiph. / Hoph.). According to priestly legislation, fat was to be set apart from

[9] Translation according to Skehan and Di Lella, *Wisdom*, p. 536.

the meat offerings. Eating the fat of the sacrificed animals was not allowed, but as the most valuable part of the offering, the fat had to be burned for God. The technical term referring to the separating of the fat from the sacrifice is the verb רום.[10] It is no wonder that Ben Sira leans on priestly language, as cultic issues of all sorts are strongly stressed by him whenever he gets a chance to turn to them. Aaron surpasses Moses in length of presentation when Ben Sira devotes himself to a meticulous description of Aaron's priestly vestments (Sir 45,6-13). Furthermore, Ben Sira emphasises that an eternal covenant was made with Aaron and his offspring (45,15). God himself was Aaron's legacy (45,22). The adoptation of priestly language by Ben Sira is striking. Another great option for making use of cultic vocabulary is utilized by Ben Sira at the end of the Praise of the Ancestors, when he describes the High Priest Simon II as the leader of sacrificial worship (Sir 50). Priestly concepts were well known to Ben Sira, and it is astonishing how eloquently he can play with words in 47,2. The very same verb רום that is so often used in the Priestly Code in its cultic sense is also used in Ps 89,20 as referring to David's election: הרימותי בחור מעם "I have exalted one chosen from the people". Undoubtedly, Ben Sira was aware of Ps 89, and by combining in his mind these two aspects of the same verb he has managed to create a nice pun.

If Sir 47,2 is regarded as an introduction to David's life and sustainable significance, verses 3-7 focus on David's combat skills since his youth. David as a military genius seems to be an important aspect that Ben Sira desires to highlight. This picture of David is mostly based upon the stories told in the Deuteronomistic History. Another central aspect in David's life, according to Ben Sira, is his role as an inaugurator of temple worship – even before the temple was built! This picture of David that is displayed in 47,8-10 reflects Chronistic theology to such an extent that there can be no doubt that Ben Sira had known of the Chronicles. Let us first turn to verses 3-7.

When Ben Sira says that David ridiculed lions and bears, he refers to David's famous self-boast in front of Saul slightly before his fight against Goliath (1 Sam 17,34-36). David desperately tried to convince the king and his court that despite his young age he was capable of fighting hard. To prove this David mentioned his earlier easy wins over lions and bears, which gave Ben Sira a good reason to use the verb שׂחק in this connection: David did not have to fight seriously, it sufficed that he only played with his adversaries and laughed at these wild beasts. Ben Sira's description in v. 3 does not contain verbatim quotations; he even prefers the word כפיר for 'lion', whereas 1 Sam 17,34-36 uses ארי. Nonetheless, it is evident that Ben Sira has used traditions of David in their Deuteronomistic form as his source text for v. 3. The Chronicler does not pay attention to David's heroic youth. Ben Sira was not the only later author who was inspired by

[10] Exod 29,13.22.27; Lev 2,9; 3,3-5.9–11.14–16; 4,8.10.19.

David's victorious battles against the beasts. Some apocryphal psalms are devoted to this theme, too. Psalm 152 (number IV in the apocryphal psalms of the Syriac Peshitta) refers in its heading to David's fight with a lion and a bear. In fact, this psalm aspires to give an impression that it is David's cry for help during his battle, and wild beasts are also mentioned in Ps 152,2. Psalm 153 (number V according to the Peshitta) continues this topic by expressing David's song of thanksgiving after he had beaten the frightening animals. This is explicitly said in the superscription of Ps 153, and even v. 4 alludes back to David's battle with the lion and the bear. These apocryphal psalms represent a poetic interpretation for the brief mention in 1 Sam 17,34-36.[11]

Ben Sira continues his retelling of the Deuteronomistic description in v. 4 when he marvels at the way David struck down the formidable opponent Goliath. David's encounter with Goliath is told in 1 Sam 17,40-54, and notably only there, because 2 Sam 21,19 gives the honour of killing Goliath to Elhanan from Bethlehem, whereas 1 Chr 20,5 revises this information by stating that Elhanan in fact killed Goliath's brother! Thus the Chronicler leaves the door open for David's heroic act, but he does not explicitly repeat the battle story between David and Goliath. One reason for this may have been the Chronicler's reluctance to focus more closely on the reign of Saul. It is a clear theological tendency that the Chronicler begins his narrative after the genealogies with descriptions of Saul's death and David's kingship (1 Chr 10-11).[12] Apocryphal Psalm 151 also deals with David's encounter with Goliath, and it is a wonder that no psalm superscription in the Masoretic Psalter is connected with this famous episode. Sir 47,4 uses partly the same words as 1 Sam 17, including גבור (it refers to Goliath in 1 Sam 17,51), the verb נכה (cf. 1 Sam 17,50) and especially the name of the weapon קלע (1 Sam 17,40.49-50).

David's achievement is not based on his clever tactics or on his better mobility, but it was actually God who gave the victory because David called on God the Most High (Sir 47,5). This refers to David's speeches in 1 Sam 17,37.45-47, which underline that God can save even without sword and spear. David put his life into the hands of God and trusted solely in his help.[13] This was exemplary in Ben Sira's eyes, and 47,5 can with good reason be regarded as a theological centre in

[11] Dating these Syriac psalms is a difficult task, as is dating the canonical psalms. Pss 151-155 are all preserved in Syriac, but Ps 151 has even found its way into the Septuagint. Moreover, Ps 151 and Pss 154-155 have been discovered in their Hebrew form from Qumran. It is, however, likely that all of these five apocryphal psalms are older than the Qumran community. See the discussion and evaluation by Adam Simon van der Woude, "Die fünf syrischen Psalmen," in *Poetische Schriften* (JSHRZ, Band IV; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1974), pp. 31-47.

[12] It is characteristic of Ben Sira's selective historiography that he simply ignores many negative persons of the past, including Saul, who is only briefly mentioned without name in the description where the spirit of Samuel prophesied and told the king his fate (Sir 46,20).

[13] Benjamin G. Wright, "The Use and Interpretation of Biblical Tradition in Ben Sira's Praise of the Ancestors," in G.G. Xeravits and J. Zsengellér (eds), *Studies in the Book of Ben Sira. Papers of the Third International Conference on the Deuterocanonical Books, Shime'on Centre, Pápa, Hungary, 18-20 May, 2006* (JSJSup 127; Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 183-207 (esp. p. 203), emphasizes that David actually never prays in the narrative of 1 Sam 17; he simply claims in his speech to Goliath that God will enable him to defeat the giant.

the unit of vss 4-7.[14] The Praise of the Ancestors contains many events where people in the midst of anguish cry to the Lord for help, and their prayers are heard. Such is the case with Joshua (Sir 46,5), Samuel (Sir 46,16) and the people of Judah in the time of Hezekiah (Sir 48,20). The young David who calls on God fits perfectly well with this scheme, which seems to be of importance to Ben Sira. Even the wording is precisely the same in Sir 46,5 and Sir 47,5 (קרא אל אל עליון), and the same pattern is used in the plural in Sir 48,20. The manuscript is unfortunately so corrupt that the Hebrew in Sir 46,16 is not completely legible, and it is difficult to say which words Ben Sira employed there (the source text in 1 Sam 7,7-9 uses the expression זעק אל־יהוה). That God gave strength to David's right arm is not explicitly said with these words in 1 Sam 17, but Ben Sira might have had in mind other biblical accounts where 'right hand' is used as a metaphor for strength and military success (e.g. Ps 89,14.43). It is curious that Ben Sira uses the expression 'Most High God' (אל עליון) when he refers to God,[15] even though his source text in 1 Sam 17 speaks of YHWH (vss 37.45-47), of *Elohim* (v. 46) or in a long form of "the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel" (יהוה צבאות אלהי מערכות ישׂראל; v. 45). It seems that Ben Sira is fond of using the form "God the Most High". Ben Sira's reference to Goliath as a skilled warrior stems from 1 Sam 17,33, where the wording is nearly the same: איש יודע מלחמות (Sir 47,5) / איש מלחמה (1 Sam 17,33). Ben Sira's statement that God exalted through David the horn of his people does not directly derive from 1 Sam 17. But the saying as such is well known, particularly from the Deuteronomistic or deuteronomistically influenced literature (1 Sam 2,10; Ps 89,18.25; Ps 132,17). The closest parallel to Ben Sira's text, however, can be found in Ps 148,14 (וירם קרן לעמו), which is probably an addition to an originally late psalm.[16]

Sir 47,6 reminds us of the triumphant (young) women who sang to honour David and Saul (1 Sam 18,6-7). This episode led to Saul's implacable jealousy and hatred towards David, although Ben Sira does not mention this detail. The verb for singing (ענה) is the same in 1 Sam 18,7 and Sir 47,6, as well as the number 10,000 (רבבה with the preposition ב) referring to the great amount of enemies whom David managed to slay. The very same expression also occurs in 1 Sam 21,12 and 29,5. The singers are introduced as "women" (נשׁים) in 1 Sam 18,7, whereas they are said

[14] Marböck, "Davids Erbe," p. 127.

[15] Robert C. T. Hayward, "El Elyon and the Divine Names in Ben Sira," in R. Egger-Wenzel (ed.), *Ben Sira's God. Proceedings of the International Ben Sira Conference Durham-Ushaw College 2001* (BZAW 321; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002), pp. 180-198 (esp. pp. 182-183), observes that Ben Sira uses the title אל עליון especially when God is addressed in prayers, praises, confessions or thanksgivings.

[16] Marko Marttila, *Collective Reinterpretation in the Psalms. A Study of the Redaction History of the Psalter* (FAT II/13; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), pp. 165-167. It is noteworthy that the entire verse Ps 148,14 is repeated at the end of a liturgical prayer in Sir 51,12o. But this prayer hardly stems from Ben Sira himself, and it is included only by MsB. See Lutz Schrader, *Leiden und Gerechtigkeit. Studien zu Theologie und Textgeschichte des Sirachbuches* (BET 27; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1994), pp. 74-75.

to be "young women" (בנות) according to Sir 47,6. Fundamentally, this difference is not crucial. The next sentence in 47,6 is complicated. First, the verb עטה is employed. With the accusative this verb means "to wrap oneself with" / "to cover oneself with", as is seen, for example, in 1 Sam 28,14 where the spirit of Samuel is depicted as an old man wrapped in a robe. The use of this verb is understandable when it occurs together with garments that cover the body with which one can truly wrap oneself. But it is peculiar that Ben Sira combines this verb with the word צניף, which occurs only three times in the canonical books of the Old Testament and has the meaning "turban".[17] It is best to interpret Ben Sira's thought thus that he means that David's head was covered with a turban, which actually is a synonym for crown in this context. Before his passage on David, Ben Sira has used the words עטה and צניף together in 40,4, and even there the context implies that "crown" is the most appropriate translation for צניף. In any case, this is something new that Ben Sira develops, as none of his sources focus on describing the crown of David. According to the Deuteronomistic History, David's anointing by Samuel (1 Sam 16,13) and later by the men of Judah (2 Sam 2,4) and by the elders of Israel (2 Sam 5,3) signified his coronation. David's crown is not at all mentioned in DtrG. It is only referred to in Ps 89,40 with the term נזר, and in Ps 89,20, if the Hebrew word עזר is replaced by נזר, as Veijola suggests,[18] but this conjecture is not necessary, because the text in Ps 89,20 remains fully understandable even without it.[19] In the light of biblical testimony, David was a capable military commander, and Sir 47,6b summarizes his successes in this field. David defeated the Jebusites (2 Sam 5,6-8), the Moabites (2 Sam 8,2), the Arameans (2 Sam 8,5-12; 10,15-19), the Edomites (2 Sam 8,14), the Ammonites (2 Sam 10,1-14; 11,1) and the Philistines (2 Sam 5,17-25; 8,1; 21,15-22). It is somewhat surprising that David's conquest of Jerusalem is not explicitly mentioned by Ben Sira, who otherwise so heavily concentrates on this city.[20] In his concise summary, Ben Sira employs the verb כנע (Hiph.) when describing how David defeated his enemies. This verb is also used in 2 Sam 8,1 where it is stated that David subdued the Philistines.

As it was noted in the text-critical analysis, Sir 47,7a hardly functions in such a form as it is transmitted by MsB. The verb נתן as the predicate is incomprehensible, because David did

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[17] The canonical occurrences are in Isa 62,3; Zech 3,5 and Job 29,14. See Holladay, *Lexicon*, p. 308.

[18] Timo Veijola, *Verheißung in der Krise. Studien zur Literatur und Theologie der Exilszeit anhand des 89. Psalms* (AASF B 220; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1982), p. 31.

[19] Klaus Seybold, *Die Psalmen* (HAT I/15; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), pp. 347, 349, holds to עזר and renders it as meaning 'help', but he, too, assumes that the form נזר is conceivable as well. On the other hand, the word עזר is also retained in 4QPsX, which mainly repeats the wording of Ps 89:20-31 (without vss 24-25 and 29-30) but makes at certain points alterations and even omissions. See Eugene Ulrich, "4QPsX," in E. Ulrich et al. (eds), *Qumran Cave 4, XI Psalms to Chronicles* (DJD XVI; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 163-69.

[20] This is also wondered by Sauer, *Jesus Sirach*, p. 321.

not give cities to or build cities for the Philistines.[21] Such a positive statement even strongly contradicts all that has just been said in the previous verse and that will be said in 47,7b. The Philistines had been the enemy; they had been a constant menace to the Israelites, and even right at the end of his book before the epilogue, the Philistines are once again mentioned in a negative light (Sir 50,26).[22] All this suggests that Ben Sira had the same polemical attitude throughout towards the Philistines, even though this nation had ceased to exist centuries before Ben Sira's birth. It is hardly conceivable that Ben Sira could have said anything positive about the Philistines. Neither does his main source – the Deuteronomistic History – depict the Philistines in a positive light. It is true that David lived a period of time among the Philistines because he was forced to flee Saul's persecution. According to 1 Sam 27,5-6, the city of Ziklag was given to David and his people in the land of the Philistines, but this mention does not really fit with Ben Sira's description that speaks of cities in the plural. Different solutions have been suggested. Some scholars have left the Hebrew text aside and followed the reading of LXX: καὶ ἐξουδένωσεν Φυλιστιιμ τοὺς ὑπεναντίους "and he disdained Philistines, the enemies". This reading is fluent and undoubtedly fits with its context, but there are also some weaknesses, which are the reason that I am not inclined to prefer the Greek text at this point. First, the Greek verb ἐξουδενόω usually presupposes the Hebrew words בזה (2 Kgs 19,21; Ezek 22,8; 2 Chr 36,16) or מאס (Ezek 21,15; Job 30,1), and if either of these verbs originally was in the Hebrew text of Sir 47,7, it is difficult to imagine why it was later replaced with נתן. Even an assumption of a copyist's error is hardly convincing because the verbs look so different. Furthermore, the Greek reading would require an amendment to the Hebrew text because τοὺς ὑπεναντίους does not correspond to ערים but to צרים. It seems that the Greek translator has here chosen a relatively free way to translate verse 7. For these reasons I partly favour the text-critical decision made by Skehan and Di Lella,[23] who plausibly argue that ויתן is a misreading of ויחן and that the reference is actually made to David's campaigns (cf. Judg 9,50 וילך אבימלך אל־תבץ *ויחן בתבץ* וילכדה "Then Abimelech went to Thebez, and *encamped against Thebez*, and took it"[24]). I differ, however, from Skehan and Di Lella in the interpretation of ערים. While they see it as an Aramaized form of צרים and thus reach the translation "He campaigned against the hostile Philistines", I would like to retain ערים as it is, thus referring to the cities of the Philistines. This implies a complete destruction of the Philistean forces, and this state of affairs is

[21] Nonetheless, Sauer, *Jesus Sirach*, p. 319, retains the Hebrew form of MsB and renders: "Er baute unter den Philistern Städte." The same rendering is also given by Dietrich, *David*, p. 89.
[22] Wright, "Biblical Tradition," p. 202.
[23] Skehan – Di Lella, *Wisdom*, p. 524.
[24] Translation according to NRSV.

stressed in Sir 47,7b: "Until this day David crushed their horn," i.e. the Philistines were no longer a threat to the Israelites. Verbatim connections between Sir 47,7 and 2 Sam cannot be pointed out.

Sir 47,7 concludes Ben Sira's description of David as a military hero that began in 47,4. Now he turns to another important aspect in David's life, namely to David's role in worship. In all his deeds he gave thanks to God the Most High (אל עליון). The same divine name occurs in 47,5, and as it was noted there, this name is particularly used in the later literature when somebody prays or praises God.[25] Ben Sira portrays David as a person who prays constantly, which is a foreign feature in the picture of David in the Deuteronomistic History, whose presentation Ben Sira has so far rather firmly followed. Deuteronomists admit that David prayed (e.g. 2 Sam 7,18-29; 12,20), but prayer is not at all in the foreground in David's activities. Instead, Ben Sira here leans on several superscriptions of the Psalter that convey David's prayers to God, including some psalms of thanksgiving (Pss 18, 30, 34, 65 and 138). A characteristically Deuteronomistic emphasis is displayed in Sir 47,8 when Ben Sira writes that David loved his Maker with all his heart (בכל לבו אוהב עושׂהו). This leads us straight to the core of the Deuteronomistic proclamation, namely to *Shema Jisrael*; שׁמע ישׂראל יהוה אלהינו יהוה אחד ואהבת את יהוה אלהיך בכל־לבבך ובכל־נפשׁך ובכל־מאדך (Deut 6,4-5). Here it is emphatically decreed that one should love God with all one's heart. Is there something concrete related to this saying when Ben Sira uses it in his description of David? In which sense did David love God with all his heart? Probably the answer lies in the monolatric nature of the *Shema*. There were no other gods for Israelites except Yahweh. Before the *Shema* this is underlined in the first commandment of the Decalogue (Deut 5,7).[26] Though David was not quite faultless in Ben Sira's eyes, he was not guilty of idolatry, the worst sin that Ben Sira could envisage.[27] This was particularly the criterion by which Ben Sira evaluated the Judean kings, and eventually only David, Hezekiah and Josiah were non-sinners (Sir 49,4). The biggest abomination to Ben Sira was thus idolatry, and David was impeccable in this respect because he

[25] Hayward, "El Elyon," pp. 182-183.

[26] Timo Veijola, *Das 5. Buch Mose / Deuteronomium. Kapitel 1,1–16,17* (ATD 8,1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), p. 178, puts it clearly: "Der Nominalsatz 'Jahwe ist einzig' will natürlich nicht im Sinne des absoluten Monotheismus verstanden werden, sondern im Horizont der vorangehenden, parallelen Aussage ('Jahwe ist unser Gott') schlicht besagen, dass Jahwe unser einziger Gott sei. Es geht also in V. 4b letzten Endes um nichts anderes als das zentrale Anliegen des Ersten Gebots (mit dem Prolog) des Dekalogs." Matthias Köckert, *Die zehn Gebote* (Wissen in der Beck'schen Reihe 2430; München: Beck, 2007), p. 49, remarks that the first commandment does not deny the existence of foreign gods but prohibits their worship in Israel. This is a phase of monolatry that later developed into full-scale monotheism. About this interesting development, see Juha Pakkala, "Die Entwicklung der Gotteskonzeptionen in den deuteronomistischen Redaktionen von polytheistischen zu monotheistischen Vorstellungen," in M. Witte et al. (eds), *Die deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerke. Redaktions- und religionsgeschichtliche Perspektiven zur 'Deuteronomismus'-Diskussion in Tora und Vorderen Propheten* (BZAW 365; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), pp. 239-248.

[27] Teresa R. Brown, "God and Men in Israel's History: God and Idol Worship in Praise of the Fathers (Sir 44-50)," in R. Egger-Wenzel (ed.), *Ben Sira's God. Proceedings of the International Ben Sira Conference Durham-Ushaw College 2001* (BZAW 321; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002), pp. 214-220.

loved his Maker with all his heart and obeyed the divine legislation. Even the last sentence in Sir 47,8 – which is partly corrupt in Hebrew – contains repercussions from the *Shema*. Obviously, Ben Sira says in 47,8bβ that David praised God daily (thus LXX and the Peshitta). This is a liturgical reminiscent of Deut 6,6-9 that urges that one should continuously contemplate the commandments: they must be kept in mind daily, both early in the morning and late in the evening. Obeying God or praising God is not a part-time job, according to the Deuteronomistic editors and Ben Sira. It is something that must be accomplished whole-heartedly. In Ben Sira's opinion, David succeeded in this, and therefore he is an exemplary figure for future generations.

Sir 47,9-10 is based on a Chronistic view of David. The Chronicler mentions several times that David organized music for worship (1 Chr 15,16; 16,4-6; 23,5), even though the temple was not yet built. There is nothing that hints in this direction in the Deuteronomistic History. Unfortunately, Ben Sira's Hebrew text is badly corrupt at this point, and we must lean on the Greek translation when we try to reconstruct the text. On this basis, it seems that David combined human voices with the voice of stringed instruments and set the singers before the altar. As regards Sir 47,9, MsB(Marg) contains the word מזמור, which is often connected with David in the superscriptions of the Psalter (מזמור לדוד; Ps 3,1; 4,1; 5,1; 6,1; 8,1; 9,1 etc.). Also, the word נגינות is typical of the headings in the Psalter (Ps 4,1; 6,1; 54,1; 55,1; 67,1; 76,1); it also occurs in the middle of a psalm in Ps 77,7, but the meaning at that point is little obscure.[28] Furthermore, as a technical musical term it is found in Hab 3,19. In 1-2 Chr, however, this word cannot be attested, and this indicates that Ben Sira did not slavishly follow the wording of the Chronicles, even though he made use of the Chronicler's concept of David as the organizer of the cult. That the sanctuary resounded from early morning may imply that the priests stayed there all day and all night long (cf. 1 Chr 16,40; Ps 134,1).[29]

In Sir 47,11, Ben Sira returns to the Deuteronomistic source literature when he speaks of David's sin. Indisputably, Ben Sira here refers to David's famous act of adultery with Bathsheba. One may even say that a sin caused another sin, because David not only slept with Bathsheba, but to hide his crime he decided to make sure that Bathsheba's husband Uriah was killed in battle (2 Sam 11). Maybe for this reason the Greek text speaks of David's sins in the plural (τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτοῦ). On the other hand, to maintain an immaculate picture of David, the Chronicler does not

[28] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms*, p. 274.

[29] Robert C. T. Hayward, *The Jewish Temple. A Non-Biblical Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 20-24, refers to Greek philosopher Hecataeus of Abdera, who lived in the days of Alexander the Great and Ptolemy I. Hecataeus composed a work of history with references even to the Jews. This work no longer exists, but some parts of it have survived because they were quoted by Josephus (*Cont. Ap. I.* 185-204). In one of these extracts (199), Hecataeus mentions that priests spent their time in the temple of Jerusalem night and day.

mention these episodes at all in David's life. This is an important observation. The Chronicler, who probably composed his work in the third century B.C.E., exploited the Deuteronomistic History to a remarkable extent. That was his basic source which he either wanted to interpret, rewrite or replace with his own historiography.[30] The Chronicler has strong theological emphases, and when he deviates from the Deuteronomistic History, he usually does it for theological reasons. David is a figure that the Chronicler lifts on a podium. Of course, David is a significant person already in DtrG, but especially David's faultlessness and key role in establishing the cult are the things which the Chronicler brings to the picture of David. Consequently, the Chronicler is silent about David's adultery with Bathsheba and Abshalom's rebellion against his father. The Chronicler's historiography is thus a highly idealistic view of what once happened in the past. Ben Sira, writing after the Chronicler and being aware of both the Deuteronomistic and Chronistic traditions, was facing a difficult situation: how could both of these sources that portray David so differently at certain important points be used in a balanced way? As we have seen above, it was Ben Sira's solution to describe David professionally in a two-fold way: David was a successful warrior and a military commander (Dtr view) and he was a musician and the organizer of cultic practices (Chr view). At the end of his description, Ben Sira then returns to the Deuteronomistic concept with a very precise adherence to the Deuteronomistic phrase that is found in 2 Sam 12,13b.

גם־יהוה העביר חטאתך 2 Sam 12,13b

ייי העביר פשׁעו [..] Sir 47,11 (the corrupted opening of the line may well have included the small word גם).[31]

Sir 47,11aβ employs the same expression that was used in v. 5. "To exalt the horn" is a saying that occurs both in the Deuteronomistic contexts and elsewhere (1 Sam 2,10; Ps 89,18.25; Ps 132,17; Ps 148,14).[32] In Sir 47,5, its use is reminiscent of the nomistic layer DtrN, in whose interpretation the

[30] As an example of a study that argues that the Chronicler endeavoured to replace the Deuteronomistic History, one could mention the following work: Isaac Kalimi, *An Ancient Israelite Historian. Studies in the Chronicler, His Time, Place and Writing* (SSN, vol. 46; Leiden: Brill, 2005). On the other hand, Georg Steins, "Die Bücher der Chronik," in E. Zenger et al. (eds), *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Studienbücher Theologie 1,1; 5th edition; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2004), pp. 249-262 (esp. p. 258), favours the view that the Chronicler rather wanted to interpret and supplement his source. Konrad Schmid, *Literaturgeschichte des Alten Testaments. Eine Einführung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2008), pp. 187-190, offers an illuminating compact survey on the main points where the Chronicler differed from the work of the Deuteronomists.

[31] It is, however, noteworthy that the word used for 'sin' is different in these two parallel sentences. Basically, these words are very close to each other – nearly synonyms – and we must always bear in mind the possibility that Ben Sira quoted his sources from memory. If that is the case, it is no wonder that some similar words mutually interchange.

[32] It is noteworthy that Sir 51,12h urges thanking God, who "makes a horn to sprout for the house of David". This liturgical prayer, which is included only in MsB, is definitely an addition, but it could have been composed rather soon after Ben Sira if its allusions to the Zadokite priesthood suggest a date before the Hasmonaean occupation of the high priestly office; see Géza Xeravits, "The Figure of David in the Book of Ben Sira," *Hen* XXIII (2001): pp. 27-38 (esp. pp. 35-36). In any case, this text indisputably shows how the house of David maintained its significance in prayers written centuries after the Davidic monarchy had ceased to exist.

people of Israel surpass earthly monarchs (cf. 2 Sam 5,12b). Sir 47,11b, however, contains plenty of similarities with 2 Sam 7,12-16. Striking is the use of similar terminology:

וכוננתי את־כסא ממלכתו עד־עולם 2 Sam 7,13

נאמן ביתך וממלכתך עד־עולם לפניך כסאך יהיה נכון עד־עולם 2 Sam 7,16

תן לו חק ממלכת וכסאו הכין על ירושלם[..] Sir 47,11b

Covenant theology is put forward in Sir 47,11 by the concept of חק, which is repeatedly rendered with διαθήκη in the Greek Ben Sira.[33] One problem – which was noted rather early – deals with the last geographical name in v. 11. MsB states that God had established David's throne over Jerusalem. It may have sounded restricted if taken literally since 2 Sam 5,1-3 tells how David became the king of both Judah and Israel ("It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you shall be ruler over Israel"; 2 Sam 5,2). Accordingly, the Greek Ben Sira says that God gave David a glorious throne in Israel. The difference between the Hebrew and Greek texts is, however, only apparent, because David's throne over Jerusalem naturally implies that he reigned over a united monarchy ("At Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years"; 2 Sam 5,5).

Usually, commentators regard Sir 47,11 as the concluding sentence in the description of David and address the passage from v. 12 onward to Solomon. Such a division is a modern issue because ancient manuscripts do not reveal any seam or blank lines between vss 11 and 12. At this point I would like to depart from the main line of the scholars and consider v. 12 as a part of the description of David. Hence, the passage of Solomon begins in v. 13, where Solomon's name is explicitly mentioned for the first time. Instead, v. 12 tells more about David than about Solomon. It is said that David had a learned son who succeeded him on the throne as the divine oracle had promised. Furthermore, it is stressed that because of David's merits (בעבורו) this son was able to enjoy a peaceful reign. Ben Sira's sentence probably alludes to 1 Kgs 11,11-12 where God says to Solomon: "(11) Since this has been your mind and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and give it to your servant. (12) Yet for the sake of your father David (למען דוד אביך) I will not do it in your lifetime; I will tear it out of the hand of your son."[34] David was in a theological sense a yardstick for all the Judean kings that succeeded him on the throne. This is evident when we look at the way in which the Judean kings are evaluated by the Deuteronomistic editors: kings either did what was good or (mostly) what was evil in the eyes of Yahweh. Occasionally, later monarchs were compared with

[33] For this phenomenon, see Marko Marttila, "'Statute' or 'Covenant'? Remarks on the Rendering of the Word חק in the Greek Ben Sira," in A. Voitila and J. Jokiranta (eds), *Scripture in Transition. Essays on Septuagint, Hebrew Bible, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honour of Raija Sollamo* (JSJSup 126; Leiden: Brill, 2008), pp. 73-89.

[34] Translation according to NRSV.

David. Good kings did what was right just as their ancestor David had done (e.g. 2 Kgs 18,3), while the bad kings did not do what was right as their ancestor David had done (e.g. 2 Kgs 16,2). Despite some incompetent rulers the kingdom was blessed because of David and his election. Although God's wrath was occasionally provoked, he left a remnant for David's offspring, as Ben Sira notes in 47,22.

One thing still deserves our attention: Ben Sira's picture of David is completely devoid of any eschatological features. David was not a Messianic figure to him. This observation is well in line with Ben Sira's teachings elsewhere in his book. Though some scholars occasionally tend to see apocalyptic aspects in Ben Sira's work,[35] it is better to share Johannes Marböck's balanced view that Ben Sira may not be regarded as an apocalyptist. This does not exclude the possibility that Ben Sira was to some extent aware of apocalyptic traditions and even exploited their material here and there in his book,[36] but such hints are only a curiosity. For Ben Sira, David was an ideal ruler whose success was based on divine election and David's own impeccable obedience to God's commandments. According to the Deuteronomistic pattern, Ben Sira used David as a model and evaluated his successors to the throne from the viewpoint of whether they remained on the path of their ancestor David or not. But the concept of *David redivivus* is absolutely foreign to Ben Sira, even though it began to blossom shortly after his time.[37]

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[35] The most famous advocate for the Messianic perspective in Ben Sira has in recent times been James D. Martin. In Ben Sira's passage on David, Martin argues that the addition of לעולם in Sir 47,11 may give Messianic overtones to the whole sentence, but this argument is not convincing because the term לעולם is simply quoted from Nathan's oracle (2 Sam 7) where it occurs several times, and it does not even mean an endless time in that connection, but rather a long timespan; Dietrich, *David*, p. 330. Martin's second example concerns Sir 47,22 where he suggests reading ויתן as an indicative imperfect, referring thus to the future and supposing a root from the Davidic dynasty. Whether or not this was the original meaning of Ben Sira, at least his grandson has translated this particular verb in the past tense (ἔδωκεν), and underplaying any Messianic speculations. The third passage related to David that Martin wants to see in a Messianic light is Sir 45,25 where the Hebrew text is very difficult to understand. Nonetheless, Martin retains the Hebrew and parallels the Davidic covenant with the Aaronic high-priesthood. Martin implies that Sir 45,25 even speaks of priestly Messianism. See James D. Martin, "Ben Sira's Hymn to the Fathers. A Messianic Perspective," in A.S. van der Woude (ed.), *Crises and Perspectives. Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Polytheism, Biblical Theology, Palestinian Archaeology and Intertestamental Literature* (OtSt XXIV; Leiden: Brill, 1986), pp. 107-119. Pancratius C. Beentjes, "'The Countries Marvelled at You'. King Solomon in Ben Sira 47:12–22," in *"Happy the One Who Meditates on Wisdom" (Sir. 14,20). Collected Essays on the Book of Ben Sira* (CBET 43; Leuven: Peeters, 2006), pp. 135-144 (esp. pp. 141-143), also retains the Hebrew text of Sir 45,25 and is of the opinion that God's covenant with David was taken over and continued in the high-priesthood, but he does not hint at Messianism of any sort here. Martin's views about Ben Sira's supposed Messianism are also criticized by Xerovits, "Figure," pp. 36-38.

[36] Johannes Marböck, "Apokalyptische Traditionen im Sirachbuch?," in M. Witte (ed.), *Gott und Mensch im Dialog. Festschrift für Otto Kaiser zum 80. Geburtstag* (BZAW 345/II; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004), 833-849 (esp. pp. 848-849). See also Marböck, "Davids Erbe," p. 132.

[37] Dietrich, *David*, pp. 335-338, lists the following Jewish works from the Intertestamental period which promote the idea of a new David and represent thus a reception history of 2 Sam 7: The Testament of Judah (22,2-3), the Qumranic text 4Q174 (lines 10-12) and Psalms of Solomon (esp. ch. 17). These works are analysed more thoroughly in Michael Pietsch, *"Dieser ist der Sproß Davids…". Studien zur Rezeptionsgeschichte der Nathanverheißung im alttestamentlichen, zwischentestamentlichen und neutestamentlichen Schrifttum* (WMANT 100; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2003).

3. Conclusions

For Ben Sira the history of Israel is a history of great men who have been guided by God. As source material for his presentation he has used earlier biblical traditions which he seems to have known rather thoroughly. David is one of the key figures in Ben Sira's Praise of the Ancestors; only Aaron and the High Priest Simon surpass David in the length of presentation. In his picture of David, Ben Sira stresses the following aspects:

1) David was a great warrior and a successful military commander (Sir 47,3-7). This picture stems above all from the Deuteronomistic History.

2) David was an exemplary pious man who sang songs of praises and organized public worship (Sir 47,8-10). This picture is a combination of the Chronicles (David as the inaugurator of the temple cult) and the information given in the superscriptions of several Davidic psalms (David as a poet and musician).

3) David's special status among the people is repeatedly emphasized with the use of different expressions. Because of David, his dynasty stood firm in front of God (Sir 45,25; 47,11.22; 48,15). These ideas reflect the divine promise that was originally transmitted to David by Nathan (2 Sam 7; Ps 89; Ps 132; 1 Chr 17). The Deuteronomistic colour in Ben Sira's picture of David is the most obvious one.

Ben Sira's adherence to his source texts is transparent. Nonetheless, the amount of verbatim quotations is scarce. It often happens that Ben Sira changes some words of the text that is clearly in the background of his retold history (e.g. Sir 47,3.6a). But it is also evident that sometimes Ben Sira cites his source text in the precisely the same form as we know it (e.g. Sir 47,11aα). It is possible – but difficult to verify – that Ben Sira occasionally quoted his sources from memory. David is an important figure not only in the Old Testament but also in the New Testament. Ben Sira, who lived in the period between these two literary works, dedicates a long passage to David. Even in this respect, he is a significant link between the past and the future.