The Literary Development of Psalm 151:  
A New Look at the Septuagint Version

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For many years, Psalm 151 was only known from the Septuagint and Vulgate versions of the book of Psalms, as well as from a Syriac collection of apocryphal psalms from the 10th century.¹ Until the Dead Sea discoveries, scholars still debated whether these texts were translations of an original Hebrew Vorlage. However, this discussion was put to rest in 1963 when James Sanders published a preliminary edition of the psalm as preserved in the Psalms Scroll from Cave 11.² The final column of that scroll, Column XXVIII, contains most of Psalm 134 (lines 1–2), followed by two separate psalms, the first (lines 3–12) similar, yet not identical to the presumed Hebrew Vorlage of vv. 1–5 of the Septuagint version of Psalm 151. Lines 13–14 contain a new psalm, delineated by an open paragraph (תורשה חותם) at

¹ This paper was first presented at the Thirteenth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, 2001. I would like to thank Prof. Alexander Rosé and Dr. Baruch Schwartz for their insightful comments on earlier versions of this study.


² J. A. Sanders, “Psalm 151 in 11QPss,” ZAW 75 (1963) 73–86. The editio princeps of the psalm was published two years later in idem, The Psalms Scroll of Qumran Cave 11 (11QPss) (DJD IV; Oxford: Clarendon, 1965) 54–64.

the end of line 12. The material preserved in these lines is fragmentary, but almost certainly describes David’s battle with Goliath. From the perspective of content, this second psalm parallels the second part of LXX Psalm 151, vv. 6–7, which also describes this encounter. Thus Sanders labeled the two passages in 11QPs\textsuperscript{a} as Psalms 151 A and B.

As is evident from the comparison of Psalm 151A and LXX Psalm 151.1–5 provided below, the LXX version of the psalm is significantly shorter than the Qumran text. Such large-scale differences should not be viewed as the product of negligent textual transmission by copyists, but rather as textual evidence for the literary development of this psalm.\textsuperscript{3} As will be argued, each version of the poem represents a distinct edition of this short composition, and each therefore needs to be investigated independently before they can be compared to each other.

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\textsuperscript{3} E. Tov, Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible (2nd ed.; Minneapolis and Assen: Fortress and Royal van Gorcum, 2001) 313–350, provides an important introduction to the theoretical principles underlying the interrelationship of textual and literary criticisms, as well as specific examples of biblical compositions in which this phenomenon is attested.

\textsuperscript{4} The text of the psalm follows the suggested reading of P. Auffret, “Structure littéraire et interprétation du Psalme 151,” RevQ 9 (1977) 163–188, and later adopted by D. Amara, “Psalm 151 from Qumran and its Relation to Psalm 151 LXX,” Textus 19 (1998) 1*-35* (Heb.). The numbers within the 11QPs\textsuperscript{a} version represent the line numbers in col. XXVIII; the numbers in the LXX version delineate the verses.
Numerous scholars have discussed the relationship between these versions, and various possibilities have been raised as to the development of the texts. Sanders, in the official publication of the Qumran version of the psalm, suggested that the Hebrew version represented the original poem, which was subsequently shortened by a scribe who removed any reference to or influence of Hellenistic literature, primarily the influence of the character of Orpheus on the portrayal of David in lines 5–6 of the Psalms Scroll.  

on the verses in question, the consensus regarding the literary development of the poem has generally remained unchanged since Sanders. According to most scholars, the Hebrew versions of the psalms preserved in Qumran, 151A and 151B, were combined and shortened either by a Hebrew reviser or by the Greek translator of the psalm. Alternatively, Haran has argued the opposite scenario, that the Hebrew Vorlage of the shorter Greek version of the poem was expanded, and mistakenly divided to the two psalms preserved in the Psalms Scroll.

A seemingly related question regarding the literary development of the psalm is whether there were originally two psalms as in 11QPs or one as in the LXX. Consistently, those who argue that the Psalms Scroll contains the more original version of the text, also claim that the text originally consisted of two psalms as in the Qumran version. Alternatively, those who posited that the shorter text found in the LXX was the earlier edition also suggested that an original psalm as represented by the Septuagint was later divided into two in the Qumran scroll. However, methodologically, one must distinguish between these two issues; the shorter versus longer version of the poem, on the one hand, and one or two poems on the other, are in fact

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7 Sanders, The Psalms Scroll, and almost all subsequent scholars, most recently Amara, “Psalm 151.”


9 As originally suggested by Sanders, The Psalms Scroll, and found subsequently in numerous studies.

two independent questions. Specifically, I would like to suggest that vv. 1-5 existed as an independent composition, as in the Qumran scroll, yet the earlier edition of this poem is that found in vv. 1-5 of the Septuagint.

As I hope to demonstrate, both the Qumran version of 151A and LXX 151:1-5 offer carefully planned structures, a sign of complete literary units. If both editions of Psalm 151A can be shown to be coherent and artfully composed, how should one proceed with the judgment of which version is more original? Since the publication of the Qumran material, all studies of the psalm have begun their analysis from the “newer,” longer text, and only afterwards did they address the LXX version. This bias towards the Hebrew version of the psalm has resulted in a skewed view of the meaning of the Greek edition, as all scholars have assumed that this shorter poem necessarily addresses the same topics as the longer version. A more balanced approach necessitates an independent analysis of each of the editions, and only afterwards, a comparison of the two textual witnesses to identify possible signs of development from one to the other.

As noted, almost all studies since the publication of the Psalms Scroll forty years ago have concentrated on the Hebrew version of Psalm 151. The exegesis of this text is made difficult by the layout of this poem in prose form. Scholars have disagreed as to the proper division of the text, an obvious necessity for any interpretation. Additionally, the similarity between the Hebrew letters waw and yod in Dead Sea Scrolls in general, and in 11QPsα in particular,11 allowed for multiple possibilities of interpretation. The frequent usage in this poem of pronominal suffixes, either in the first person (yod) or the third person (waw), has allowed exegetes to suggest drastically differing understandings of this psalm. Although there is no consensus regarding all the interpretive issues of the Hebrew version, many of the theoretical possibilities of interpretation have already been discussed, and therefore need not be addressed again in this study. Instead, this article

11 Tov, Textual Criticism, 245-247.
will focus on LXX Psalm 151, which as noted above, has not received a systematic analysis independent of the Qumran text.  

Many scholars have described the problematic nature of the text of the LXX translation.  13 Even those who have suggested that the Greek version of the psalm preserves an earlier stage in its literary development than that reflected in the Qumran edition have been unable to offer a satisfactory interpretation of the poem, due to its supposed textual difficulties.  

However, all of these studies have overlooked or misinterpreted certain details of LXX Psalm 151, often under the influence of 11QlPs. In order to analyze LXX 151:1–5, it is necessary first to reconstruct the Hebrew Vorlage which served as the basis for the Greek translation:  

12 M. Greenberg, “The Use of the Ancient Versions for Interpreting the Hebrew Text: A Sampling from Ezekiel ii 1 – iii 1,” VTSup 29 (1978) 131–148, adduces differences between the MT and the LXX of Ezekiel to show that both textual witnesses present equally valid readings, and thus are both “original.” Such an approach rightly emphasizes the need to examine each witness independently in its own terms, but undervalues the comparison between the two (or more) witnesses to determine if one can identify the direction and Tendenz of these developments.  


15 This study adopts the reconstruction provided by Amara, “Psalm 151,” 19*–25*. 
The Literary Development of Psalm 151

Hebrew Reconstruction

LXX Psalm 151

The Superscription

The Greek superscription consists of elements that are attributable to a Hebrew Vorlage, and others that must be the work of the Greek translator as they have no parallel in the LXX translation of Psalms. The emphasis on Davidic authorship of the psalm, ἱδιόγραφος εἰς Δαυίδ, “an autograph to David,” suggests that there was possible doubt about its origins. Davidic authorship, generally indicated in the Hebrew by וַיְהִי, is usually
represented in the LXX Psalms by the dative, τῷ Δαυίδ, and at times the genitive, τοῦ Δαυίδ. The unique translation provided by the LXX should be viewed as a free rendering of the standard Hebrew, ליווה. The next stich, καὶ ἔξωθεν τοῦ ἄριθμοῦ, “and it is out of the count,” apparently refers to this work as either being outside the count of the Masoretic collection of Psalms or a later addition to the Greek Psalter. This sentence clearly interrupts the flow from the opening ליווה, until the historical element of the superscription, David’s battle against Goliath, and thus should probably be attributed to the Greek translator or a later scribe. Additionally, this stich cannot be rendered satisfactorily into biblical Hebrew.

The ascription of this poem to David’s battle against Goliath, should not be taken as an indication of the organic connection of vv. 6–7 to the psalm but rather as a later attempt to connect an existing psalm to specific events from the historiographical books of the Bible. This phenomenon is well documented by a comparison of the MT and the LXX versions of Psalms in which the latter often contains superscriptions not found in the former. Especially of interest is Psalm 144 which in the MT opens with the basic ליווה, while the LXX version (143) adds πρὸς τὸν Γολιάδ, ἄλλα γὰρ, relating that poem to the same event as in the superscription of LXX 151.


18 The closest translation can be found in LXX Ps 71:1, Εἰς Σαλωμῶν, representing the Hebrew נַפְלָשׁ (Ps 72:1). However, the term ἴδιόγραφος appears only here in the Septuagint.

19 Amara, “Psalm 151,” 20*.

Sanders described Psalm 151A as a “midrash” on 1 Sam 16:1-13, the story of the anointing of David, which provided the reason for God’s choice of David as king.\(^{21}\) Identification of the biblical allusions in the Hebrew Vorlage of the Greek version of vv. 1-5,\(^{22}\) however, suggests that the author carefully interwove the first half of ch. 16, vv. 1-13, with the second, vv. 14-23. Saul’s search for a musician and David’s arrival in the royal court.\(^ {23}\) As will be suggested, the recognition of the use of 1 Sam 16:14-23 in LXX Psalm 151 leads to a completely new interpretation of the poem.

(v. 1b) After the superscription, v. 1 consists of three components:

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\text{כַּפּוּשׁ הַיְּחִית בַּאֲבוֹתֵךְ}
\]

This and the parallelism to כַּפּוּשׁ אֲבֵדַת אֲבָרִים אֲבָרַהַם אֶלְעָבָדָהָ לְגַרָּה גַּרְגַּרְגָּהַ עַדֶּן.

David is referred to as כַּפּוּשׁ relative to his brothers in 1 Sam 16:11 and 17:14. The parallelism of כַּפּוּשׁ and כַּפּוּשׁ has been recognized as the influence of Isa 60:22.\(^{24}\) This allusion informs the reader that although David begins as a humble servant, he is destined for greatness. The final stich of v. 1, וּמְדַעַת אֲבָרַהַם אֵלֶּה, is based upon 1 Sam 16:11 and 17:15.

(v. 2) This verse is identical in both versions and describes David’s musical talents, יַדְעַת וּלְיִתָּנָה וּדְדָה וַעֲבֹדַת. The word-pair יַדְעַת and וּלְיִתָּנָה appears already in Ugaritic literature\(^{25}\) and elsewhere in the Bible,\(^{26}\) and its usage in Psalm

\(^{21}\) Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll*, 56.

\(^{22}\) Smith, “How to Write,” 195-200 provides a list of biblical ‘building blocks’ used in the composition of the Qumran psalm, specifically from 1 Samuel 15-18.

\(^{23}\) Contra Talmon, “Extra-canonical,” 270-272, who suggests that the omission of the episode of Saul’s search for a musician is the result of a conscious attempt to solve certain difficulties in the arrangement of the narrative in the MT.


\(^{26}\) Isa 2:8; 17:8; Ps 141:1; Song 5:5.
151 is most similar to the opening verse of Psalm 144: יד לְוַדְבֹּב אֶפְיצָבָיאֵי לְזַמְלָנָה 27

11QPs\textsuperscript{a} has one small, yet significant, addition to this verse, וְאַשְׁפִּיטָה לְזַמְלָנָה. This phrase defines the nature of David’s playing of instruments as religious music dedicated specifically to God. 28 Although from the methodological point of view this addition should not be discussed until after the study of LXX Psalm 151, the influence of this phrase in the Qumran version of the psalm upon scholarly interpretation of the Greek version justifies its discussion. All commentators have assumed that the LXX version also refers to religious song, an interpretation influenced by the Qumran text. However, the Greek text itself only stresses David’s general musical abilities. David’s talents as a musician are mentioned explicitly in 1 Sam 16:18, 23 specifically in the context of Saul’s search for a musician to help remove the evil spirit plaguing the king. In light of the explicit mention of David as a musician in this narrative, it is perfectly reasonable for the author of LXX Psalm 151 to adopt this motif and include it in his poem.

(v. 3) The crux interpretatorum of LXX Psalm 151 is v. 3a. καὶ τίς ἀναγγέλατι τῷ κυρίῳ μου; All modern interpreters identify the indirect object of this question, τῷ κυρίῳ μου, as a reference to YHWH, and hence retrovert the text into Hebrew as וְממי ינֵי לֶזְיָה, “and who will inform YHWH?” This interpretation once again is the result of the exegesis of the LXX psalm in light of the Qumran version. In the parallel lines (5-7) of the poem in 11QPs\textsuperscript{a}, one finds an expanded exposition on the lack of testimony offered by the forces of nature on behalf of David. 29 Since the previous lines of that

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27 Talmon, “Extra-Canonical,” 254. As noted above, the superscription preserved in the Septuagint translation of that psalm attributes its origins to the David’s battle with Goliath, as does LXX Psalm 151.

28 Compare the use of this formula to describe praise addressed to God in Jos 7:19; Isa 42:12.

poem describe David’s performance of music for the glory of YHWH, והשיאת לו כבוד (line 5). YHWH is the only reasonable recipient of a report regarding David’s actions. However, this same assumption can not be made regarding the LXX edition. In the shorter poem, the music is not designated for YHWH; rather, a description of David’s musical talents is given, consistent with the portrayal of David as a musician in 1 Samuel 16-18. All previous interpretations of the LXX psalm, colored by the longer Qumran text, understood David’s music as destined for God. They therefore questioned the logic of the Septuagint: If the religious element has been eliminated from the poem, then what is left to report to God?30

This apparent inconsistency in LXX Psalm 151, music without any special religious character as the subject of the report to YHWH, disappears upon closer inspection of the Greek text. The indirect object in v. 3a, καὶ τῖς ἀνοιγγελεῖ τῷ κυρίῳ μου; should not be translated as if vocalized ὑντεῖν, to the Lord, YHWH. The presence of the possessive suffix after the noun κύριος precludes this translation. In fact, the LXX almost never, throughout the entire Bible, uses κύριος μου as an equivalent of the form vocalized as יְהָוָה, the Lord. It is used only in quotations of speech directed to God in the second person; the translators understood the Hebrew text in each of these passages in a vocative sense, thus reading the text as יְהָוָה.31

30 The question here has been formulated according to those who view the longer, Qumran version of the psalm as the more original of the two. Smith, “How to Write,” 185, assumes a textual mishap in the Greek version.

31 Amara, “Psalm 151,” 23*, n. 95, cites the following exceptions in which the LXX appends the 1 sing. possessive suffix to κύριος, where it is absent in the MT, all in the context of speech directed at the Lord: Exod 34:9; Judg 6:15 (perhaps under the influence of v. 13), 22 (LXX); Ps 16:2 (LXX Ps 15:2); 35:23 (LXX Ps 34:23). One can add to this list a concentration of examples of this phenomenon in 2 Sam 7:18-29 (7 times). Judg 6:22 and 2 Sam 7:18-29 may both be attempts to translate the epithet יהוה נ(ev). The Tetragrammaton, generally translated by the LXX as κύριος and vocalized by the Masoretes to be pronounced יְהָוָה, must be understood differently in this title in order to avoid redundancy. Thus the Masoretes vocalized the second element, YHWH, as יהוה ש to indicate the difference between the two divine names. Perhaps
The Hebrew Vorlage of the LXX Psalm 151 was not vocalized and presumably read רָמוּ וְיִדְעֵה לַאֲדוּנִי. The indirect object of this question can thus be pointed in one of two ways: אֲדוּנִי or אֲדוּנָה. The LXX translator understood the poem with the latter reading, including the possessive suffix. However, in contrast to other examples in which אֲדוּנָה is used in the vocative sense to refer to YHWH, this understanding is impossible in the Greek version of this poem in which David refers to the Lord in the third person. The recipient of the report of David’s music cannot be the divine Lord, but should rather be translated as “my lord, master.” In the context of 1 Samuel 16, the narrative basis for Psalm 151, the character referred to as an אֲדוּנָה is actually Saul and not YHWH, as the servants of Saul refer to the king as their יהוה הוא אדוני, אדוני (v. 16). Additionally, David himself refers to King Saul by the title יהוה, אדוני, “my lord,” in a number of passages within the book of Samuel.32

David’s question in LXX Ps 151:3a refers to Saul— who will report David’s musical abilities to the king? In 1 Sam 16:16, Saul’s servants recommend to him that he find a player of the harp to help rid him of the evil spirit: יִאָרוּ נָא אֲדוּנָה וְלֹא יִנָּקֹשׁ אֶת שֵׁם יִי וְיִדְעֵה כְּכֶרֶן הָרָע הַבָּרוּךְ עַלְיוֹנָה וְיִדְעֵה עֶלָיוֹנָה וְיִדְעֵה נָגְנָה. In this context, David’s statement that he plays the harps and the harp in LXX Ps 151:1, followed by his question are understandable. He plays the harp, yet there is no one to inform King Saul, David’s master, who is looking for such an individual. David himself is a shepherd out in the field, watching after his father’s flocks, and therefore does not encounter anyone who could inform the king of his musical abilities.

Who then can recognize David’s talents? The psalmist answers this question in v. 3b with a string of three short sentences, all of which open with the third person pronoun הוא. He is the one who should hear him play the harp, and therefore lead the LXX translators in these two contexts revocalized the first element, אֲדוּנָה, as אֲדוּנָי, thus reducing the redundancy, “Lord, my Lord.”

32 1 Sam 24:6, 8, 10; 26:17, 18, 19.
him to Saul, the real ממלך, YHWH, does hear him, and does recognize his abilities. The poet stresses the Lord’s omniscience, in contrast to the limited knowledge of David’s other lord, Saul.

(v. 4) The contrast between the two אדונינו, אדני, the Lord, and, King Saul, is continued in the third sentence, והוא שלח מלאך, “he sent his messenger.” In the context of the choice of David, this messenger refers to the prophet Samuel. In the parallel version from 11QPs*, the poem describes Samuel as נביא, “his prophet” (line 8). This seemingly minor difference is once again significant in light of 1 Samuel 16, the narrative source of this poem. According to 1 Sam 16:19, King Saul sent emissaries to Jesse with the mission of bringing back his son David the musician: וرسلת שלח אל אשר בן בנאי. According to LXX Psalm 151, it is God who sends the מלאך, a reference to the prophet Samuel who anointed David. The same verb שלח is used in reference to Samuel’s mission: מלך קורץ שמנך ולקח אשלים אל אשר בית יהוה כרואית בניו מלך (1 Sam 16:2).

This contrast between YHWH and King Saul, between the divine King and the human sovereign, is the theme of LXX Psalm 151:1–5. Only the true ממלך, the YHWH, can help David achieve greatness, by bringing him to the King Saul’s royal court. If David had been left to rely on King Saul alone, he would have remained in the fields, tending his father’s flocks. Only through the direct intervention of YHWH, who sent his messenger, was David discovered. The idea that one should rely upon God alone, and not on

33 Amara, “Psalm 151,” 21*, 27* posits that the use of the term מלאך to describe a prophet is later than the term נביא, and thus supports her theory that the LXX version is a revision of the Qumran psalm. However, this claim fails to notice the literary allusion to the 1 Samuel 16 narrative and its inversion. In addition, since this use of מלאך is found already in Second Isaiah (44:26) which according to all scholars preceded the composition of Psalm 151, the relative dating of the terms נביא and ממלך in the Bible is not significant for determining the direction of literary development of this psalm.
human intervention, to achieve greatness is found elsewhere in the Bible, such as Jer 17:5–10; Ps 118:8–9; 146:3.  

Perhaps the author of this psalm already perceived this message in the text of 1 Samuel 16 itself. In v. 18, one of King Saul’s servants suggests that he has found a musician who fits and greatly surpasses the criteria set by Saul: וְיָעַן אָדָם מַהְנֵה, וְיָעַן אֵימוֹ, וְיָעַן אֱלֹהִים וְיָעַן אָדָם וְיָעַן אָדָם. The final attribute, עִם, appears on a number of other occasions throughout Samuel-Kings to describe the Lord’s relationship with David (1 Sam 18:12, 14, 28, 20:13; 2 Sam 7:3; 1 Kgs 1:37). On each of those occasions, it is apparent from the narrative that David has been successful, and the author attributes this achievement to divine assistance. However, in 1 Sam 16:18, David has yet to accomplish anything which could be known to Saul’s servant. This description was thus apparently the result of the anointing ceremony after which the biblical narrator remarks that the spirit of YHWH rested upon David from that day on (v. 13). This implies that the servant himself knew of the fact that Samuel had performed this ceremony on David. Thus, without God’s choice of David, and Samuel’s mission to make this decision official, Saul’s servant would have been unaware of his existence. David would have remained in the fields unknown to King Saul and distant from the monarchy.

V. 4b, describing the anointing of David, is based upon the language of 1 Sam 16:13: יְהוֹ בָּנָא אֶל קָדָם ההוּא שָׁמָּה וּרְשׁוּ עָלָיו בַּכָּרְבָּו אֲחָיִו. (v. 5) This verse completes the original psalm as a parallel to the opening in v. 1b. The psalm opens with a depiction of David as כִּי צַעְרֵי כֵן and amongst his brothers, and concludes with a description of his brothers, beautiful and great, yet YHWH specifically chose David over them, a theme found explicitly in 1 Sam 16:7. This parallelism completes a chiastic structure evident in vv. 1–5:

34 One finds a similar application of this principle in rabbinic literature to the exegesis of a different biblical story: see the explanation offered by Targums Neofiti and Pseudo-Jonathan to Gen 40:23 as to why the cupbearer forgot Jospeh.
The two stichs at the beginning and the end of this passage recount material found in 1 Samuel 16. The essence of the poem is found in vv. 2-4a: the three sentences in vv. 3b-4a that open with the pronoun אַתָּה respond to three aspects in vv. 2-3a. The first, as noted above, emphasizes the contrast between human and divine masters. The second answers the question וְמִיהוּ וְניִי, and who will tell. YHWH hears David; he need not be told. The third informs that the messenger sent to find a musician for King Saul was actually divinely sent. This carefully planned literary structure supports the claim that vv. 1-5 present a complete unit.

(Vv. 6-7) Verses 6-7 of the Greek version, based upon the story of the battle with Goliath in 1 Samuel 17 fall out of this artful arrangement. More importantly, they drastically alter the focus of the poem from an emphasis on divine power and assistance to the somewhat boastful claim of David that he alone defeated Goliath, saving the children of Israel from disgrace. The emphasis on David’s prowess is even more sharply pronounced in light of 1 Sam 17:45-47 in which the narrator emphasizes that David’s victory over Goliath is due to divine intervention, and not to David’s superior fighting capabilities. These two considerations, coupled with the fact that one finds two psalms in Qumran, the first parallel to LXX Psalm 151:1-5 (151A), and the second roughly parallel to LXX Psalm 151:6-7 (151B) lead to the conclusion that vv. 6-7 were added as a supplement to the original psalm found in vv. 1-5. This supplement presumably resulted from the
tradition found at the opening of Psalm 151B from Qumran, לְדוֹרִיָּהּ מִשְׁמֶשֶׁת נְכָהַי אֲבָדָהוּ, and in Josephus’s *Antiquities* (VI, 165), that David’s might began immediately after his anointment.

The Relationship between LXX Psalm 151 and 11QPs\(^a\) 151A

In light of this independent reading of the Greek text, it is now possible to compare it with the edition preserved in the Psalms Scroll. Hurvitz has noted the elements in the Qumran version of the psalm which belong to Late Biblical Hebrew.\(^{35}\) As Haran has emphasized, all of these elements are found specifically in the Qumran version, and not in the Septuagint.\(^{36}\) The presumed Hebrew *Vorlage* of the LXX contains no overtly late language.\(^{37}\)

This observation strongly suggests that these extra elements were added at a later stage in the literary development of the psalm, and thus 11QPs\(^a\) represents a later stage than that found in the LXX.

Second, Talmon has also noted the different style of lines 5–7 אֲמוֹרִיָּה אַל (בֵּנוּשֵׁה...) וּרְהִי תֵּסֶר אָה מַעְשֶׁה from the rest of the poem, describing it as hymnic interlude enclosed in an envelope structure by the two main stanzas of the poem. As he concludes, although it is possible that the original poet designed this arrangement from the outset, in light of the different style of the hymnic center and its absence in the various translations, it is more likely that it was added at a later stage.\(^{38}\) As Talmon himself notes, this passage is not completely absent in the LXX version, but is paralleled by LXX Psalm 151:3a: וּרְהִי תֵּסֶר אֲבָדָהוּ.\(^{39}\) Thus it is more likely that the “hymnic

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\(^{35}\) A. Hurvitz, “The Language and Date of Psalm 151 from Qumran,” *Eretz* 8 (1967) 82–87 (Heb.).

\(^{36}\) Haran, “Two Text-Forms,” 172–177.

\(^{37}\) Despite Amara’s attempts to find late language in the Greek version. Cf. Amara, “Psalm 151,” 27*.


\(^{39}\) Ibid., 253.
center” in the Qumran edition is the result of expansion of the shorter passage, rather than a simple addition as suggested.

If the extra material and differences present in 11QPṣa 151A as compared to the shorter version in the Septuagint are the result of later additions and scribal intervention, one can identify the following changes:

1. **David is transformed into a religious poet.** Instead of the secular music described in the LXX version, in the Qumran edition, the music is directed to YHWH: מַעֲשֵׂי הָֽאָדָם (line 5). Since David’s music is directed to God, he thus bestows honor upon the Lord. As noted by most commentators, this conduct is the source of the choice of David as king, the justification of which is lacking in 1 Samuel 16. The entire nature of the psalm is changed by this additional stich: this music was never intended for King Saul, and there is therefore no need for him to hear it. The Qumran version is indeed as Sanders noted, a “midrash” on 1 Sam 16:1-13, as the connection to the second half of 1 Samuel 16 has been severed. David’s musical abilities, which are mentioned explicitly in the latter half of that chapter, no longer refer to Saul’s search for a musician to help soothe his spirit, but have been reinterpreted as music in honor of YHWH.

2. **The reading of יֵלֵד instead of יֵלָד.** If the music that David played is of a religious nature, then its addressee is God, and not King Saul. Thus, the crucial verse, 3a, was read as יֵלֵד יְרֵא אֶלֶּה, who will inform the Lord, i.e., YHWH? It is possible that this reading caused the difference mentioned above, regarding the nature of David’s music. As soon as a scribe read that the potential address of the music was YHWH, then the nature of the music itself must have been unique, music for the honor of the Lord. But according to this reading, in which David wonders who will report his music to YHWH, is in itself problematic—unlike Saul, does God need to be told of this fact in order to know about it? And more importantly, who could possibly have informed Him? In order to address the first problem, the longer version added the opening אֶלְמָה אֶלְמָה יִמְסָי, “I said to myself” (line 5).

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40 Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll*, 56.
God’s lack of knowledge is not presented as an objective question, but rather a possible assumption raised by David, later to be rejected. Regarding the question of those who could possibly inform God of David’s actions out in the pasture, the only possibility is the forces of nature. Thus a scribe added a lengthy expansion preserved in lines 5-7 describing these forces, and their lack of action on behalf of David: "הוים לא י쥑, והנגבות לא יניע. עלים, העצים אתחנן, והגהות אמאמש. כו, כי יניע ומזר רمين ישפא אמאמש." None of them will testify to God on behalf of David.

(3) The poem has been supplemented with references to verses from elsewhere in the Bible describing King David and Davidic kingship. The scribe who expanded the earlier, shorter edition of the psalm, understood the poem to be a justification for God’s choice of David to succeed Saul as king. The addition of allusions to the House of David from elsewhere in the Bible further develops the theme of the Qumran version of the psalm, the choice of David and his descendants as rulers over Israel.

(a) Mic 5:1 describes the city of Bethlehem, home of David, as the place of origin of the sovereign of Israel: "הווה בית להוב אפרת את צעריו להוהי בן לואים, והוהי ברייה. המך לא צעיר והוהי מושל בישריאל." The use of צעריא as the opposite of מושל in this prophecy is the source for the use of מושל in the supplementary phrase צעריא/מושל (line 4). The original poem offered the parallel of צעריא/מושל based upon Isa 60:22, a prophecy not specifically related to Davidic kingship. This word-pair was further expanded in the later edition by a third element צעריא/מושל as alluding to the specifically Davidic prophecy mentioned above.41

(b) Ps 89:21 — מֵאָוָית רְדוּ בֶשֶם קָדָשְׁךָ מֵשָׁה. Other than this verse, throughout the Bible, “holy oil” is reserved for priests or the Temple, and

41 Those who posit that the Qumran edition of the psalm preserves an earlier version of the poem could suggest that the original author composed this double parallelism, referring to two different verses simultaneously. However, the presence of other allusions to Davidic monarchy in the Qumran version alone strongly suggests that they were all added by a later hand.
not kings. In line 11, the author uses the term נִנְיָה to describe the oil used for anointing David, a description absent from 1 Samuel 16, yet inspired by the passage describing the anointing of David in Psalms.

(c) Numerous biblical passages describe David as נִנְיָה, the term used to describe him in line 11 of this psalm (1 Sam 25:30; 2 Sam 5:2; 6:21; 7:8). The expansion of the psalm as found in Qumran was not performed mechanically. As noted by previous commentators, this later version of the poem also has a certain literary structure. Especially apparent is the parallel between the beginning and end of the psalm: נִנְיָה נָהֲרֵי לָמָן וּכְרֶשֶׁל בַּקֹּדֶשׁ (lines 3–4) and נִנְיָה נָהֲרֵי לָמָן וּכְרֶשֶׁל בַּקֹּדֶשׁ (lines 11–12). Both of these stichs contain elements added by the later reviser, and thus indicate the care in which a later scribe rewrote an earlier edition of the psalm.

The Qumran discoveries have vastly enriched our understanding of the processes of textual transmission of biblical books, and of the connection between this transmission and the final stages in the literary development of these compositions. Psalm 151, preserved in two editions, provides another example of this phenomenon. The two parallel versions of the poem allow the modern scholar a glimpse into the process of the continual growth of biblical compositions. At the same time, the results of this study exemplify a possible methodological pitfall in the investigation of such editions: the discovery of the Psalms Scroll containing the Hebrew version

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43 The term נִנְיָה is also used in reference to other kings: Saul (1 Sam 9:16, 10:1; 13:14), Solomon (1 Kgs 1:35), Jeroboam (1 Kgs 14:7), Jehu (1 Kgs 16:2), and Hezekiah (2 Kgs 20:5).

of Psalm 151 has adversely influenced the understanding of the Greek version. The importance of the Qumran biblical texts cannot be overstated, yet they should not be automatically preferred over the other versions, nor influence their interpretation. Only a careful, independent study of each textual witness allows for an accurate understanding of each text. Only afterwards can one proceed to the next step of investigation, a careful comparison of the versions to determine the direction and purpose of the development between them.

Psalm 151 exemplifies another phenomenon common in literature of the Second Temple period, the rewriting of earlier biblical compositions. Each of the two versions of the poem retells parts of 1 Samuel 16, each highlighting different aspects in that narrative, and offering its own interpretation. Psalm 151 thus presents a model not only for the relationship between textual and literary criticisms, but also for the convergence of textual criticism and biblical interpretation. Only a broad perspective that accounts for the various interdependent phenomena attested in the versions of this psalm can adequately explain the literary history of this composition.