

1 Chronicles 17,24. A Parallel to 2 Samuel 7,26, or a Text in its own Right? Short Note

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RESUMEN A primera vista 1 Cr 17,24 parece un paralelo de 2 Sam 7,26. Sin embargo, este hecho muestra que traducciones y comentarios de la Biblia presentan distintas variantes de cómo interpretar la raíz de לאמר en 1 Cr 17,24. Esta contribución ofrece un recorrido por las soluciones propuestas y, al final, realiza una sugerencia que da al Cronista su prioridad.

PALABRAS CLAVE 1 Cr 17,23-24; 2 Sam 7,24-26; Dinastía davídica; la función de לאמר.

SUMMARY *At first glance 1 Ch 17,24 looks like a parallel of 2 S 7,26. It turns out, however, that Bible translations and commentaries are at variance as of how to interpret the radius of לאמר in 1 Chr 17,24. This contribution offers an overview of solutions that are brought up and at the end makes a suggestion that gives the Chronicler his due.*

KEYWORDS 1 Chronicles 17:23-24, 2 Samuel 7:24-26, Davidic Dynasty, Function of לאמר.

In an earlier publication dealing with 1 Chronicles 17, in which the focus of the analysis was on aspects of time and space, I argued that in Nathan's oracle (1 Ch 17,1-15) there is no question of an unconditional promise of a Davidic dynasty as in 2 Samuel 7, but rather of a conditional promise which is almost exclusively concentrated in Solomon as the Temple builder¹.

As a consequence, the prayer of David as reflected in 1 Ch 17,16-27 needed to be carefully studied and compared with its parallel text (2 S 7,18-29). Such an investigation was not so much needed because of the textual differences – they

1 P. C. BEENTJES, "Transformations of Space and Time: Nathan's Oracle and David's Prayer in 1 Chronicles 17", in: A. HOUTMAN – M.J.H.M. POORTHUIS – J. SCHWARTZ (eds.), *Sanctity of Time and Space in Tradition and Modernity* (Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series I; Leiden 1998) 27-44.

have expertly been listed by Roddy Braun and Ralph Klein² –, but because of the *function* that David's prayer is now performing in light of the oracle in which Solomon has been designated to build the Temple.

As should be clear, nowhere in David's prayer (1 Ch 17,16-27) is there to be found a single reference to Solomon, as was the case in the first part of 1 Chronicles 17. In this way, in the second part of 1 Chronicles 17 the Chronicler is able to emphasize his 'David-program'³. That a 'David-program' has actually been woven into the Chronicler's version of David's prayer is proved by the application of the verb *'aman* ('to establish'). Whereas this verb in 2 S 7,16a plays an important role with respect to the *Davidic dynasty*, in 1 Ch 17,14 – where only Solomon is explicitly meant – this verb is absent and its place taken by the hiph'il of *'amad*. It is remarkable then, and it can hardly be coincidence, that the verb *'aman* ('to establish') suddenly appears in 1 Ch 17,23 and 17,24, resulting in wordings with a completely new theological bent in respect of the parallel texts of 2 Samuel 7:

2 S 7,25	דַּבַּר אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ עָלַי עַבְדְּךָ וְעַל־בֵּיתוֹ הַקֶּם עַד־עוֹלָם (‘Establish forever the word that you have spoken concerning your servant and concerning his house’)
1 Ch 17,23	דַּבַּר אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ עָלַי עַבְדְּךָ וְעַל־בֵּיתוֹ יֵאָמֵן עַד־עוֹלָם (‘Let stand fast forever the word that you have spoken concerning your servant and concerning his house’)
2 S 7,26	וַיִּגְדַּל שִׁמְךָ עַד־עוֹלָם (‘May your name be great for ever’)
1 Ch 17,24	וַיֵּאֱמַן וַיִּגְדַּל שִׁמְךָ עַד־עוֹלָם (‘Let it stand fast, that you name may be great forever’)

The verb *'aman* ('to establish') has been removed by the Chronicler from its parent text (2 S 7,16a), in which it refers to the Davidic dynasty. The verb has been transferred to *other* motifs from that same parent text that deal

2 R. BRAUN, *1 Chronicles* (WBC 14; Waco 1986) 196-197; R. W. KLEIN, *1 Chronicles* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis 2006) 371-373.

3 Therefore I am very surprised that Williamson, who explicitly wants to emphasize that 1 Chronicles 17 preserves God's promise with respect of the Davidic dynasty, nowhere refers to David's prayer as such in his important article on this subject. His only reference to this theme is a footnote: 'It should be noted that David's prayer is apparently adopted by the Chronicler *without any significant or tendentious alteration*'. H. G. M. WILLIAMSON, "The Dynastic Oracle in the Books of Chronicles", in: A. ROFÉ (ed.), *Essays on the Bible and the Ancient World III: Non-Hebrew-Section* (Jerusalem 1983) 310 n. 14 (italics mine).

exclusively with *YHWH*. In this new context, the verb *'aman* ('to establish') relates to God's word and name. It is no longer David and his dynasty who are in the center of the Chronicler's attention, but *YHWH* Himself. This pattern is also seen in 2 Ch 1,9 and 6,17, where the Chronicler diverts from its parent texts with the help of the verb *'aman* ('to establish')⁴.

TWO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

As compared to 2 S 7,26, the text of 1 Ch 17,24 in my view poses some problems.

First, it has a rather curious phrase: יהוה צבאות אלהי ישראל אלהים לישראל ('*YHWH* Sebaoth, the God of Israel, is God for Israel'), whereas the parent text of 2 S 7,26a looks more authentic: יהוה צבאות אלהים על ישראל ('*YHWH* Sebaoth is God over Israel')⁵. (2 S 7,26b)

Second, on comparison the difference between 2 S 7,26b and 1 Ch 17,24b appears to be small: ובית דוד עבדך נכון לנכון (2 S 7,26b); ובית דוד עבדך נכון לנכון (1 Ch 17,24b).

However, the absence of יהיה in the Chronicler's version is quite remarkable, the more since the collocation יהיה נכון is found some lines earlier in the phrase וכסאו יהיה נכון עד־עולם (1 Ch 17,14b) being the parallel text of כסאך יהיה נכון עד־עולם (2 S 7,16b).⁶

The (small) difference between 2 S 7,26b and 1 Ch 17,24b puts the question whether these two phrases have the same meaning or not. In my view, it has something to do with the radius of לאמר in 1 Ch 17,24. Apart from the observation that 1 Ch 17,24 has undergone a remarkable change on the *theological* level, which has been noted earlier, there is another aspect that

4 Only in 2 Ch 9,16 and 32,15 *YHWH* is *not* the subject or agent of *'aman* ('to establish'). This is also the case in 2 Ch 20,20, which is a transformation of a *quotation* from Is 7,9. See P. C. BEENTJES, "Tradition and Transformation: Aspects of Inner-biblical Interpretation in 2 Chronicles 20": *Biblica* 74 (1993) 258-268, esp. 266-268 [= P. C. BEENTJES, *Tradition and Transformation in the Book of Chronicles* (SSN 52; Leiden 2008) 61-77].

5 As to text critical details of 1 Ch 17,24, see S. L. MCKENZIE, *The Chronicler's Use of the Deuteronomistic History* (HSM 33; Atlanta 1985) 51-52. 78 n. 41.

6 'Pour exprimer fortement l'aspect durative dans le future on ajoute au participe une forme du verbe יהיה à sens de futur'; P. JOUON, *Grammaire de l'hébreu biblique* (Rome 1923 / Graz 1965) 339 § 121^o.

deserves attention, namely in what way this Hebrew verse should properly be translated:

וַיֵּאמֶר וַיִּגְדֵּל שְׁמֹךְ עַד־עוֹלָם לֵאמֹר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֱלֹהִים לְיִשְׂרָאֵל וּבֵית־
דָּוִד עַבְדְּךָ נֹכַח לְפָנֶיךָ

It turns out that both in Bible translations and in commentaries, two different options are presented. According to the first option, the phrase *וּבֵית־דָּוִד עַבְדְּךָ נֹכַח לְפָנֶיךָ* is considered not to be subordinate to *לֵאמֹר* – “Thus your name will be established and magnified for ever in the saying, “The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, is Israel’s God”; and the house of your servant David will be established in your presence’ (NRSV).

This point of view is also found, among others, in *La Sainte Bible* (BJ), *New English Bible* (NEB), *Revised Standard Version* (RSV), *Revised English Bible* (REB), *New International Version* (NIV), *New Living Translation* (NLT), *English Standard Version* (ESV), *Darby Bible Translation* (DBT), *The Net Bible* (NET), *Einheitsübersetzung* (EÜ), and in the commentaries of J. Myers, R.J. Coggins, R. Braun, P.B. Dirksen, G. Knoppers⁷. This approach is also reflected in the Targum on Chronicles:

וַיְהִי מִהַיּוֹם וַיִּתְרַבֵּי שְׁמֹךְ עַד עֲלֵמָא יְיָ מְרֵי חִילוּתָא
יְיָ אֱלֹהֵי דִישְׂרָאֵל אֱלֹהֵי דִישְׂרָאֵל וּבֵית דָּוִד בְּרַךְ יְהִי מִתְקַן קִדְמָךְ

‘Qu’elle se vérifie et que ton Nom soit magnifié à jamais (en ces termes): “Yhwh est le *Seigneur des armées*, Yhwh est le Dieu d’Israel, il est Dieu pour Israel!” Et que la maison de David, ton serviteur, soit affirmée devant toi!’⁸.

Contrary to that option, quite a few Bible translations and commentaries consider the phrase *וּבֵית־דָּוִד עַבְדְּךָ נֹכַח לְפָנֶיךָ* still to be dependent of *לֵאמֹר*. This also seems to be the case in the Septuagint: *Κύριε κύριε παντοκράτωρ θεὸς*

7 J. MYERS, *1 Chronicles* (AB 12; Garden City 1965) 128; R. J. COGGINS, *The First and Second Books of Chronicles* (CBC; Cambridge 1976) 96; R. BRAUN, *1 Chronicles*, 196; S. JAPHET, *I&II Chronicles* (OTL; London 1993) 325-326; P. B. DIRKSEN, *1 Chronicles* (HCOT; Louvain 2005) 239: “and the house of your servant David . . .”. Translated thus, this clause is an independent statement. But the clause may be meant as part of the praise by the “people”; G. KNOPPERS, *1 Chronicles 10-29* (AB 12A; New York 2004) 677.

8 R. LE DÉAULT, *Targum des Chroniques, Tome II : Texte et glossaire* (AnBib 51; Rome 1971) 54; id., *Targum des Chroniques, Tome I: Introduction et Traduction* (AnBib 51; Rome 1971) 81.

Ἰσραὴλ, καὶ ὁ οἶκος Δαυὶδ παιδὸς σου ἀνωρθωμένος ἐναντίου σου ('Lord, Lord Almighty, God of Israel, and the house of your servant David established before you!')⁹.

This type of rendering is found, among others, in *New American Standard Bible* (NAS), *Duay Reims Bible* (DRB), *The Scriptures* (ISR), *International Standard Version* (ISV), *World English Bible* (WEB), *Revidierte Elberfelder Bibel*, *Luther Bibel*, *La Bible par Louis Segond*, and in the commentaries of J. W. Rothstein, H. Bückers, R. W. Klein, J. Jarick¹⁰.

One also finds Bible translations in which a *colon* is found between both parts of 1 Ch 17,24, as in the King James Version: '... saying, The LORD of hosts *is* the God of Israel, *even* a God to Israel: and *let* the house of David thy servant *be* established before thee'. The same is true for *American Standard Version* (ASV), *English Revised Version* (ERV), *Webster's Bible Translation* (WBT), *Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible* (TOB), Buber-Rosenzweig¹¹. Here, there is some tension between the first and the second half of the statement. Whereas the first part, dealing with YHWH, seems to be a *confession*, the part dealing with the house of David is conceived to be a *wish*¹².

By omitting יהיה in 1 Ch 17,24, the Chronicler not only has created a new text, but also a completely new context. Whereas the radius of לאמר in 2 S 7,26 is confined to the statement about YHWH, in 1 Ch 17,24 it is broadened to the entire sentence introduced by לאמר. As a consequence, the phrase dealing with the House of David no longer refers to a situation in the future (2 S 7,26), but is now part of the quotation and therefore presented as a statement too¹³.

9 *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (New York – Oxford 2007) 359.

10 J. W. ROTHSTEIN, *Kommentar zum ersten Buch der Chronik* (KAT XVIII/2; Leipzig 1927) 322; H. BÜCKERS, *Die Bücher der Chronik oder Paralipomenon* (Die Heilige Schrift für das Leben erklärt Band IV/1; Freiburg 1952) 117; KLEIN, *1 Chronicles*, 372; J. JARICK, *1 Chronicles* (Readings; Sheffield 2007) 119.

11 'Getreu und groß sei dein Name in Weltzeit, daß man spreche: Gott Jisraels ist ER der Umscharte, Gott für Jisrael! und gegründet sei vor dir das Haus Dawids deines Knechts'. The translation of 2 S 7,26 runs: 'Groß sei dein Name auf Weltzeit, daß man spreche: Gott über Jisrael ist ER der Umscharte! Gegründet vor dir sei das Haus deines Knechtes Dawid!'.

12 In Dutch Bible Translations, the difference between option 1 and option 2 to a high degree appears to be a confessional one. Bible translations with a Reformation background, such as *Statenvertaling 1637*, *Nieuwe Vertaling 1951*, *Herziene Staten Vertaling 2010*, have chosen option 1, whereas in translations with a Roman-Catholic background, such as *Petrus Canisius vertaling 1939*, *Willibrordvertaling 1975*, *Willibrordvertaling (geheel herziene uitgave 1995)*, *Willibrordvertaling editie 2012*, option 2 is found. Option 1 is found in the interconfessional *De Nieuwe Bijbelvertaling* (2004); option 2 is found in the (liberal) *Leidse Vertaling*.

13 I like to thank my colleague Dr. Piet van Midden for his comment upon an earlier draft.

