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Chapter 1

Son of God and Son of Man: 4Q246 in the Light of the Book of Daniel  
  
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1. “SONS OF GOD” IN THE HEBREW BIBLE AND ANCIENT JUDAISM

The claim of Jesus to be the son of God, asserted by the New Testament, is one of the most difficult aspects of Christian religion. It not only makes Chris-tianity’s relationship to its mother religion, Judaism, difficult but also presents significant problems for Christianity in the modern world. The description of a person or a heavenly being as “son of God” is not self-evident, particularly under the conditions of the Enlightenment and according to our categories of under-standing. God and heavenly beings belong to a reality that defies the worldview of the modern era. This applies even more to the genealogical relationship that is expressed by the term “son.” To put it quite simply: since, with our usual (modern) categories of understanding, we cannot say who or what God is, there is no way we can know who or what a “son of God” is.Philology helps us a little here. “Son of God (the gods)” (אלהיםבן or similar) isa generic term and means nothing but “god” in the same way that “son of man” (אדםבן) is“man” and “son of an ox” (בקרבן) is“ox.” This means that the title “s on of God” in itself does not describe the relationship o f father and son but ex presses the divine nature of an earthly or heavenly figure—something that is difficult enough to understand in terms of our modern thinking or on the basis of Jewish and Christian monotheism.In the ancient Near East, however, as in the Hebrew Bible, the New Testa-ment, and other writings of ancient Judaism and early Christianity, we encounter statements that conform neither to grammar nor to pure doctrine. In the myths of Ugarit and other ancient Near Eastern cultures, gods and divine couples have children by means of procreation and birth. The myth of the procreation and birth of a god spells out the idea of the divine attribute in the form of a narrative. This

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narrative of the coming into being of a god is intended to confirm that the figure in question is indeed a god. As in the myth of the creation of the world, myth is not only an image of reality, it interprets and generates reality through the narration of its creation.Closely related to the myth of the divine procreation and birth of the gods is the idea of the birth of the king as a god. InPs 2:7, the earthly king is called “myson, whom I have begotten today” (ילדתיךהיוםאניאתהבני). Asin Egypt, the act of enthronement signifies the procreation of the king as a god. Weare dealing here with a metaphorical understanding of the title “son of God.” The image depicts the generic concept in concrete terms and expresses the divine quality through the idea of biological descent. This figurative use of language is also the basis of th e promise to David in 2Sam 7:14 (quoted in Ps 89:27): והואלאבאהיה־לואנילבןיהיה־לי. Furthermore, this usage is transferred to the people of Israel, tothe exiles, and finally to the pious, who are called “sons of God.”1 Addressing God as “father” in prayers also makes use of figurative speech.2The title “son of God” thus refers to the divine attribute of a heavenly or earthly being, beit as a generic term for “divine” or as a mythical and figurative way of speaking about the procreation and birth of a god. This is also the case in the few places in the Hebrew Bible that mention “sons of God.” Ofall the locations in which we encounter the plural “sons” (אלים/אלהים[ה]בני), only in Dan 3:25 do we also find the singular “son of God,” אלהיןבר in Aramaic. The usage continues in parabiblical writings and in the Dead Sea Scrolls.3The expression refers to heavenly beings that belong to the court of the Most High God (YHWH) and in other texts are simply called “gods” (אלהים, אלים), “angels” (מלאכים, ἄγγελοι), “princes” (שרים), “holy ones” (קדושים), “spirits” (רוחות), or—inAramaic—“watchers” (עירין). Asa rule, these divine beings reside in heaven and surround, serve, and praise God (Psalms 29, 89; Job 38; Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice). Also among them there may be a divine adversary—Satan ( Job 1–2) orMastema ( Jubilees)—surrounded by his own army of heavenly beings (4Q225, 11QMelch). Some of these divine beings represent the peoples on earth (Deuteronomy 32, Daniel). Others are occasionally also active on earth, such as the “sons of God” who intermingle with the “daughters of man” (Gen 6:2) orthe divine being who saves Daniel’s three friends from the flames of the fiery furnace (Daniel 3).We also encounter a figure that is called “son of God” and “son of the Most High” in the Aramaic Apocryphon of Daniel (4Q246) from Qumran. Unfortunately, the  
  
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manuscript is not fully intact, so we do not know who this figure is—a primary reason why the significance of the title in this text is disputed. In the following, I will focus on this text and discuss the interpretations that have been put forward in scholarship. The text is the earliest Jewish witness of the terms “son of God” and “son of the Most High” (in parallel) and is thus highly significant, if not decisive, for the understanding of the notion of divine sonship in ancient Judaism and early Christianity (cf. Luke 1:32–35).First, I will introduce the text and discuss the different interpretations sug-gested by scholarship on the basis of its structure. Following the approach of Michael Segal, I will then discuss 4Q246’s inner-biblical references, especially to Daniel 7, the book of Daniel as a whole, and some other texts brought into play by Segal, in combination with the linguistic debate on 4Q246. I argue that neither the structure nor the inner-biblical references support any kind of messianic interpre-tation but that the text suggests instead that “son of God” is a negative appellation that likely refers to Antiochus IV or another Seleucid king.  
  
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