

4Q246

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The Aramaic text 4Q246 (the "son of God" text) is recognized as a document of first-rate importance, but scholars have not been able to agree on its interpretation. The present study offers new readings, translation, and commentary, and suggests that a proper understanding of the fragment's internal poetic structure and of its affinity to the Akkadian prophecies leads to the conclusion that the text represents the "son of God" as a negative figure. The probable historical background of 4Q246 is the Seleucid period, especially the struggle against Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

Key Words: Son of God, 4Q246, Mark 14:64, Luke 1:35, Akkadian prophecies, Antiochus Epiphanes

The Aramaic text 4Q246 was acquired by J. T. Milik from the antiquities dealer Kando in 1958. J. A. Fitzmyer published part of the text based on a lecture of Milik's, and a number of discussions appeared based on this partial publication.¹ Recently Emile Puech has published the full text with commentary; Fitzmyer has also returned to the text with a full commentary and interpretation.² The availability of the complete fragment will undoubtedly initiate a new phase in the discussion of this fragmentary document.

1. Fitzmyer's original article was "The Contribution of Qumran Aramaic to the Study of the New Testament," *NTS* 20 (1974-75) 382-407; reprinted in Fitzmyer, *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (SBLMS 25; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979) 85-113, esp. 92-93. References to this article use the pagination of the latter publication. Other early articles on this text are David Flusser, "The Hubris of the Antichrist in a Fragment from Qumran," *Immanuel* 10 (1981) 31-39, and F. García Martínez, "The Eschatological Figure of 4Q246," *Qumran and Apocalyptic: Studies on the Aramaic Texts from Qumran* (Leiden: Brill, 1991) 162-79, an English translation of "¿Tipo del Anticristo o Libertador escatológico?" *El Misterio de la Palabra. Homenaje a L. Alonso Schökel* (ed. V. Collado and E. Zurro; Madrid: Cristianidad, 1983) 229-44. Milik's original transcription of the text can be retrieved from the *Preliminary Concordance to the Hebrew and Aramaic Fragments from Qumran Caves II-IX* (Arranged for Printing by H.-P. Richter; Göttingen, 1988).

2. Emile Puech, "Fragment d'une apocalypse en araméen (4Q246 = pseudo-Dan^d) et le 'Royaume de Dieu'," *RB* 99 (1992) 98-131; J. A. Fitzmyer, "4Q246: The 'Son of God' Document from Qumran," *Bib* (1993) 153-74. Two other treatments of the entire text have appeared: Robert Eisenman and Michael Wise, "The Son of God (4Q246),"

4Q246 contains two columns of nine lines each. The first column, having been torn approximately through the middle, is missing the first half of each line, but the second column is complete. It is of course impossible to estimate exactly how long the complete scroll may have been, but the column length is only about half that of a normal size scroll. Paleographically, the text was said by Milik (according to Fitzmyer) to date from the latter third of the first century BCE, a judgment with which Puech agrees.³ The letter forms are those of "early formal Herodian" script, although Milik's and Puech's dates may be too narrow.

Linguistically, the text, as luck would have it, contains few of the diagnostic features typically used to place Palestinian Aramaic in a typological series. There is one example of non-assimilated nun: (ינתן, II, 8) and one of elided aleph (תהא, I, 4). The preformative of the third masculine singular imperfect of the verb הוי is lamedh (להוה, I, 7), typical of Qumran Aramaic. The orthography is conservative, with few indications of vowels by *matres lectionis*: the third masculine plural suffix is הן-, not הון-; כל ("all") not כול, as is usual at Qumran; once קשומ (II, 5) but also קשמ (II, 6); ידוש (II, 3) but also יסף (II, 6); and so on. The text could fit almost anywhere in a typological series from Daniel to the Genesis Apocryphon.

In the essay that follows, I will first offer a transcription of the text that differs in some respects from Puech's. Afterwards I give a stichometric translation and a commentary on the text, followed by a summary and conclusions.

TRANSCRIPTION

Column I

[ע]לוהי שרת נפל קדם כרסיא	.1
כא לעלמא אתה רגז ושניך	.2
א חזוך וכלא אתה עד עלמא	.3
רב[רבין עקה תחא על אלעא	.4
ונחשירון רב [למ]דינתא	.5
מלך אתור [ומ]צריין	.6
רב להוה על[א]רעא	.7

The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered (Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element, 1992) 68-71; and John J. Collins, "A Pre-Christian 'Son of God' Among the Dead Sea Scrolls," *BibRev* 9/3 (June 1993) 34-38, 57. Collins' longer treatment of the text was published after the present article was written ("The Son of God Text from Qumran," *From Jesus to John: Essays on Jesus and New Testament Oiristology in Honour of Marinus de Jonge* [ed. M. C. De Boer; JSTNSup 84; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993] 65-82).

3. Puech, "Fragment," 105.

	[. ישת]עבדון וכלא ישנמןשון	.8
	[. ר]בא יתקרא ובשמה יתכנה	.9
Column II		
	ברה די אל יתאמר ובר עליון יקרונה בזיקיא	.1
	די חזיתא כן מלכותהן תהוא שנין ימלכון על	.2
	ארעא וכלא ידשון עם לעם ידוש ומדינה למדנינה	.3
	עד יקום עם אל וכלא ינוח מן חרב	.4
	מלכותה מלכות עלם וכל ארחתה בקשומ ידינן	.5
	ארעא בקשט וכלא יעבד שלם חרב מן ארעא יסף	.6
	וכל מדינתא לה יסגרון אל רבא באילה	.7
	הוא יעבד לה קרב עממין ינתן בידה וכלהן	.8
	ירמה קדמוהי שלטנה שלטן עלם וכל תהומי	.9

NOTES ON THE TRANSCRIPTION

Column I, line 2: Puech reads עלמח <<מ>>{{ ל }} Puech thinks that the lamedh was to be replaced by a sublinear mem. There is a crude circle underneath the ayin that could be taken to be a cursive mem. It does not resemble the other mems in the document, however, and sublinear corrections are unexpected. Puech's reading is therefore unlikely, although the circle is unexplained. Collins reads [ל]עלמא, Eisenman and Wise עלמא. The photograph clearly shows a faint lamedh before the ayin.

Line 2: Milik read רגניז, but the yodh he thought he saw is simply a spot of ink where the scribe initially put down the pen for the gimel.

Line 2: ושניד: so also Puech and Eisenman and Wise. Collins reads, less probably, ושנד.

Line 3: א[. . .] חזוד. So also Collins. Eisenman and Wise restore א[ל ר]בא חזוד, an unlikely restoration grammatically; Fitzmyer also sees a beth, but restores [על י]בא חזוד; however, the word חזו "vision" (not "face"!) is masculine, not feminine. Puech restores [ש/ק]רא חזוד. The trace of the letter before the aleph is too small for identification.

Line 4: Milik read [ר]ברבין; there is a trace of a letter before the resh, but it cannot be identified with certainty. Puech, Fitzmyer, and Collins unwarrantedly read an unquestioned beth.

Line 5: [למ]דינתא רב נחשירון Puech, Fitzmyer, and Collins read במדינתא, with no brackets, but the beth and mem are not visible in the photograph. Eisenman and Wise read [מ]דינתא רבו, but the ׀ ending of the first word is unlikely for grammatical reasons (see below), while the waw of רבו is not visible and is again prima facie unlikely. There are traces of at least one letter between the beth of רב and the dalet of [מ]דינתא; there is also a trace of ink above the line that seems to be the remnant of the upper shaft of a lamedh.

Column II, line 2: חזיהא: so also Collins and Eisenman and Wise. Puech's and Fitzmyer's חזיהא is unlikely both paleographically and grammatically (see below).

Line 2: תהוא: so also Eisenman and Wise (Collins omits!). Puech and Fitzmyer read תהוה, but the "K" shape of the final letter is clear enough to make the identification with aleph probable.

Line 6: בקשט: Collins erroneously reads בקשומ.

Line 6: לשלם: Collins erroneously reads לשלם.

Line 7: יסגדון: Collins erroneously reads יסגדין.

Line 8: יעבד: so also Collins and Eisenman and Wise. Puech and Fitzmyer read, less probably, ועבד.

Line 8: וכלהן: Eisenman and Wise erroneously read בלהן.

Line 8: תחומי: Eisenman and Wise erroneously read תחומי.

Since the first column is damaged, one must rely on the second column for information about the arrangement and composition of the text. It is evident that the text is arranged in parallelistic bicola, with generally three stresses to a line. This 3+3 stress pattern is occasionally broken for a two-stress second line (3+2). The fragmentary sentences of the first column must be construed to fit this pattern.

I now offer my reconstruction of the stichometry and structure of the text, followed by a translation and commentary on the text by bicola. The siglum || indicates the caesura between bicola.

Column I—Stichometric reconstruction

[] [רוח אל ע]לוהי שרת	A
נפל קדם כרסיא [מל]כא	B
לעלמא אתה רגז ושניך []	C
[] א חזוך וכלא אתה עד עלמא	D
[רב]רבין עקה תתא על ארעא	E
[] [] ונחשירון	F
רב [למ]דינתא [יקום] []	G
מלך אתור [ומ]צריין []	H
[] רב להוה על ארעא	I
[] וכלא יש[מ]שון [לה]	J
[בן]ברה רב[א] יתקרא ובשמה יתכנה	K

Column II—Stichometric division

ברה די אל יתאמר ובר עליון יקרונה	A
כזיקיא די חזיתא בן מלכותה תהוא	B
שניין ימלכון על ארעא וכלא ידשון	C
עם לעם ידוש ומדינה למד[י]נה	D
עי יקום עם אל וכל יניח מן חרב	E

מלכותה מלכות עלם וכל ארחתה בקשומ	F
ידין] ארעא בקשט וכלא יעבד שלם	G
חרב מן ארעא יסף וכל מדינתא לה יסגדון	H
אל רבא באילה הוא יעבד לה קרב	I
עממין ינתן בידה וכלהן ירמה קדמוהי	J
ש44למנה שלמן עלם וכל תהומי [ארעא לה]	K

TRANSLATION

Column I

A	[[the spirit of God] rested upon him
B	He fell before the throne [ki]ng
C	To the world (?) wrath is coming And your years []
D	[]your vision And all is coming to the world (?)
E	[]great Tribulation will come upon the land
F	[[] and slaughters
G	A prince of nations [will arise] []
H	The king of Assyria and Egypt []
I	[] He will be chief over the land
J	[] will be enslaved And all will serve him
K	[Likewise his son] will be called The Great And by his name he will be designated.

Column II

A	He will be called the son of God, And the son of the Most High they will call him.
B	Like the meteors that you saw, So will be their kingdom.
C	(A few) years they will reign over the land, And they will crush everyone (or everything)
D	People will crush people, Nation (will crush) nation.

- E Until the people of God shall arise,
And all will have rest from the sword.
- F His/their kingdom is an eternal kingdom,
And all his/their ways are in truth.
- G He/they shall judge the land in truth,
And all will make peace.
- H The sword will cease from the land,
And all the nations shall do homage to him/there.
- I The Great God is his/their help
He himself will fight for him/them.
- J He will put the nations in his/their power,
And all of them he will place before him/them.
- K His dominion is an eternal dominion,
And all the deeps of [the earth are his].

COMMENTARY

[] || [רוח אל ע]לוהי שרת

A [] || [the spirit of God] rested upon him

The verb שׁרׁי, when used intransitively in the Pe^cal as here, means "to rest, stay." It is often used of a quality or presence coming to rest on or to endue a person, as for instance, in *Tg. Num* 11:26: ושרת עליהון רוח נבואה, "and a spirit of prophecy rested on them." It seems likely that the word רוּח or something similar should be restored. Puech, followed by Fitzmyer, suggests [דחלה רבה ע]לוהי שרת "une grande frayeur (?) demeura sur lui." Besides yielding an over-long four-stress line, the word דחלה or the like is never used with שׁרׁי.⁴ Eisenman and Wise restore [וכדי רוחה ע]לוהי שרת "and when the Spirit came to rest upon him." This is possible, but it is doubtful that the writer would have referred to "the spirit" without qualification.

The probable context is that of a vision interpreter receiving the power or knowledge to understand a symbolic vision.

B נפל קדם כרסיא [] || מל[כא

B He fell before the throne

[] ki]ng

Eisenman and Wise take the first line above to be paired with the second line of bicolon A: "And when the Spirit came to rest upon him he fell before the throne." Such a reconstruction is unlikely, because,

4. A check of *Targum Onqelos*, *Targum Jonathan*, and *Targum Neofiti* shows that words for fear (אִי־חָה, דַּחֲלָה, etc.) are never used with שׁרׁי, but "spirit" (*Tg. Isa* 11:2, *Tg. Ezek* 11:5, *Tg. Neof. Gen* 41:38), "glory" (יִקָּר, *Tg. Onq. Exod* 19:2, *Tg. Isa* 6:1) and "presence" (שִׁכְיָנָה, *Tg. Neof. Exod* 32:32, *Num* 14:42) occur often. An examination of the Syriac *Demonstrationes* of Aphrahat reveals that only "spirit" is used with the collocation šry^cl.

רב[רבין] || עקה תתא על ארעא] E

E []great

Tribulation will come upon the land.

Eisenman and Wise restore רב[רבין] ובאשין, "There will be violence and great evils," an overlong four-beat line. (One would expect, in any case, the feminine רברבין באשין for "great evils.") Puech's ר[ברבין] [ארעא במלכין] is a better balanced line, but purely hypothetical. More likely is some kind of reference to something in the vision that portends tribulation: רב[רבין] [אתין] "great signs," or the like. The interpreter is beginning to give details of the vision.

ונחשירון [] || [] F

[] || רב [למדינתא] [יקום] G

F []

[] and slaughters

G A prince of nations [will arise]

[]

My construal of the text differs from previous expositors in that I take ונחשירון to be the end of a bicolon instead of the first word of a colon. Eisenman and Wise, for instance, read [רב] [עממין יעבדון קרב], "Peoples will make war, and battles shall multiply among the nations." Besides erring in some material readings (see above), this sentence cannot mean what it is said to mean: the past tense רבו cannot be translated "shall multiply."

Puech, on the other hand, understands נחשירון (the proper reading) as a singular, principally because he takes the singular as an attributive adjective modifying it.⁶ He reconstructs the whole line as רב [מדינתא] [עממין] [ונחשירון] [קרב להוה בין עממין], "Il y aura la guerre entre les peuples et un grand massacre dans les provinces" (similarly Collins). The problem with this is that there is no such word as נחשירון "slaughter," described by Puech as "une forme nouvelle avec affixe -ôn."⁷ In fact, the word is the plural of the normal Aramaic form נחשירו: forms ending in -û take the plural -wân, thus נחשירון.

If נחשירון is plural, then רב syntactically must belong to another line. There is room to restore an entire bicolon before רב: perhaps רב [עממין] [קרב אף קטל] [ונחשירון], "All shall make war, even killing and slaughters," or the like. The next line introduces a new bicolon, and a new figure appears: "a prince of nations." The Akkadian prophecy texts,⁸ which 4Q246 so much resembles, commonly speak in this way

6. Puech, "Fragment," 111.

7. Ibid.

8. The Akkadian prophecy texts are the so-called "Text A," the Marduk Prophecy, the Shulgi Prophecy, the Uruk Prophecy, and the Dynastic Prophecy. Bibliographical

they both appear to be about the same length. The reverse is the problem with his line 7, where he proposes to put 22 letters/spaces (להוה... ברך) in an area that would allow 17 or 18 at the most. The second reason is that his restored text is prose, not poetry.

Puech also chooses this line to introduce the "Son of God" figure: ארעא [יקום מלך אחרן והוא] רב להוה על ארעא, "Se lévera un autre/dernier roi, et lui, il sera grand sur la terre." This reconstruction is better than Fitzmyer's both as poetry and as paleography, but there is no reason to introduce the "Son of God" at this point. This will become plain in the discussion below.

Further similarities to the Akkadian prophecy genre can be detected in these lines. In the Uruk prophecy, for instance, on two occasions it is stated of a future king that he shall "become master over the land" (*kibrāti erbetti ibēl*).¹⁰ Another text mentions a prince, *rubûm*, who shall not "become master over the land," *lā ibēl māta*.¹¹

J [ישתעבדון] וכל א ישמשון [לה]

J [] will be enslaved

And all will serve him

Previous studies have seen in the description here the dawning of a new age of peace and prosperity, in keeping with the prevailing view that the reference is to the "Son of God." Fitzmyer reconstructs the prosaic [לה] ישמשון וכל א יעבדון "and all the peoples shall make peace with him, and they shall all serve him." This is too long for the available space by about four letters. Puech similarly restores [לה] ישמשון וכל א יעבדון "עממיא/מלכיא שלם עמה", "Les peuples/rois feront la paix avec lui et tous le serviront." Eisenman and Wise's reconstruction is along the same lines.

However, I understand this portion of the text to belong to a comprehensive description of the appearance of a powerful ruler. This appearance is introduced by tribulation and war. The leader (רב) is, or is connected in some way with, the "king of Assyria and Egypt"; he will become master over the entire land. The consequence of this mastery is described in the present bicolon: The lands or peoples of the land shall be subdued or enslaved and they shall serve the world ruler. The restoration of ישתעבדון is simply a guess, of course; it is no more certain than the יעבדון, restored by almost everyone else. (The word עבדין, "slaves," is also a possible restoration: וכל א להוה עבדין, "all shall become slaves," or the like.) Similar statements are

10. H. Flunger and S. A. Kaufman, "A New Akkadian Prophecy Text," *JAOS* 95 (1975) 372. The sentences referred to are in lines 10 and 16 of the reverse.

11. "Text A" in A. K. Grayson and W. G. Lambert, "Akkadian Prophecies," *JCS* 18 (1964) 13-14.

made in the Akkadian "Dynastic Prophecy" of a king who shall "oppress the land" (*eli māti idannin*) and to whom the lands will have to bring tribute (*mātāti kalašina biltum* x[.]).¹²

K [כּן ברה ר]בא יתקראּ || ובשמה יתכנהּ

K [Likewise his son] will be called The Great
And by his name he will be designated.

This couplet is crucial for the construal of the whole but is unfortunately broken. Most previous commentators have opted to reconstruct it on the model of II, 1. Thus Fitzmyer: [והוא בר אל ר]בא יתקראּ, "he shall be called son of the great God." This reconstruction is too long by about four spaces: Eisenman and Wise's [בר אל ר]בא יתקראּ is almost identical, but a better fit. Puech's [בר מרא ר]בא יתקראּ, "le fils de Grand Souverain it sera appelé," is similar.

Obviously the understanding of this line is governed by the understanding of the text as a whole. Previous commentators, interpreting the text to deal almost exclusively with the "Son of God," have virtually ignored the context. Woe and tribulation precede and follow the introduction of the personage in this line. There are incomplete references to at least one ruler in Column I, who may be the "king of Assyria and Egypt"; but then, in II, 2 there is a reference to "their kingdom." What is the antecedent of the pronoun? I propose that the text deals with the rise of one world ruler, who is then succeeded by another, his son. The son shall be designated by his father's name. It is their kingdom (מלכותהוּ) that is referred to in II, 2.

The mention of a successor to a king is also a feature of the Akkadian prophecies. The son is characterized in the same way as the father. The "Dynastic Prophecy" mentions an anonymous king who will "exercise sovereignty" for three years; and "after his death, his son will ascend the throne . . . but he will not be master of the land."¹³ Even closer to our text, but with a positive spin, is the Uruk prophecy:

A king will arise in Uruk who will provide justice in the land. . . .
After him his son will arise as king in Uruk and become master over the world. He will exercise rule and kingship in Uruk and his dynasty will be established forever. The kings of Uruk will exercise rulership like the gods.¹⁴

Further comments on this interpretation of the text will be found in the section "Interpretation" below.

12. A. K. Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975) 32-33.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Hunger and Kaufman, "A New Akkadian Prophecy," 372-73.

ברה די אל יתאמר || ובר אליון יקרונה A

A He will be called "The Son of God,"

And the son of the Most High they will call him.

This, the most famous line of the text, presents no particular problems of translation. The interpretation, of course, is an entirely different matter (see "Interpretation").

Fitzmyer's translation of the first colon, "he shall be hailed as the Son of God," is too highly colored. The meaning of 'יתאמר', in this context is simply "be called." Fitzmyer's reference to Luke 1:32, 35 also involves an inaccuracy. "The absence of definite articles in the Lucan usage," he says, "is indicative of the Semitism involved, which is now clearly manifest in this Aramaic text."¹⁵ In fact, the Aramaic expressions are definite, not indefinite: ברה די אל is the genitive construction with the anticipatory pronominal suffix, which can only mean "The Son of God," while Luke 1:35 has anarthrous τὸς θεοῦ. בר עליון also should be taken as definite, since עליון is a quasi-proper name. The proper Aramaic adjective for "high, highest" is עליון; the use of the Hebraic form indicates that a title is being used.

בזיקיא די חזיתה || כן מלכותהן תהוא B

B Like the meteors that you saw,

So will be their kingdom.

Puech, Milik, Garcia-Martinez, and Fitzmyer all read חזיתה instead of חזיתה, with translations such as "like comets of the vision."¹⁶ Although yodh and waw are quite similar in this text, the yodh has a slightly larger head. In any case, the emphatic state of the word חזו, "vision," is חזוה, not חזוה. Eisenman and Wise and Collins correctly read חזיתה, "you saw."

The line confirms that the framework of the text is the interpretation of a vision and gives some information about the content of that vision. The visionary, probably a king, saw "meteors." It is interesting that the Akkadian prophecies have strong links to astrological omens. In one text, a series of prophetic announcements is introduced by an astrological omen protasis, "[If the star(?)] . . . rises and passes over [from] east to west, . . . there is a sulphur [fire] with . . . going along beside it. . . ." ¹⁷ Another prophecy is introduced by "If a torch (i.e., a meteorite) flashes from the height of the sky to the horizon, [. . .] shines very brightly . . ." The prophecy of 4Q246 seems therefore to include a divinatory interpretation of a vision of astrological phenomena, like some of the Akkadian prophecies.

15. Fitzmyer, "4Q246," 162.

16. Fitzmyer, "4Q246," 163; Puech, "Fragment," 167.

17. R. D. Biggs, "More Babylonian Prophecies," *Iraq* 29 (1967) 117-32.

In this couplet, the rapid passage of the meteor serves as a token of the short duration of "their kingdom," that of the "Son of God" and his father.

שנין ימלכון על אדעא || וכלא ידשון C

C (A few) years they will reign over the land,
And they will crush everyone (or everything).

The joint (or successive) rules are contrasted with the eternal rule of God to follow: they shall reign only a few years over the land. The expression שנין "years" is an antonym of עלם, as in the Mishnaic Hebrew phrases קנין שנין "temporary possession" and קנין עולם "eternal possession."

A standard feature of the Akkadian prophecies is an indication of the length of the reigns of the anonymous kings whose rule is predicted: "A prince will arise and rule for eighteen years. . . . A prince will arise and rule for thirteen years. . . . A prince will arise but his days will be short and he will not be master of the land," and so on.¹⁸ In 4Q246, no time is specified, but the implication is that the reign will be short.

Despite the transitory nature of their reign, it will be marked by violence and strife. The placement of this couplet and the next one is crucial: it comes after the introduction of the "son of God" and before the description of the reign of peace that accompanies the manifestation of the people of God. The "son of God" does not usher in the kingdom of God, but belongs to the description of the woes preceding it. He must be a negative figure.

עם לעם ידוש || ומדינה למדינה D

D People will crush people,
Nation (will crush) nation.

Previous scholars have translated מדינה as "province," a meaning it has in some Aramaic contexts. In Jewish Aramaic, however, it gradually broadens its reference to mean "land, nation," and the like, as here.¹⁹

Puech and Fitzmyer have quite properly referred to the parallels to the expressions used here: Isa 19:2 (city against city and kingdom against kingdom), Mark 13:8 par. (nation will make war upon nation, kingdom upon kingdom), 4 Ezra 13:31 (people against people and kingdom against kingdom). This sort of expression may have a Meso-

18. Grayson and Lambert, "Akkadian Prophecies," 13-14.

19. There are many instances in *Tg. Jon.*, e.g., Isa 37:10, Jer 16:15; 23:3; 27:6; 40:11; Ezek 21:24; 22:23; 36:24; 39:27, etc.

potamian background and is found in one Akkadian prophecy, which says that during one king's rule "city [will rebel] against city, tribe against tribe" (*alu iti alī bitu iti bitī [inakkir]*).²⁰

עד יקום עם אל || וכל א ינוח מן הרב

E

E Until the people of God shall arise,
And all will have rest from the sword.

II, 4 begins with a slight *vacat*, the usual Qumranian signal for the beginning of a paragraph. Here it signals a change in the direction of the narrative. David Flusser has discerned the importance of this change in topic, that is, that the pivot of the entire prophecy turns on the entity now being introduced, the "people of God."²¹ In this couplet, and in those which follow, the future blessings all attend the rise of the people of God. It is the people's appearance that is crucial, not that of the "Son of God."

The "rise" of the people of God is formally similar to the "rise" of anonymous kings in the Akkadian prophecies, which are structured around sentences beginning "a prince/king shall arise," followed by characterization of the reign.

מלכותה מלכות עלם || וכל ארחתה בקשומ

F

F His/their kingdom is an eternal kingdom,
And all his/their ways are in truth.

The phrase *מלכותה מלכות עלם*, "his kingdom is an eternal kingdom," appears also in Dan 3:33 and 4:31 in Nebuchadnezzar's praise of God, as well as in Dan 7:27, where the antecedent may be "God," or possibly "the people of the saints of the Most High." The question of antecedent also arises here: Is it God, or the people of God, or the "Son of God"? Fitzmyer takes the third masculine suffixes ה- to refer to the redeemer Son of God. Of all possibilities, that one is the most remote, since the antecedent is four lines away. In II, 7 the suffix on *אילה* clearly refers to someone other than God, and probably all the suffixes up to II, 9 refer to the people of God.

It would be easy to take the reference to the "eternal kingdom" as purely hymnic, but it too is formally similar to time references of the Akkadian prophecies. Usually, after mentioning the rise of a future prince, the duration of his reign is given. In this case, the duration is eternal, as in the climax to the Uruk prophecy: "He will exercise rule and kingship in Uruk and his dynasty will be established forever" (*belūtu u šarrūtu ina aereb Uruk ippuš adi ulla palušu ikānu*).

20. Grayson and Lambert, "Akkadian Prophecies," 17.

21. Flusser, "Hubris," 33.

ידין ארעא בקשט || וכלא יעבד שלם G

G He/they shall judge the land in truth,
And all will make peace.

The rule of redeemed Israel over the land and its beneficent effects are described. The first line of the bicolon is very close to the climax of the Uruk prophecy (Reverse, I, 17): "he will provide justice in the land, he will give right decisions for the land" (*dīna māti idānu purussē māti iparras*).

חרב מן ארעא יסף || וכל מדינתא לה יסגדון H

H The sword will cease from the land,
And all the nations will bow down to him/them.

The blessings of the future age continue to be described. The "golden age" of righteousness also comes forth in the Akkadian prophecies, as in "Text A": "The land will rest secure, fare well, (and its) people will [enjoy] prosperity: (*mātu aburriš uššab libbi māti itāb nisu nuḥša imman*).²²

The second colon gives one pause; could the people of God legitimately receive the act of prostration? And yet the following bicolon could only refer to the people of God. There is a parallel in Dan 2:46 where Nebuchadnezzar is said to have fallen down and worshiped Daniel, or prostrated himself before him.

אל רבא באילה || הוא יעבד לה קרב I

I The Great God is his/their help,
He himself will fight for him/them.

The sentences have been divided differently by others. Eisenman and Wise translate, "As for the Great God, with His help he will make war." They evidently take אל רבא as the head of a casus pendens construction, with הוּא referring to the "Son of God." Such an understanding ignores the poetic structure of the text and also leaves לה untranslated. Fitzmyer and Puech read יעבד, as ועבד and therefore must read הוּא as the copula of the first colon: "The great God is himself his might, he shall make war for him."²³ This bicolon produces an unlikely 4 + 2 stress pattern: it is also unclear why the poet should resort to a participle (עבד) when the rest of the verbs in the passage are imperfect.

The word אִיל, "help," is found in Ps 88:5 and a related form is found in Ps 22:20 (אִילוֹת). The only early attestation in Aramaic of this word is in a proper name appearing on an Aramaic endorsement:

22. Grayson and Lambert, "Akkadian Prophecies," 12, 14.

23. Fitzmyer, "4Q246," 165.

רמנאילי, "Rimmon is my help" (Akkadian ^d*KUR-a-a-li*).²⁴ Nevertheless, because of the vocalism of the word and the occurrences in Syriac, the Hebrew instances have always been considered Aramaisms.²⁵

Fitzmyer notes that the beth on באילה is *beth essentiae*, denoting identity.²⁶ A similar phrase in Hebrew occurs in Exod 18:4: אלהי אבי בעזרי, "the God of my father is my help"; and Aramaic instances are common in the targumim, for example, *Tg. Onq. Gen 21:20*: בסעדיה מירא דיוי הוה, "the command of the Lord was his help" (translating Heb. ויהי אלהים את הנער).

The pronoun הוא is emphatic: "it is he who shall fight for him/them."

J עממין ינתן בידה || וכלהן ירמה קדמוהי

J He will put the peoples in his/their power,
And all of them he will place before him/them.

The expression נתן ביד is especially frequent in biblical Hebrew with the meaning "to deliver into the power of." The verb ירמה here may have the meaning "throw down in defeat," or, more likely, "put, place" before someone at their disposal. God will put the Gentile nations into the power of his people, making of them a kind of gift.

K שלטנה שלטן עלם || וכל תהומי [ארעא לה] K

K His dominion is an eternal dominion,
And all the deeps [of the earth are his].

The phrase שלטנה שלטן עלם finds an exact parallel in Dan 4:31 (referring to God), and 7:14 (referring to the "son of man").

The second colon is restored variously. Puech suggests וכל תהומי [ארעא ישמעון לה], "tous les abîmes de la terre lui obéiront."²⁷ This is overlong for the style of this text, as is Fitzmyer's וכל תהומי [ארעא לא], "and none of the abysses of the earth shall prevail against it."²⁸ Since the style favors a three-stress line, the best alternative would be something like וכל תהומי [ארעא לה], "all the deeps of the earth are his."

The question of the antecedent of the pronouns comes up again in this colon. Since God's action has been the focus of the preceding two bicola, it is likely that the pronouns refer to him in this one. The

24. M. Maraqtan, *Die semitischen Personennamen in den alt- und reichsaramäischen Inschriften aus Vorderasien* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1988) 125.

25. M. Wagner, *Die lexikalischen und grammatikalischen Aramaismen im alttestamentlichen Hebräisch* (BZAW 96; Berlin; Töpelmann, 1966) 23-24, §§11-12.

26. Fitzmyer, "4Q246," 165.

27. Puech, "Fragment," 109.

28. Fitzmyer, "4Q246," 166.

reference to "deeps" also makes more sense as an allusion to the scope of divine power.

INTERPRETATION

4Q246 has been of particular interest to New Testament scholars, because of its likeness to the words of the Annunciation in Luke 1:32-33:

He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end [RSV].

Although there is indeed a *prima facie* likeness between the passages, the study of 4Q246 has suffered from a tendency to read it in the light of the Gospel passage, as a bit of hitherto unknown Jewish messianic lore that prefigures New Testament christology. According to Collins, "The Son of God may be identified with confidence as a messianic figure."²⁹ Fitzmyer, although resisting the use of the term "messiah," also endorses the idea that the Son of God is a "coming Jewish ruler . . . who [will] be a successor to the Davidic throne."³⁰ But Flusser and García Martínez have identified the major problem with this interpretation, that is, that the reign of the "Son of God," far from being a time of blessing, ushers in a time of warfare and strife.³¹ The true pivot of the text is the mention of the "people of God," introduced after a *vacat* in II, 4. Flusser's solution is to construe the Son of God as an evil figure, indeed as the Antichrist. Milik too sees the Son as a negative character.

The text then climaxes not in the appearance of the "Son of God," but in the people of God. Proponents of the "messianic" interpretation have responded to this criticism differently. Collins appeals to the repetitiveness of apocalyptic literature to explain why the rise of the Son of God and the rise of the people of God is interrupted by a description of war.

It is typical of apocalyptic literature that it does not tell its story in simple sequential order, but often goes over the same ground again and again to make its point. For example, Daniel 7 recounts a famous vision in which "one like a son of man" comes on the clouds of heaven (verse 13) and is given a kingdom. An interpretation follows, which says that "the holy ones of the Most High" receive the kingdom (verse 18). Finally, there is an elaboration of this interpretation, according to which the kingdom is given to "the people of the holy ones of the Most

29. Collins, "Pre-Christian 'Son of God'," 35.

30. Fitzmyer, "4Q246," 174.

31. Flusser, "Hubris," 33, 35.

High" (verse 27). The giving of the kingdom, then, is narrated three times, but these are not three separate events.³²

The analogy with Daniel is misconceived. As is plain even from Collins' summary, the giving of the kingdom in Daniel 7 is not narrated three times; it is narrated once, and interpreted twice. Every mention of it is in a different context. The events Collins sees as beneficent in 4Q246—the rise of the Son of God and of the people of God—are discrete events separated by tribulation, not reiterations or reinterpretations of the same event.

García Martínez recognizes that it is "incomprehensible that, after an apparent peace-making arrangement [in I, 8] . . . the text continues to talk of one people crushing another people and one city another one [II, 3]."³³ His solution is to interpret the Son of God as an angel, named in other Qumran texts as Michael or the Prince of Light, whose "intervention unleashes the final stages of the eschatological confrontation . . . [which] ends in a final and definitive period of peace and in the eternal reign of Israel."³⁴ But there is no indication in this text that the "son of God" intervenes to help the people of God; instead, the rise of the people is decisive. The "people of God" are never brought into any relation to the "son of God." Furthermore, as already noted, after the introduction of the "son of God," the text speaks of "their kingdom" (מלכותהויה) lasting only a short time (II, 1-2); in such a context the antecedent of "their" can only be the son of God and his predecessor(s).

In the end, then, the "positive" interpretation of the son of God fails to survive a close reading of the text.

The principal "negative" interpretations of 4Q246 are those of Flusser and Milik. Flusser construed the text as an early Jewish attestation of the Antichrist myth. The "son of God" is an eschatological figure, the wicked ruler of the last kingdom, and his claim to divine status is blasphemous hubris. His disappearance coincides with the rise of the people of God.

Flusser's analysis has been properly faulted for its uncritical reliance for parallels on Christian or post-Christian texts as the parallels to 4Q246.³⁵ If the Antichrist is called "son of God" in those texts, that is more likely to be a reverse image of the Christian confession of Jesus as Son than any independent Jewish tradition. And yet, as we shall show, if the "son of God" is a negative figure in this pre-Christian text

32. Collins, "Pre-Christian 'Son of God,'" 36.

33. García Martínez, "Eschatological Figure," 170.

34. Ibid. 178-79.

35. Such as 2 Thess 2:1-12, *Ascension of Isaiah* 4:2-26, Didache 16:4, *Assumption of Moses*, the *Oracle of Hystaspes*.

we have at once both an authentic Jewish source for the growth of the legend of the Antichrist (in this context admittedly an anachronistic term) and a possible background for the condemnation of Jesus as blasphemer.³⁶

Milik understands 4Q246 as an *ex eventu* prophecy speaking of the rise of Alexander Balas (the "Son of God") whose coins bore his image with the legend θεόπατωρ or *Deo patre natus*.³⁷ "God," in this case, is Antiochus IV Epiphanes, whose son Balas claimed to be. Milik claims that Balas's assumption of the title "son of God" was meant to honor Antiochus's pretensions, and that Balas also designated himself the successor of Alexander the Great. Milik restores I, 9 as [הלפת מלכא רבא יתקרא ובשמה יתכנה], "he shall style himself successor of the Great King and call himself by his name." All this seems overingenious; nothing else in 4Q246 points to the reign of Balas, although Milik is right to see the Seleucid period as the most probable background of the text. The Hellenistic rulers of the Near East all in varying degrees adopted the language of divinity for themselves and all accepted divine honors, as did their Roman successors. If the reconstruction given here is correct, the historical referent must be sought in a king of both Assyria (= Syria) and Egypt who is succeeded by an arrogant son of the same name.

The Akkadian prophecies provide the most convincing background for 4Q246. In attempting to reassess its purpose and nature, they must be given a prominent role. A summary of the traits they have in common with 4Q246 shows the general similarity.

<i>4Q246</i>	<i>Akkadian Prophecies</i>
"tribulation will come upon the land" (I, E)	"there will be a hard time in the land" (Uruk, obv., line 9) "confusion, disturbance, and disorder in the land" (Text A, first side, ii:13)
"a prince of nations [will arise]" (I, G)	"a prince will arise" (common to all)
"the people of God will arise" (II, E)	
"he will be master over the land" (I, I)	"he will become master over the land" (Uruk, rev., 10, 16; Marduk Prophecy III:20')
oppression and submission	"he shall oppress the land" (Dynastic Prophecy, ii:14)

36. Gregory Jenks briefly discusses Flusser's reading of 4Q246 in his *Origins and Early Development of the Antichrist Myth* (BZNW 59; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991) 180-82. He is not convinced that the text reflects a pre-Christian Jewish belief in the Antichrist but allows that it may contain beliefs about the "endtyrant" a figure who influenced later Christian belief about the Antichrist.

37. Milik briefly summarizes his view in "Les modeles arameens du livre d'Esther dans la grotte 4 de Qumrân," *RevQ* 59 (1992) 383-84.

"[his son] will be called Great, and by his name he will be designated" (I, K)	"the lands will be given together to the king of Babylon and Nippur" (Shulgi Prophecy, III:1') "after him his son will arise as king in Uruk and become master over the world" (Uruk, rev., 16) "after him his son shall sit on the throne" (Dynastic Prophecy ii:9) Astronomical omens of Text B
"like the meteors that you saw, so will be their kingdom" (II, B) "people will crush people, nation will crush nation" (II, D) "the sword" as symbol of violence (II, E, H)	"city against city, tribe against tribe" (Text B 15) "friends will cast one another to the ground with the sword, comrades will destroy one another with the sword" (Shulgi V)
"(a few) years they will reign over the land" (II, C) "his/their kingdom is an eternal kingdom" (II, F) "he/they shall judge the land in truth" (II, G)	"he shall reign for X years" (common to all) "his dynasty shall be established forever" (Uruk, rev., 17) "he will provide justice in the land, he will give right decisions for the land" (Uruk, rev., 17)
"The Great God is his help, he himself shall fight for him" (II, I)	"Enlil, Shamash, and Marduk will go at the side of his army" (Dynastic iii: 15-16) "I [Marduk], god of all, will befriend him, he will destroy Elam" (Marduk 21'-22')

Besides these common elements and expressions, 4Q246 shares the method of the Akkadian prophecies, that is, to "foretell" history in terms of the rise of a series of unnamed rulers, their reigns characterized as either disastrous or propitious. The final ruler in the series (where it is preserved) always inaugurates an era of prosperity, peace and true worship. The prophecies—and, we may assume, 4Q246—are designed as political propaganda to support and justify the final reign. The Uruk prophecy, for instance, was apparently composed to muster support for the fragile reign of Awel-Marduk, son of Nebuchadnezzar II (6th century BCE).³⁸

38. Hunger and Kaufman, "New Akkadian Prophecy Text," 374-75; Tremper Longman III, *Fictional Akkadian Autobiography: A Generic and Comparative Study* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1991) 149.

The similarities must not be exaggerated. The Akkadian texts emphasize the restoration or rebuilding of temples or the return of cultic objects to their proper location as crucial elements in the return of prosperity. This feature is completely absent in 4Q246. The final "ruler" in 4Q246 is a group, "the people of God," which is without comparison in the Akkadian prophecies. The Aramaic text is an adaptation of the Akkadian genre for a particular purpose.

What is that purpose? If we assume that 4Q246 is to be characterized broadly as political propaganda, then the Maccabean revolt immediately suggests itself as the true referent of "the rise of the people of God." The "son of God," in that case, would be Antiochus IV Epiphanes, and his father would be Antiochus III the Great, a supposition that fits our textual reconstruction ("[also his son] shall be called Great, and by his name [Antiochus] he shall be designated"). The extension of the Seleucid realm under Antiochus III to include Palestine might be referred to in the fragmentary first column, and the continual battles with the Ptolemies could accurately be described as "people against people, nation against nation." This reconstruction has the added advantage of placing 4Q246 within the same putative time frame as Daniel, the canonical text most similar to it.³⁹

A reasonable guess about the origin of 4Q246 may be hazarded. Its message is almost a reversal of the Akkadian prophecy it most resembles, the Uruk prophecy. The conclusion of that text prophesies the rise of a benevolent ruler, who is succeeded by a son who, as world ruler, inaugurates an eternal dynasty "like the gods":

A king will arise in Uruk who will provide justice in the land and will give the right decisions for the land. . . . He will fill the rivers and fields with abundant yield. After him his son will arise as king in Uruk and become master over the world. He will exercise rule and kingship in Uruk and his dynasty will be established forever. The king of Uruk will exercise rulership like the gods. (Reverse, 11, 15-19)

4Q246 reflects a similar scenario of the rise of a decisive father and son, who gain power over the entire land; but their dynasty will be transitory. The eternal kingdom belongs to the "people of God," as do the blessings of peace, justice, and prosperity. It seems probable that

39. See Puech, "Fragment," 127. Scholars have also noted the influence of the Akkadian prophecy genre on Daniel, such as Joyce Baldwin, "Some Literary Affinities of the Book of Daniel," *TynBul* 30 (1979) 77-99. She argues that the influence of the Akkadian genre on Daniel 8-12 points to a sixth century BC date for that book, since Daniel is "related not only to the second century pseudepigrapha but also to Babylonian writings of great antiquity" (p. 99). If 4Q246 is a second-century adaptation of the Akkadian prophecy genre, this argument is invalidated, since it demonstrates the vitality of the Akkadian genre in Palestine in the second century. It is possible of course (but not, to my mind, likely) that 4Q246 is to be dated before the second century.

the advent of the Seleucids was accompanied by the dissemination of propaganda, including *ex eventu* prophecies of the Akkadian type. The Judean opposition may well have produced counter-"prophecies" of its own undercutting the Seleucid ones. 4Q246 would have been one of them. The Danielic literature, especially Daniel 8-12, would also fit well here.

But the particular spin placed on the "prophecy"—understanding the "son of God" in a negative sense—is best understood as an inner-Jewish development. A counter-prophecy to a Seleucid broadside along the lines of the Uruk prophecy need not have employed the same divinizing language. Why might the writer of 4Q246 have done so? Possibly because polemic against the divine pretensions of foreign rulers was already a feature of Israelite literature. Such a critique finds expression primarily in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, but also, I believe, in Psalm 82. In Isaiah 14 the king of Babylon (perhaps originally Assyria) is addressed as the "son of Dawn," a divine being:

Once you thought in your heart, "I will climb to the sky;
Higher than the stars of God I will set my throne.
I will sit in the mount of assembly,
On the summit of Zaphon:
I will mount the back of a cloud—I will match the Most High".
(Isa 14:13-14, NJPV)

The same kind of heaven-storming arrogance is attributed to the king of Tyre in Ezekiel 28:

You have been so haughty and have said, "I am a god [or: I am El];
I sit enthroned like a god in the heart of the seas," whereas you are
not a god but a man, though you deemed your mind equal to a god's.
(Ezek 28:2, NJP V)

Lastly, Psalm 82 is usually taken today as a myth of the coming supremacy of Yahweh among the gods; but in fact the psalm is another example of the Israelite critique of the divine kingship ideology, as the reference to "princes" (שָׁרִים) may indicate.

I had taken you for divine beings (אֱלֹהִים); sons of the Most High, all
of you; but you shall die as men do, fall like any prince (כְּאֶחָד הַשָּׂרִים).
Arise, O God, judge the earth, for all the nations are your possession.
(Ps 82:6-8, NJPV)

All these passages highlight the contrast between the grandiose pretensions of the "divine" kings and their inevitable fall into ruin. The same contrast lies at the foundation of 4Q246. The world ruler and his "divine" son, despite their superhuman power, pass away, only to be replaced by the people of God, who alone are favored with divine blessings. The Qumran composition exploits the traditional

Israelite disdain for "divine" kings in a pastiche of a genre generally used to support that ideology. Seen from this perspective, 4Q246 is a sample of Jewish counter-propaganda to Seleucid claims, turning the Mesopotamian prophecy genre against itself, and utilizing a powerful Israelite aversion to human claims to divinity.

Whether 4Q246, understood in this light, can still make some contribution to understanding the New Testament's use of the phrase "Son of God" to describe Jesus remains to be seen. It has long been an axiom with one school of New Testament exegetes that the early Palestinian church used the phrase in an unremarkable "adoptionist" sense that no Jew would have objected to; it was the later Hellenizing Gentile party that elevated it into a title with overtones of divinity. Yet in the Palestinian 4Q246, "the Son of God" is used as a title, indeed—if the above exegesis is correct—with overtones of (spurious) divinity that the author implicitly censures. The early Aramaic speaking church could not have been unaware of the implications (divinity), or the dangers (blasphemy), of using the phrase as a title. If it did so, it must be supposed that it was willing to face the dangers of the title for the sake of its implications. The confession of Jesus as "the Son of God"—and the Jewish reaction to this claim with charges of blasphemy (e.g., in Mark 14:64)—may belong to an earlier stage of New Testament development than some scholars have been willing to admit. In any case, as Fitzmyer said in the same context two decades ago, "much remains to be discussed."⁴⁰

40. Fitzmyer, "Contribution of Qumran Aramaic," 107.