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SON OF MAN בן אדם, בר אנוש, ó υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου

I. Son of man is a typical Semitic expression ('son of...' = one of the species of) denoting an individual human being (Ps 8:4; Job 16:21). Paradoxically it comes to refer, in Jewish texts, to a heavenly figure who looks like a human being and, in New Testament texts, to →Jesus both in his humanity and in his identity as the heavenly figure described in the Jewish texts.

II. The earliest relevant text for the non-generic use of 'son of man' is Dan 7:13-14. The chapter purports to be a vision that →Daniel received while in exile in Babylon. In fact it derives from the Hellenistic period, and its present form dates from the time of Antiochus Epiphanes' persecution of the Jews (167-164 BCE). The focus of the vision alternates between the earthly and heavenly realms. In the first half of the chapter Daniel describes his vision (vv 1-14). He sees four great beasts rising out of the sea. The tenth horn of the last and fiercest beast utters arrogant words. In heaven the aged deity ('the →ancient of days') convenes a court that condemns the beast, whose body is burned. At that point, 'one like a son of man' arrives on the clouds of heaven and is given everlasting 'sovereignty, glory, and kingly power'.

The second half of the chapter interprets the vision (vv 15-27). The four beasts represent four great kingdoms. The last of these is the Macedonian, and the tenth and last of its kings defies →God by making war on 'the holy ones of the Most High', the angelic patrons of Israel. The enthronement of 'one like a son of man' means that kingly power, sovereignty, the greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be given to the

people of the holy ones of the →Most High, and this will last forever (v 27).

Not surprisingly, the origins of this vision and the precise meaning of many of its details are debated. The vision itself is widely recognized to have derived from ancient Near Eastern myth, although the precise provenance is debated. The closest parallel is in Canaanite combat myths that describe the triumph of →El over the forces of chaos, represented by Yamm (the →sea). The interaction between the ancient deity and the 'one like a son of man' also finds a counterpart in Canaanite myth, where El, depicted as an old man, is succeeded by →Baal, the rider of the cloud chariot.

In its present form, the chapter presents one of several visions in the Book of Daniel that see in the reign of Antiochus a supernatural clash between Israel's God, or God's →angels, and the demonic forces embodied in the Macedonian kingdom, and that anticipate the triumph of Israel and its God (chaps. 8 and 10-12; cf. chap. 2). The 'one like a son of man' is a high angel, perhaps to be identified with →Michael (cf. 10:13. 21; 12:1). His human-like appearance is traditional (cf. Dan 9:21, 'the man Gabriel', *hā'îš gabri'ēl*), although it may be mentioned in 7:13 in order to contrast the figure with the beasts. The literary break between 7:12 and 7:13 indicates that the 'one like a son of man' appears on the scene only after judgment has been passed on the last beast. Thus, vv 13-14 do not ascribe judicial functions to the 'one like a son of man' (contrast 12:1) but describe his enthronement after the judgment, and the text emphasizes how he, the heavenly entourage in general, and Israel will exercise God's everlasting sovereignty over all the kingdoms on earth. A similar notion of dual, heavenly/earthly dominion (*mišrat/mmšlt*) appears in IQM 17:6-8, which identifies Michael as 'the great angel' who helps Israel and holds dominion among the gods ('*lym*).

The second Jewish text to refer to a 'son of man' is the Parables or Similitudes of Enoch (*1 Enoch* 37-71), which date from around the turn of the era. Here the 'son of

man' is a heavenly figure, whose origins predate creation but whose primary functions are related to the end time.

Enoch's portrait of the 'son of man' draws on three or four major strands of tradition. Chapter 46 introduces him in a scene that draws on Daniel 7:13 (cf. 46:1-3), and chap. 47 reflects Dan 7:9-10. Once the one "whose face was like the appearance of a man and full of graciousness like one of the holy angels" has been presented to God, who "had a head of days like white wool" (46:1), and to the reader, he is with some frequency referred to as 'this son of man', 'that son of man', or 'the son of man who...'. The term appears not to be a formal title, but a reference to a known human-like figure.

The Deutero-Isaianic servant poems are the second strand of tradition on which the Parables draw. Especially noteworthy is *1 Enoch* 48, where the naming of 'that son of man' is described in language taken from Isaiah 49. Similarly, the great judgment scene in *1 Enoch* 62-63 has been inspired by a traditional interpretation of Isaiah 52-53 which is also attested in Wis 5. The servant tradition is also evident throughout the Parables in the son of man's chief title, 'the Chosen One', whose Deutero-Isaianic origin is attested in *1 Enoch* 49:3-4 (cf. Isa 42:1), and quite possibly in the title 'Righteous One' (*1 Enoch* 38:2; cf. Isa 53:11).

The third major strand of tradition informing the Parable's portrait is found in the Davidic oracles of Isaiah and the royal psalms (cf. *1 Enoch* 48:8 ['kings of the earth'], 10 with Ps 2:2; *1 Enoch* 49:3-4a; 62:2-3 with Isa 11:1-5). The naming scene in *1 Enoch* 48 may indicate that Jewish speculation about the figure of Wisdom has also coloured the Enochic picture of this heavenly figure. In 48:3-5 the hiddenness of the 'son of man' is related to his existence before creation (contrast Isa 49:2 and see Prov 8:22-31 and Sir 24:1-6).

This remarkable conflation of traditions is not completely surprising when one considers the sources. Second Isaiah does not expect a restoration of the Davidic dynasty

and invests the servant with qualities of the Davidic king, climaxing his references to the servant with a major scene of exaltation in the presence of the kings and the nations (52:12-15). Dan 7 describes the enthronement of one like a son of man, who receives 'sovereignty' (*šoltān*) and 'kingly power' (*malkū*) 7:14. Nonetheless, the Enochic conflation significantly transforms the individual traditions. Expectations of a Davidic restoration have been replaced by belief in an enthroned heavenly deliverer who is identified with the servant and the Danielic one like a 'son of man'. The 'son of man', on the other hand, does not appear after the judgment, but is enthroned in order to execute divine judgment. The servant tradition is made focal, but the Chosen One is both pre-existent to creation and a major eschatological figure, with power to execute wide-sweeping judgment. The major objects of his judgment are the kings who, in Isa 52:13-15, are bystanders rather than the persecutors of the righteous. This last transformation is expressed in language drawn from Isaiah 14 (cf. *1 Enoch* 46:4-7), but corresponds to the opposition of the kings of the earth and the Lord's anointed one in Ps 2.

Thus the Parables feature a transcendent saviour figure, called 'son of man', 'the Chosen One' and 'the Righteous One'. Seated on God's throne of glory, he is invested with judicial functions and serves specifically as the eschatological champion and vindicator of the persecuted 'righteous ones' and 'chosen ones', gathering them into community with himself and condemning their enemies, 'the kings and the mighty' (chaps. 51, 62-63).

The Enochic conflation and transformation of traditions is attested, partly, in other Jewish texts, although the term 'son of man' occurs in none of them. Chief among these texts is 2 Esdr 11-13 and its descriptions of the anointed one and the man from the sea, which are clearly beholden to Daniel 7. Descriptions of a transcendental anointed one in 2 Bar 29-30; 36-39; and 53-74 may also derive from this stream of tradition. Wis 2:4-5 is a special case. It fea-

tures the traditional interpretation of Isa 52-53 found also in *1 Enoch* 62-63 and makes some use of Ps 2, though not identifying the central figure of that psalm as a son of David; however, it has no close connections with Dan 7. The significance of Wisdom of Solomon lies in the fact that the persecuted righteous one has no transcendent vindicator like the Chosen One in *1 Enoch* 62-63; rather, the tradition describes how, after death, the righteous one himself is exalted as judge of his enemies. The two options of interpreting Second Isaiah, in the Parables and Wisdom of Solomon, will reappear in the NT.

III. 'Son of man' is a major, though not widespread, NT title for Jesus. Its appearance is limited to the four gospels, one reference in Acts (7:56), and Rev 1:13, and it may be implied in Heb 2:6-9. Few topics in NT studies have generated as much literature and controversy as the gospel's use of 'son of man'. Some of the disputed points are the following: Do the gospels presuppose a Jewish tradition about a transcendent figure called '(the) son of man'? Do the gospels, which sometimes quote Dan 7, also know the tradition in the Parables of Enoch? Does 'son of man' sometimes mean humanity in general, or can it be a surrogate expression for 'me'? Did Jesus himself use the term? If so, was he referring to another, eschatological figure, or to himself? If the latter, did he mean 'this human' or did he imply his identity as the eschatological 'son of man'? Do certain Pauline passages reflect knowledge of 'son of man' traditions attested in the gospels? In addition, exegetes debate the meaning or function of the term in many passages. Consensus is notably lacking in all of these matters of interpretation. There is perhaps wide agreement that, on a purely descriptive level, one may classify 'son of man' sayings into three groups, which describe or refer to, respectively: the present, earthly activity of the son of man; the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus the son of man; the future, eschatological activity of the son of man. These are at least a helpful way into the

texts, which can be treated here only briefly. Four preliminary remarks need to be made.

1) The evidence suggests that by the turn of the era, some Jewish apocalyptic circles envisioned the existence of a heavenly figure, sometimes referred to as 'son of man', but often not. The Parables of Enoch, 2 Esdr, and 2 *Baruch* (and indirectly the Wisdom of Solomon) indicate that this figure was thought to have eschatological judicial functions, which indicates a significant change from the foundational text in Dan 7 brought about by conflation with other streams of Jewish tradition, notably Davidic royal oracles and Deutero-Isaianic servant texts. 2) The transformations in the tradition, both in the ascription of judicial functions not found in Dan 7 and in a consciousness of the royal and servant traditions, are evident in many NT passages. 3) For reasons that are not clear, 'son of man' becomes a dominant title, where it had not been in the Jewish tradition, and Dan 7 is quoted, even when the judicial interpretation in Enoch, with its transformation of Daniel, is present. 4) The absence of the title 'son of man' in the Pauline corpus should not prejudice our search for 'son of man' traditions that may be presented in connection with another 'christological' title.

The Gospel of Mark, the earliest extant Christian text with references to the son of man, plays on the ambiguities in the paradoxical use of the term mentioned above. Son of man denotes Jesus in his humanity and stands in contrast to 'son of God', the gospel's highest designation for him. At times, however, the expression is ambiguous and can also indicate the notion of a transcendent son of man. In 2:1-12, Jesus the man claims to have 'on earth' the 'sovereignty' (*exousia*) that Dan 7:14 (LXX) attributes to the eschatological cloud-borne 'one like a son of man', although forgiveness of sins suggests the judicial function not present in Daniel. Mark 14:61-62 exploits the ambiguity to the full. Asked if he is the →Messiah, the son of God, Jesus responds that Caiaphas, who is about to condemn him, will see to his detriment *the man*

who stands before him, coming on the clouds of heaven as the eschatological *son of man*, seated at God's right hand as messiah and judge (Ps 110:1; but also *1 Enoch* 62:1). This juxtaposition of messiah and 'son of man' appears also in 8:29-31 and in 13:21-27, where he is the champion of the chosen as in the Parables of Enoch. Moreover, 8:29-31; 9:9; 9:31, and 10:33-34.45 refer to the suffering, death, and resurrection of the 'son of man', employing a pattern of persecution and vindication drawn from the interpretation of the servant poems attested also in Wis 5, where, different from *1 Enoch* 62-63, the central figure is the vindicated one rather than the vindicator. Thus, for Mark 'son of man' is a complex and ambiguous code word that denotes Jesus' humanity (the ordinary meaning of the expression), Jesus' identity as the eschatological son of man and messiah, and his fate in the role that Wisdom explicates for the servant and the central figure in Ps 2: the suffering and vindicated righteous one.

Q, the hypothetical document common to Matthew and Luke (alongside Mark), contained a number of sayings of Jesus regarding the judicial functions of the son of man. Especially noteworthy is Matt 24:26-27; 37-39 / Luke 17:22-37, where the epiphany of the 'son of man' is compared to the coming of the flood. In *1 Enoch*, the flood is the prototype of the final judgment. It is possible that this saying represents genuine Jesus tradition and that the 'son of man' is a figure other than Jesus. In Matt 10:32-33 / Luke 12:8-9 (cf. Mark 8:38), Jesus speaks of human confession or denial of him and its eschatological consequences. According to Luke and Mark, the eschatological judicial agent (whether judge or witness) is identified as 'the son of man', while Matthew explicitly identifies that figure as Jesus ('I'). If the original Q formulation was referring to the 'son of man' as a figure distinct from Jesus, then the Matthean and the Lukan/Markan options would parallel, respectively, the forms of the tradition in *1 Enoch* 62-63 and in Wis 5.

The Gospel of Matthew has a special

interest in the *eschaton*, which is carried in part by Q 'son of man' traditions. However, Matthew's major addition to the corpus of 'son of man' texts is a description of the judgment (25:31-46), that closely parallels *1 Enoch* 62-63. The 'son of man' is called 'king', reflecting the royal stream of tradition. People are judged on the basis of their actions toward 'the least of these my brothers', which are, in fact, actions for or against Jesus. The solidarity between the heavenly one and his brothers and the criterion of judgment corresponds to *1 Enoch* 62:1, where the kings and the mighty are to recognize in the Chosen One the chosen ones whom they have persecuted.

Although Luke tends to dampen eschatological expectations, a text like 18:1-8 warns against complacency and indicates the son of man as the eschatological vindicator who can appear at any time. Taking a different tack, Luke 22:69 radicalizes eschatology by maintaining, as opposed to Mark 14:62, that the 'son of man's' enthronement is an accomplished fact (see also Acts 7:56 and cf. Matt 26:64).

Although the Fourth Gospel lacks many of the obvious apocalyptic traits of the synoptic gospels, it reflects notions of the 'son of man' that are at home in the synoptics and antecedent Jewish tradition. The author employs the term 'exalt' (*hypsoun*) only with reference to 'the son of man' and the parallel term 'glorify' mainly in connection with 'Jesus' and 'the son of man'. However, these terms, appropriate to the Jewish understanding of the eschatological son of man, do not refer to a future event, but express John's understanding of Jesus' death as synonymous with his exaltation. John 13:31-32 is remarkable because its language recalls Isa 53:12 and 49:3, thus reflecting the servant tradition that is paired with 'son of man' tradition in Jewish and synoptic texts. John 5:27-29 echoes the language of Daniel 7:14 and states explicitly that the 'son of man' has authority to execute judgment, as he does in *1 Enoch*.

Whether Paul knew synoptic 'son of man' traditions is a disputed point. A nega-

tive answer is supported by the complete absence of the term in the Pauline corpus. This absence is not surprising since the Semitic expression would have been meaningless to Paul's gentile audience. However, two passages in 1 Thess indicate remarkable verbal and conceptual parallels with synoptic 'son of man' traditions. In 4:15-17 Paul appeals to 'a word of the Lord' and then describes the parousia and resurrection in language reminiscent of Mark 13:26-27 and Matt 24:31. In 5:1-11 his discussion of the day of the Lord recalls the Q passage in Matt 24:43-44 // Luke 12:39-40, and some of his vocabulary parallels the Lukan ending to the synoptic apocalypse (Luke 21:34-36). Paul's discussion of the parousia and resurrection in 1 Cor 15:23-28 may also reflect 'son of man' tradition. Its combination of language found in Ps 110:1; Dan 7:14 and Ps 8:7 is reminiscent of the conflation of Ps 110:1 and Dan 7:13 in Mark 14:62 and the curious use of Ps 8:4-6 in Heb 2:6-9 with reference to Jesus' exaltation rather than humanity's dominion over creation. In summary, Paul's expectations about Jesus' parousia may well reflect tradition about Jesus as eschatological son of man. Moreover, his statements about Jesus' future function as judge (2 Cor 5:10; Rom 2:16) could also derive from that tradition. His use of the titles Lord and Son (of God) in such contexts can be explained as a mean of communicating to his non-Jewish audience.

The Book of Revelation, an apocalypse that parallels 1 Enoch in many respects, attests knowledge of the conflated 'son of man', messianic, and (probably) servant tradition found in the Parables of Enoch and 4 Ezra, an apocalypse by a contemporary of John. Jesus is introduced in Rev 1:7 with imagery from Dan 7:14, and chapter 5 recasts Dan 7:13-14. After chap. 13 returns to the imagery of Dan 7, Jesus, the opponent of the great beast, is placed on Mount Zion with his entourage marked by the name of his 'father' (cf. Ps 2:6-7), and 19:11-21 reflects both Ps 2 and Isa 11, texts employed in the Parables. References to Jesus as →'lamb' recall Isa 53:7.11.

#### IV. Bibliography

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SOOTHSAYING SPIRIT → SPIRIT OF THE DEAD

SOPHIA → WISDOM

SOTER → SAVIOUR