

getical. The Hebrew text of Genesis 1:26 can be translated “Let us make the human *as* our image” (בצלמנו) (taking the *bet* as a *bet essentiae*). The Jewish translators of Genesis at Alexandria did not understand the preposition this way. The LXX translates it by καθ’ εἰκόνα ἡμῶν, “*according to* our image.” Here, human beings ceased to *be* the image, and were reduced to being *according to the image* (or Image) of God. In this way of thinking, humans did not share the identity of the primal God in any direct sense. They shared it only with a mediate divine being called God’s “Image.” This raised the question about the identity of God’s Image. Some Alexandrians apparently identified it with Wisdom (cf. Wisd 7:26). Philo identified it with the Logos (*Conf.* 146). Paul identified it with Christ (2 Cor 4:4), who is also the Wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:30). At any rate, human beings were created according to the likeness (καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν) of this divine being (Gen 1:26). It was only appropriate, then, for humans to undergo assimilation (ἐξομοίωσις) to this being as their redemptive goal. But assimilation to a specifically divine being is, I would argue, a form of deification.

Sharing God’s Divine Sovereignty: The Divinity of Israelite Kings.⁴⁹

Besides Moses, Enoch and Elijah, the other major biblical characters who seem to overlap with the divine identity are the Israelite kings. The Israelite king, it seems, is directly called a “God” in Ps 44:7 [ET 45:6; MT 45:7]), where a court poet addresses the king: “Your throne, O God (אלהים; ὁ θεός) endures forever and ever.”⁵⁰ Similarly, the

49 For early research on the divinity of Israelite kings, see G. Widengren, *Sakrales Königtum im alten Testament und im Judentum* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1955); J. Morgenstern, “The King-God among the Western Semites and the Meaning of Epiphanes,” *Vetus Testamentum* 10 (1960): 138–97; Aubrey Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1967).

50 For recent discussion on this text, see Adela Yarbro and John Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2008), 14, 56; Mark S. Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel’s Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (New York: Oxford University Press), 160–62. J. S. M. Mulder dates this psalm to the seventh-century B.C.E. (*Studies on Psalm 45* [Oss (the Netherlands): Offsetdrukkerij Witsiers, 1972], 158). He notes that the term אלהים in v. 7a, which refers to the king, has a good Egyptian parallel that occurs in the set phrase “the perfect (or beautiful) God.” B. Couroyer uses this Egyptian expres-

prophet Isaiah bestows the name “Mighty God” (אל גבור) on a future king (9:6).⁵¹ Influential in the mid 20th century, Sigmund Mowinckel translated “Mighty God (אל גבור)” as “Divine Hero,”⁵² and commented: “the heroic power which the child will possess is characterized as divine. In form the name offers a precise parallel to the epithet applied to Aleyan-Baal in the Ugaritic texts: *‘ilu gaziru*, ‘the victorious or heroic god’” (cf. also Deut 10:17; Jer 32:18; Neh 9:32; Ps 23[24]:8).⁵³ R. A. Carlson prefers to relate the title “Mighty God” to the Assyrian royal title *ilu qar-rādu* (“Strong God”) which often appears.⁵⁴ Hans Wildberger, who keeps the translation “mighty God,” confirms that it is a divine epithet.⁵⁵ אל גבור is directly applied to YHWH in Isa 10:21 (LXX θεός ισχυρός) and Jer 39[32]:18 (ὁ θεός ὁ μέγας καὶ ἰσχυρός). That the Israelite king could be called “God” is less shocking in light of Ps 44:7 [ET 45:6]. Although this language is often explained (away) by Old Testament scholars by the idea that the Israelite king merely represents Yahweh on earth,⁵⁶ bearing the name “God” seems to indicate a closer relation to Yahweh than representation.

sion as one of his arguments to demonstrate that אלהים is a vocative (“Dieu ou Roi,” *Revue Biblique* 78 [1971]: 234–39). For the king of Tyre as “God,” note Ezek 28:14. The Egyptian king is also addressed by his vassals as “my God” in the El Amarna letters 157, 213, 215, 233, 241, 243, 270, 299, 301, 305, 306, 319, 363, 366) (as noted in Mark Smith, *God in Translation: Deities in Cross-cultural Discourse in the Biblical World* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008], 14).

- 51 This is one of four names given to an anticipated Israelite king. For a proposed fifth name, see H. Wildberger, “Die Thronnamen des Messias,” *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 16 (1960): 329. The LXX translates the four names as “Angel of the Great Council” (Μεγάλης βουλῆς ἄγγελος). Some MSS, however, give the fuller reading: “Wonderful Counselor, Strong God (θεός ισχυρός), Authoritative Ruler of Peace, Father of the Coming World.” See the apparatus in the Rahlfs edition of the Septuagint.
- 52 W. McClellan, (“El Gibbor,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 6 [1944]: 276–288) takes exception to the latter translation (since it can also be translated “Heroic God,” or “a God of a Hero”). He agrees, however, that אל גבור is a divine name.
- 53 Sigmund Mowinckel, *He that Cometh: The Messiah Concept in the Old Testament and Later Judaism* (trans. G. W. Anderson Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 105; cf. Wildberger, “Die Thronnamen,” 317.
- 54 “The Anti-Assyrian Character of the Oracle in Is IX:1–6,” *Vetus Testamentum* 24 (1974): 134.
- 55 *Isaiah: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 403–404.
- 56 By way of example, Werner H. Schmidt, *The Faith of the Old Testament: A History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 182.

Furthermore, the name “Everlasting Father” (אביעד), applied to the king in the same verse, most likely means “Father of Eternity” (cf. “Father of Years,” used of El at Ugarit, and “Ancient of Days” in Dan 7:9). It indicates, said Mowinckel, “the one who produces, directs, and is lord of the ever-changing years ... who thus produces and directs ‘eternity’, the entire fullness of events and reality. It is evident that such a name really belongs to a god, and not just any god, but *the* god, ‘the high god’, ‘the supreme god’, ‘the father of the gods.’”⁵⁷ It is probably more accurate to conclude, however, that אביעד is a hyperbolic way of granting the king immortality. Hugo Gressmann already noted as parallels the Egyptian royal titles “prince of eternity,” and “lord of unendingness.”⁵⁸ The additional implication of the king’s immortality seems to have been understood by the psalmist who prays that the king may live as long as the sun endures (Ps 71[72]:5, LXX). Similarly in Psalm 20:5 [ET 21:4], the king asks for life and Yahweh gives it to him, “length of days forever and ever” (cf. Ps 60:7 [ET 61:6]).

Perhaps most famously, Yahweh declares to the king: “You are my son” (בני אהר; Υἱός μου εἶ σύ) (Ps 2:6–7). Most students of the Bible are familiar with the “sons of God” as lesser divine beings. They appear in the divine council (Ps 81[82]:1); sing praises in the divine court (Ps 28 [29]:1), rule the nations (Deut 32:8 [LXX], Ps 81[82], esp. v.6), and impregnate human women (Gen 6:2). It seems slightly tendentious, then, to reduce the sonship of the Israelite king here to a mere metaphor.⁵⁹ At the very least, the king is depicted as entering into a kinship relation to God like humanity in Gen 1:26, (made according to) the image of God.

The realism of royal sonship language must be taken seriously. The king is actually “begotten” (ילדה; γεγέννηκά σε) as son of God, not merely adopted (Ps 2:7).⁶⁰ Adela Yarbro and John Collins describe

57 *He that Cometh*, 106. Mowinckel cites for comparison Tob 13:6, 13; 14:7; Sir 36:22. Yet Mowinckel goes on to affirm that the “newborn king, who is described as a divine being with divine titles and faculties, who has appropriated the characteristics, achievements and name ... of the sun god and supreme god, is nevertheless only an instrument in the hands of ‘Yahweh,’ ‘God Almighty’, who is the Author of all: he is a scion of David, a mere man ... in the last resort the power and the glory belong to Yahweh” (107). It is true, at any rate, that the divinity or divine power of the Israelite king is not threatening to Yahweh.

58 Noted in Wildberger, *Commentary*, 404.

59 This is a move made by many. Kaufmann (*Religion of Israel*, 77), is a notable example.

60 Adela Yarbro and John Collins, *King and Messiah*, 19–22. The language of begetting is not part of an adoption formula.