4Q246 and Collective Interpretation

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1 Introduction¹

4QApocryphon of Daniel ar, the small and fragmentary Aramaic manuscript (4Q246), despite its size and condition, has been incredibly popular among biblical exegetes.² The manuscript has not only aroused curiosity among Qumran and Old Testament scholars but also fellow scholars from New Testament studies. This particular interest is due to the “Son of God/Son of The Most High” figure (ברה די אל/בר עליון). The figure is often considered the protagonist of the text and consequently the fragment is often designated the “Son of God” text.³

However, in the following, my point of departure for reading 4Q246 is the collective interpretation of the figure “People of God” (עם אל, 4Q246 II 4). As I will argue, my reading differs from previous collective interpretations because I interpret the role of the “People of God” independently from the figure “Son of God”; whether we understand the “Son of God” figure positively, negatively, metaphorically, or historically.⁴

Methodologically, I read the fragmentary 4Q246 composition as it is preserved, as a narrative and with its own story to tell.⁵ Even though I acknowledge

- 1 This article—and the paper on which it is based—builds on my MA-thesis, which was submitted to the Faculty of Theology at the University of Copenhagen 15 January 2016.
- 2 Émile Puech, “246. Apocryphe de Daniel ar,” in *Qumran Cave 4.XVII: Parabiblical Texts, Part 3*, ed. George J. Brooke et al., DJD 22 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 165–84.
- 3 For a more detailed overview, see Årstein Justnes, *The Time of Salvation: An Analysis of 4QApocryphon of Daniel ar (4Q246), 4QMessianic Apocalypse (4Q521 2), and 4QTime of Righteousness (4Q215a)* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009). My interpretation of 4Q246 has been developed in close dialogue with Justnes’s dissertation. For two recent contributions to the interpretation of 4Q246, with emphasis on the “Son of God” figure and the first part of the text, see George J. Brooke, “Son of God, Sons of God and Election in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Son of God: Divine Sonship in Jewish and Christian Antiquity*, ed. Garrick V. Allen et al. (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2019), 28–40, and Reinhard G. Kratz, “Son of God and Son of Man: 4Q246 in the Light of the Book of Daniel,” in the same volume, 9–27.
- 4 Cf. the overview of scholarly positions in Justnes, *Time of Salvation*, 32–73; Brooke, “Son of God, Sons of God.” For two recent alternative views see Tucker S. Ferda, “Naming the Messiah: A Contribution to the 4Q246 ‘Son of God’ Debate,” *DSD* 21 (2014): 150–75; Michael Segal, “Who is the ‘Son of God’ in 4Q246? An Overlooked Example of Early Biblical Interpretation,” *DSD* 21 (2014): 289–312.
- 5 A similar methodological approach is taken by Kratz, “Son of God and Son of Man.” I do not intend in this article to discuss the relationship of 4Q246 to the “sectarian” Qumran texts.

and greatly admire all the work that has been done on this fragment, I do not wish to take any suggestions of reconstruction into account.

2 “Son of God” = “People of God” as in Dan 7

Initially, I would like to sketch the different collective suggestions, which have inspired my reading of 4Q246. Martin Hengel in his 1975 book *Der Sohn Gottes* briefly opens up the possibility of interpreting the “Son of God” figure in 4Q246 as the Jewish people, in the light of Dan 7:13.⁶ John J. Collins in 1993 points to several biblical passages, especially Sirach 36:17. He calls attention to the combination of “Israel” being referred to as “the firstborn”, and the people being called by God’s name in Sirach 36:17. Accordingly, he finds a collective interpretation of “Son of God” interesting but not preferable.⁷ In several publications on 4Q246, Émile Puech switches back and forth between a negative and positive interpretation of the “Son of God” figure. Depending on how Puech understands the figure of “Son of God”, he evaluates the plausibility of a collective interpretation differently.⁸ A common feature for these interpretations is that scholars see a connection between the “Son of God” and the “People of God” in 4Q246. This connection is seen in light of the interrelation between the “one like a Son of Man” and the “Holy People of the Most High” in Daniel 7.⁹

For the possibility that the text, like other Aramaic compositions, could have been read and cherished by the Qumran community, see Brooke, “Son of God, Sons of God.”

6 Martin Hengel, *Der Sohn Gottes: Die Entstehung der Christologie und die jüdisch-hellenistische Religionsgeschichte* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1975), 72.

7 John J. Collins, “The *Son of God* Text from Qumran,” in *From Jesus to John: Essays on New Testament Christology in Honour of Marinus de Jonge*, ed. Martinus C. De Boer, JSNTSup 84 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 65–82.

8 See Émile Puech, “Notes sur le Fragment d’Apocalypse 4Q246—‘Le Fils De Dieu,’” *RB* 101 (1994): 533–58; DJD 22:165–84; “Some Remarks on 4Q246 and 4Q521 and Qumran Messianism,” in *The Provo International Conference on The Dead Sea Scrolls: Technological Innovations, New Texts, and Reformulated Issues*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Eugene Ulrich, STDJ 30 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 545–65; “Le fils de Dieu, le fils du Très-Haut, messie roi en 4Q246,” in *Le jugement dans l’un et l’autre testament. I: Mélanges offerts à Raymond Kuntzmann*, ed. Eberhard Bons, LD 197 (Paris: Cerf, 2004), 271–86.

9 Cf. Brooke, “Son of God, Sons of God.”

3 Israel, a Collective Messiah

In 1992 at the 10QS Paris meeting, Hartmut Stegemann argued that expectations of a *collective messianism* were more prevalent in Second Temple Judaism and probably more dominant than an individual messianic expectation.¹⁰ Based on this hypothesis, Annette Steudel shows how this idea is also present in some of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Steudel makes a strong argument for this view by illustrating that the collective theme is present in 1QM and 4Q246. In both texts, the “People of God” plays a central part in bringing forth the new eschatological era. In both texts, there are no traces of an individual messiah, at least not in the preserved manuscripts. For Steudel it is imperative to understand the figure of “Son of God” as a negative and historical figure (Antiochus IV Epiphanes). In the light of this negative interpretation of the “Son of God”, she points to the overarching contrast between the two eras and the roles of the two figures (“Son of God” vs. “People of God”) in each era.¹¹

The extant text can be understood as a narrative in its own right. I shall argue that when the text is read as a narrative in its own right, a collective interpretation suggests itself. Such an interpretation holds, regardless of how the “Son of God” figure is understood.

4 Transcription and Translation

My transcription of 4Q246 is based primarily on the PAM photos from The Leon Levy Dead Sea Scrolls Digital Library.¹² One general problem, beside the fragmentary condition of the manuscript (one third of the first column is missing), is that the handwriting makes it difficult to distinguish between the letters ך and ך.¹³

	Column 1
ע]לוהי שרת נפל קדם כרסיא	1
מ]לכא (ל)עלמא אתה רגז ושניך	2
א חזוך וכלא אתה עד עלמא	3

10 The paper was published in a revised and augmented version: Hartmut Stegemann, “Some Remarks to 1QSa, 1QSB, and Qumran Messianism,” *RevQ* 17 (1996): 489–515.

11 Annette Steudel, “The Eternal Reign of the People of God—Collective Expectations in Qumran Texts (4Q246 and 1QM),” *RevQ* 17 (1996): 507–25.

12 I have systematically compared the photos to Puech’s and Justnes’ transcriptions.

13 Cf. the paleographic description of 4Q246 in Puech, DJD 22:166.

- 8 [] they [will] serve and everything *ys^own*
 9 [] the [g]reat, will he be called, and by his name they will call him/ the
 [g]reat, will he call himself and by his name he shall designate himself.²¹

Column II

- 1 He shall be appointed the son of God, they shall call him son of the Most
 High.²² Like the meteors
 2 which you saw,²³ so shall their kingdom be. For some years they shall be
 kings over
 3 the earth and trample everything down: people shall trample down
 people, and cities shall trample down [ci]ties.
 4 *Vacat* Until the People of God shall rise and everything shall rest from the
 sword *Vacat*.²⁴
 5 His/their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all his/their
 paths in truth, and he/they shall jud[ge]
 6 the earth in truth and all will do/make peace. The sword will end/cease
 from the earth,
 7 and all the cities will worship him/them. The great God is his/their
 strength;
 8 he himself will wage war for him/them. He will give nations in his/their
 hand and
 9 cast them all down before him/them. His/their dominion shall be an
 everlasting dominion, and all the deeps of ...

5 Words in 4Q246

One of the characteristic features of this small fragment is a repetitive and minimalistic vocabulary. This could work as a deliberate rhetoric device; this simplistic feature seems to enhance the movements and the contrasts within the text. The preserved text contains a total of 129 words, including prepositions and conjunctions. In the chart, the bars represent the occurrences of the repeated words. For example, the word *ארעא* occurs five times, in three cases as part of the adverbial phrase *על ארעא*. Every time *על ארעא* occurs it describes the location and the amount of destruction on earth.

21 I mention both translations to show both possibilities. However, the “Son of God” figure does not play a major part in this article.

22 The verbs may be understood as reflexive or passive forms.

23 Puech understands *חזותא* not as a verb in the second person (“you saw”) but rather as a noun (“visibility”) and translates: “les comètes bien visibles” (Puech, *דנך* 22:170, 174).

24 The difficulty regarding the verbs in this line (*יקום* and *ינח*) is taken up later in this article.

- קדם column I 1; II 8.
- מלכא I 2, 6; II 2 x2, 5 x2.
- עלמא I 2, 3; II 5, 9.
- אתה I 2, 3, 4.
- שני I 2; II 2.
- כלא I 3, 8; II 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.
- קרב I 4; II 8.
- על ארעא I 4, 7; II 2–3; ארעא alone: II 6 x2.
- רב I 5, 7, 9; II 7.
- מדינה I 5; II 3 x2, 7.
- עבד I 8; II 6, 8.
- קרא I 9; II 1.
- בר II 1 x2.
- חזי I 3; II 2.
- דוש II 3 x2.
- עם II 3, 4, 8.
- חרב II 4, 6.
- קשט II 5, 6.
- אל II 1, 4, 7.
- שלט II 9 x2.
- מן II 4, 6.

6 The Coming Destruction

The preserved narrative of 4Q246 seems to depict a royal scene where someone falls before another person, most likely a king or a ruler. Just after the setting the person assumed to act as interpreter gives an interpretation of a vision (חזו, I 3). The interpretation is in two parts: Part one concerns the coming of the world's destruction and downfall (I 2–II 3) and part two concerns the era of peace and the world's salvation (II 4–9).²⁵ The contrast between the time of turmoil and the time of peace forms the narrative framework of the preserved text.²⁶

In other words, there is a radical change from the first part, the coming destruction, to the second part, the rising salvation. The changes in the text occur in two opposite directions: 1) The time of trial seems to be on its way to earth from above. 2) By contrast, the shift into the new era of salvation happens from within the earth. In the preserved text, there is no mention of any particular group causing or being affected by the destruction and annihilation. On the contrary, as the interpretation moves on, the time of trial seems to be comprehensive and universal. The destruction appears as an element coming from outside, from the heavenly, extraterrestrial realm, and hitting earth, and spreading like a disease. On the other side, the time of salvation works and rises from the inside, caused through the people of God.

In column one, the preserved text in lines 1 to 2a describes a scene where an unknown figure falls before a throne and presumably salutes a ruler or a king. The preserved text does not contain any indications about the identity of the interpreter or the ruler/king. The opening scene strongly resembles Daniel chapters 2 and 4. The unknown interpreter pushes the story forward by giving his interpretation. His task is to make the incomprehensible elements of the vision clear. Line 2b informs us that a rage is coming (אתה רגז). The narrative does not specify whether the nature of the rage is divine or human. However, it is worth noticing that the rage is described as an entity approaching, and from the context, the reader knows that the rage's destination is earth. All together, these features seem to set the mood for the interpretation of the vision, where a time of trial is foreseen.

25 Most scholars take line three as the beginning of the vision's interpretation. But I see the words אתה רגז as an indication and warning about the coming destruction.

26 Cf. Steudel, "The Eternal Reign," 514–16; Kratz, "Son of God and Son of Man."

The time of tribulation (I 2–II 3)

- A rage is coming.
- Wars, oppression on planet Earth.
- Great slaughter in the cities.
- King(s) of Assyria and Egypt.
- “The Son of God”.
- The worldly kingdoms are like the meteors, they will crash and burn.
- Kings, nations, and cities are trampling each other down.

The time of peace (II 4–9)

- “The People of God” rises.
- All rest from the sword and the sword will cease from the earth.
- Peace occurs and they receive the everlasting kingdom.
- They walk and judge in righteousness.
- The great God is their strength, warrior, and salvation.
- God gives the nations to “the People of God” and cast all before them.
- Their dominion shall be an everlasting dominion.

The word vision (חֲזוֹן) is introduced for the first time in the preserved text in I 3, and this root is repeated later in II 2 (חֲזוֹתָא). These words confirm that in the text, only the interpretation is preserved and we are not able to reconstruct the whole content of the vision. The text refers to what was seen but does not include any account of the vision itself. Furthermore, we do not know whether the interpreter was informed about the vision's content in advance or had to predict both the vision and its interpretation.²⁷ Even more important is the fact that it would be an incorrect approach to 4Q246 if it were treated as a chronological and coherent impression of the lost vision, to which we have no access. The fact that the preserved text does not necessarily give a coherent and chronological account of the lost vision must be taken into consideration.²⁸

In I 3 with the phrase “everything will come for eternity” (וְכָל־אֶתְּהָ עַד עֲלָמָא), the interpreter affirms that what he is about to foresee will happen. The time of turmoil is further elucidated when the following text (I 4) describes wars and oppression approaching earth. The coming destruction spreads by manifesting itself as a great slaughter (וְנַחֲשִׁירִין רַב), taking place in the cities (I 5).

The fragmentary condition of 4Q246 leaves us with so many unresolved mysteries, for example: To what extent does the interpretation of the vision correspond one to one to the vision itself? How many kings during the time of

27 Cf. the way Joseph was informed before interpreting the dreams (Gen 40:9,16–17; 41:17–24) in contrast to the situation in Dan 2:31–35.

28 Cf. the approach by Ferda, “Naming the Messiah,” 160–61.

destruction does the text refer to? What is it that will be great on earth? And who is supposed to serve whom? Yet the biggest mystery so far has been the identity of the “Son of God.” This figure emerges in the midst of the horrible time. However, this era does not seem to end with the entrance of the “Son of God,” but continues. As the identity of the “Son of God” has been discussed and revisited extensively in scholarly research, this issue will not be addressed here, as mentioned before.²⁹

Just after the “Son of God” figure is presented in 11 2, the interpreter refers to the lost vision with the words “as the meteors that you saw” (בזיקא די חזותא). As a remarkable transcendent movement, destruction strikes, moves upon, and penetrates the earth: The time of trial in 4Q246 spreads like a disease in terms of the coming rage (אתה רגו), wars, and oppression upon the earth (נחשירין), and turns to a great slaughter in the cities (קרבין עקה תתא על ארעא). And as the interpreter refers to the vision, the meteors become yet another metaphorical warning for the time of destruction, and with this the horrible time is again pictured as something coming from the outside. Meteors are astronomical phenomena emerging from the outer atmosphere. In the metaphorical language of 4Q246, they become symbols of a short and immediate reign of chaotic elements. The astronomical image seems to function as a metaphorical comparison to the earthly kingdoms, which will only last for a number of years. As meteors are dying stars that no longer function to illuminate and show the way on the celestial vault, so the earthly kingdoms will no longer be functional but collapse.³⁰ The meteors as a metaphorical image function on the one hand as a warning about the coming disaster and on the other hand as a sign for the fundamental certainty that God is the creator of the universe and the governing element behind history. In this context, kings and kingdoms become like chessmen in God’s game of chess, they will last for a limited number of years but ultimately they will crash and burn like the meteors.

Lines 2–3 in column 11 continue describing the worldly kingdoms: “They will be kings over the earth” (ימלכון על ארעא). The kings of the tribulation time are not only kings of certain nations, but kings of the world. They seem to act as contenders to God’s kingdom. The worldly kings continue the destruction by trampling everything down. This movement begins from the highest level,

29 See Justnes, *Time of Salvation*, 32–73; Brooke, “Son of God, Sons of God”; Kratz, “Son of God and Son of Man.”

30 I am not concerned here with the details of astronomical knowledge or with the exact perception of astronomical phenomena like meteors in Jewish antiquity. My point is the experience of meteors—on the one hand catastrophic and frightening, and on the other hand short-lived and temporary phenomena.

the kings (ימלכו), and moves downwards to smaller sub-elements, which constitute the second level involving nations trampling nations down (ידשון עם) (לעם). Finally, a third level includes cities being infected by the aforementioned movements, trampling cities down (ומדינה למדינה). The notion of destruction seems once again to spread rapidly as a contagious disease, from the kings to the cities. This inner progression in 4Q246 is enhanced due to the text's repetitive and minimalist vocabulary.

7 The Rising People and Upcoming Peace

This brings us to column II 4, which consists of two short sentences, creating a chiasmus, marked by a *vacat* on each end. The temporal conjunction עד begins the short sentence עד יקום עם אל and at the same time links the new plot to the previous description of the tribulation time. Taken all together, the *vacats* on each end, the temporal conjunction (עד) and the chiasmus seem to accentuate the line as a heading introducing a new theme.

Many scholars, including Puech, Steudel, and Justnes, understand line 4 in column II as a heading.³¹ I would like to point to the chiasmic structure of the line as a further argument for this interpretation. In fact, perhaps the chiasmic structure could also hold the key to the much-debated question concerning the understanding of the verbs יקום and ינוח. Due to the handwriting of the fragment, it is difficult to decide whether we should read the verbs as *peal* or *haphel* imperfect. The handwriting makes it impossible to distinguish between a י and a ה. If these verbs are read as *haphel* forms then they function as causatives. In this case, both עם אל and כלל would no longer be the subjects of these verbs but rather the objects. Then obviously, we will have an implicit subject, which causes the new age of peace. If we accept that line 4 has a chiasmic structure, we would expect both sentences to have a subject and an (active) verb. This speaks in favor of reading the verbs as *peal* forms.

One of the striking features of 4Q246 is the amount of information that the preserved text seems to hold. In other words, a whole lot happens in a short fragment. This feature is especially clear in II 4, where the reader meets a new protagonist: the "People of God" (עם אל). Just in two short chiasmic sentences, the time of turmoil that occupies the largest part of the fragment ends and the salvations time comes about when the "People of God" rises and everything rests from the sword.

31 Puech, DJD 22:174; Steudel, "The Eternal Reign," 515; Justnes, *Time of Salvation*, 134.

Steudel interprets עַם אֱל as an antithetic equivalent to בְּרַה דִּי אֱל and sees the “People of God” as the agent who turns the time of tribulation to the era of salvation.³² Justnes however proposes that עַם אֱל could be understood as a contrast subject to the kings/nations and cities from the previous lines.³³ I do not think one interpretation needs to exclude the other. It seems to me that the central point is the fact that עַם אֱל acts as a collective entity causing the new age to begin. The “People of God” becomes the symbol of God’s eternal and persistent dominion versus the short-lived earthly and hostile kingdoms. In this context, עַם אֱל is a new actor in the text and as they rise, everything rests from the sword.

Where, then, have the “People of God” been hiding during the worldwide tribulation? Where have they been when war and slaughter spread through the earth and the cities? Where have עַם אֱל been when the kings, nations and the cities have trampled everything down? It is possible to imagine that the sentence “until the people of God will rise” (עַד יָקוּם עַם אֱל) does not only mean an uprising in terms of a political or religious resistance. It could also refer to the resurrection of the people of God. Craig A. Evans proposes the following interpretation: “4Q246 may also refer to resurrection. After the warfare described in 11 1–3 the author writes: ‘Until the people of God arise and they all have rest from the sword’ (11 4). The next line goes on to speak of an ‘eternal kingdom,’ peace, justice, and God’s eternal rule (11 5–10). It is not clear, however, that ‘arise’ refers to resurrection. It may, but it may also refer to the ascendancy of the people of God over their enemies.”³⁴

Justnes finds Evans’ interpretation baseless.³⁵ However, in the following I attempt to demonstrate that a resurrection of the “People of God” could fit into the dynamic plot of the text and constitutes a plausible interpretation. Scholars have often emphasized the kinship between 4Q246 and the Book of Daniel.³⁶ In this context, it is interesting that in Dan 12:1–2 we do have the only explicit reference to resurrection in the Old Testament:

32 Steudel, “The Eternal Reign,” 515–16.

33 Justnes, *Time of Salvation*, 136.

34 Craig A. Evans, “Qumran’s Messiah: How Important is He?” in *Religion in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. John J. Collins and Robert A. Kugler, *Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 135–49 (139).

35 Justnes, *Time of Salvation*, 136 (“Evans’ claim that the first part of l. 4 ‘may ... refer to resurrection’ is totally baseless”).

36 See most recently Kratz, “Son of God and Son of Man.”

וְבָעֵת הַהִיא יַעֲמִיד מִכָּאֵל הַשָּׁר הַגָּדוֹל הָעֹמֵד עַל-בְּנֵי עַמּוֹד וְהִיְתָה עֵת צָרָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא-
נִהְיְתָה מִהְיוֹת גּוֹי עַד הָעֵת הַהִיא וְבָעֵת הַהִיא יִמְלֹט עַמּוֹד כָּל-הַנִּמְצָא כְּתוּב בְּסֵפֶר וְרַבִּים
מִיִּשְׁנֵי אֲדָמַת-עֶפֶר יִקְיֹצוּ אֵלֶּה לְחַיִּי עוֹלָם וְאֵלֶּה לְחַרְפּוֹת לְדָרְאוֹן עוֹלָם

- 1 [...] And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.
- 2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.³⁷

There are additional references to the theme of resurrection in Isa 26:14a:

מֵתִים בְּלִי-חַיִּי רָפְאִים בְּלִי-קִמּוֹ

They are dead, do not live, the dead will not rise.

Furthermore, we read in Isa 26:19a:

יְחַיִּי מִתֵּיד נִבְלָתִי יְקוּמוֹן הָקִיצוּ וְרִנְנוּ שְׁכֵנֵי עֶפֶר

Your dead shall live; their bodies³⁸ shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy.

Isaiah 26:14a and 26:19a clearly stand in mutual contrast, one verse denying the possibility of a resurrection, and the other affirming such a possibility. In both passages, however, the verb קום is used to describe the performance or the lack of performance of the dead bodies. Therefore, the verb קום could, besides referring to a political or religious uprising, also connote the motive of resurrection.

Based on a thorough examination of the resurrection theme, Puech has argued that the Qumran community seems to believe in the resurrection of the dead. Furthermore, Puech argues that the Qumran community's understanding of resurrection is based on Dan 12:2, which he perceives as an explicit expression of resurrection. Puech seems to think that the resurrection motif in Dan 12:2 is derived from Isa 26:14–19 and Isa 53:12.³⁹

37 This and the following translations of biblical passages are taken from ESV.

38 The Hebrew has "my (dead) bodies."

39 Puech, *La croyance des Esséniens en la vie future: Immortalité, resurrection, vie éternelle? Histoire d'une croyance dans le judaïsme ancien*. 2 vols. Études Bibliques 21–22 (Paris: Gabalda, 1993), 2:66–73, 79–85.

The combination of 4Q246's relation to the Book of Daniel and the occurrence of the verb קום can speak in favor of understanding the rise of the "People of God" as a potential expression of resurrection. This connotation also makes sense when we consider the "People of God" as the receiver of the eternal kingdom. This understanding also provides an answer to the question why the "People of God" are mentioned at this stage for the first time in the preserved text. If the word בלא (in column I and column II) covers all that was affected by the widespread tribulation, this must also include the "People of God." In other words, the "People of God" has been destroyed or killed during the period of tribulation.

The second sentence in line 4b, "everything will rest from the sword" (ובלא ינוח מן חרב) is an outcome of the rising of the "People of God." In this short text, the word בלא is used nine times, in total, and seems to refer to the universal and invasive tribulation. Seen in this light, the sword (חרב) functions as a symbol for war and slaughter, which is ended by the rising of the "People of God" as a collective entity causing the cessation of war and the establishment of eschatological peace. The declaration of peace "and everything will rest from the sword" (ובלא ינוח מן חרב) is the first peace announcement. Furthermore, two similar statements are repeated in line 6 (ובלא יעבד שלם חרב מן ארעא יסף) and the word חרב is taken up in line 6 again.

Another point of disagreement is the question of interpretation of the third-person suffixes in column II from line 5 to line 9: To whom do the third-person suffixes refer? Is it the "Son of God" or the "People of God"? Those scholars who view the "Son of God" as a positive figure tend to interpret and identify the reference of the third-person suffixes as the "Son of God." However, those who interpret the "Son of God" as a negative figure point to the structure of the text and exclude the possibility that the third-person suffixes can refer to the "Son of God." They argue that the suffixes must refer to the "People of God" as the positive and the antithetic protagonist that causes the eschatological peace.⁴⁰ In this discussion, I agree with Justnes when he argues grammatically for the most obvious solution, viewing the suffixes as referring to the "People of God":

To present the problem this way, is, however, misleading. The fact that the son of God is a rather remote antecedent for the suffixes—four lines away from 2:5—makes the former solution [that the suffixes refer to the "Son of God"] only a theoretical possibility ... Grammatically, it is clearly

40 Steudel, "The Eternal Reign," 515.

preferable to take the suffixes in 2:5–9 as pointing back to the subject in 2:4, the people of God.⁴¹

Line 5 consists of three short sentences. The first sentence “their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom ...” (מַלְכוּתָהּ מַלְכוּת עֹלָם), makes it clear that the plot is a contrast between the everlasting kingdom of the “People of God” versus the worldly kingdoms of the tribulation time. The worldly kingdoms were compared to the meteors because they only lasted for a number of years; but the kingdom of the “People of God” is without end. The sentence, “their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom” (מַלְכוּתָהּ מַלְכוּת עֹלָם) creates another point of contact with the Book of Daniel. The exact same phrase is employed in Dan 3:33 and 7:27 and the same phrase appears in Ps 145:13. Both in the case of Dan 3:33 and Ps 145:13 the phrase is a salute and a description of God as the King of an everlasting kingdom that will endure through generations. The image of the “People of God” as the receiver of the eternal kingdom overlaps with Dan 7:27 where “the Saints of the Most High” are the recipients of the eternal dominion. Neither in the case of Dan 7 nor in 4Q246, has an individual messiah explicitly caused the peace in the eschatological scene. On the contrary, the “People of God” fulfills the function of a messiah by causing the new era of peace and receiving the eternal dominion. In this sense, it seems meaningful to consider the concept of a collective entity acting as a messiah.

The second sentence in line 5 continues “and all their paths [are] in truth” (וְכָל אֲרָחָתָהּ בִּקְשׁוּט). The word קְשׁוּט becomes a key characteristic of the everlasting kingdom. This stands in contrast to the wickedness of the kingdoms of the tribulation time.

The third sentence in line 5 continues to 6a “They shall jud[ge] the earth in truth” (וְיִדְּיוּ [אֶרֶץ] בִּקְשׁוּט). This line has been pointed out as a counterargument to the idea of collective interpretation. Collins finds it unlikely that the “People of God,” as an entity, can perform judgment. Moreover, Collins only assigns the function of judgment in the Old Testament to Yahweh or a king.⁴² In contrast, I do not see how we can isolate the “People of God,” which is clearly the recipient of the everlasting kingdom in the narrative, from the function of judging. I agree with Steudel when she says: “The administration of judgement is a necessary part of being a king. Therefore, it is self-evident that the people of God occupying the מַלְכוּת of the time of salvation also have the power to

⁴¹ Justnes, *Time of Salvation*, 137.

⁴² John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 159.

judge”.⁴³ In addition to Steudel, I will also point to Justnes, according to whom “Collins may be interpreting the verb ‘judge’ too narrowly. The force of דין in this context is probably not ‘to judge’ in a narrow sense, i.e. in relation to a final eschatological judgement. The following sentence ‘and make everything whole’ rather indicates that the verb should be taken in the sense ‘to rule’ or ‘to reign’ etc.”⁴⁴

The combination of the “People of God” acting as the mediator of the era of peace, receiving and being the representatives of God’s eternal dominion, who shall perform righteous judgment, seems all together to form the crucial components of a messianic practice.

Line 6b “all shall make peace” (וכלא יעבד שלם), is the second peace declaration, which confirms again that the new era has ended the worldwide turmoil. With the sentence, “Sword shall cease from the earth” (חרב מן ארעא יסף) in line 6c, we have the third and last peace declaration. This again confirms the first peace statement from line 4b, which was a result of the rising of the people of God. The way the peace and salvation unfolds in three stages corresponds to the spreading of disaster and destruction depicted in 1 2–11 3, which also unfolds in three stages.

In the first part, where the time of tribulation is unfolded, the preposition על describes the direction of approaching destruction; it becomes like an external element coming toward the planet Earth. In contrast, in the second part, where a time of peace is foreseen (11 4–7), the preposition מן describes how everything (כלא) will rest *from* (מן) the sword (חרב) and the sword will cease *from* (מן) the earth. The contents of these two sentences function as symbols of peace and the end of the world war. Accordingly, these prepositions על and מן seem to describe the arrival and the departure of the tribulation. This happens in the form of two opposite movements. While different eras and protagonists replace each other, the scene, planet Earth, remains constant and persistent throughout the text.

The narrative goes on in line 7a with “and all the cities shall worship them” (וכל מדינתא לה יסגדון). Here, the cities are the acting subject in the sentence and yet another opposing feature in the narrative. While the cities, during the tribulation, were a part of and affected by the destruction, now the cities join the peace era by worshipping those who caused peace. The structure in both cases is similar: The cities represented the smallest geographical aspect mentioned in the tribulation time (cities were the place of bloodbath and they

43 Steudel, “The Eternal Reign,” 517.

44 Justnes, *Time of Salvation*, 140.

were trampled down), and, likewise, the cities are the smallest geographical entities in the time of peace.

With the sentence “The Great God is their strength” (אל רבא באילה) in line 7b, the active role of God in the eschatological scene is accentuated. The image of God as “their strength” seems particularly in tune with the image of God in the Book of Psalms. In Ps 28:8 we encounter an image of God that fits into the context of 4Q246.

יהוה עז-למו ומעוז ישועות משיחו הוא

The Lord is the strength of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed.⁴⁵

In this verse, the second sentence elucidates the previous one. God is described as the strength of his people in the first sentence, and the second sentence explains Gods strength in terms of being the saving refuge. Furthermore, his people are paralleled with his anointed. This image seems to support the idea that the people can be the anointed one.

Further in line 8a, Gods active role seems to be stressed when the text tells us “He shall wage war for them” (הוא יעבד לה קרב). The great God wages war on behalf of his people.⁴⁶ The word קרב occurs both in time of tribulation as a part of the spreading destruction (I 4) and it occurs here in the time of salvation as a means by which God establishes peace. Once again in the narrative, the same words are repeated and in opposing contexts. The narrative unfolds by a minimalistic and repetitive vocabulary, which seems to create the inner contrast and progression in the text.

God as a warrior is yet another recognizable image from the Old Testament. In the Book of Habakkuk, we encounter a similar image of God that is particularly interesting in this context. In chapter 3:8–9 we read:

45 The Hebrew has “strength for them” whereas ESV writes out the meaning and translates “the strength of his people.” The word משיחו in the second half of the verse could also be understood as a title of the king, but the more natural understanding is to regard the anointed one as designating God’s people.

46 Here, the traditional motif of God waging war for his people comes after the declaration of universal peace in lines 4–5. God’s war against his enemies can be viewed as offsetting the war caused by the earthly kingdoms and as an ongoing process of upholding the eschatological peace.

הַבְּנֵהָרִים חָרָה יְהוָה אִם בְּנֵהָרִים אֶפְדָּ אִם־בְּיָם עֲבָרְתָּדָ כִּי תִרְכַּב עַל־סוּסֶיךָ מִרְכַּבְתִּיךָ
יְשׁוּעָה עָרִיָה תַעֲזֹר קִשְׁתְּךָ שְׁבָעוֹת מִטּוֹת אָמַר סָלָה נְהָרוֹת תִּבְקַע־אָרְצָן

- 8 Was your wrath against the rivers, O Lord? Was your anger against the rivers, or your indignation against the sea, when you rode on your horses, on your chariot of salvation?
9 You stripped the sheath from your bow, calling for many arrows. You split the earth with rivers.

Further, in verse 13, the image of God as the warrior who brings salvation is combined with the image of his people as the anointed ones.

יֵצְאָתָ לַיֵּשַׁע עִמָּךְ לַיֵּשַׁע אֶת־מְשִׁיחֶךָ מִחֻצָּתָ רֹאשׁ מִבֵּית רָשָׁע עָרוֹת יְסוֹד עַד־צִוָּאר

- 13 You went out for the salvation of your people, for the salvation of your anointed.
You crushed the head of the house of the wicked, laying him bare from thigh to neck.

The joint image of God as a warrior and his people as the anointed one, seems to be comparable to the image of God and the “People of God” in 4Q246.

God as a warrior is further elucidated in lines 8b to 9a with the sentence “He shall give the nations in their hand and cast them all down before them” (עֲמִיזִי). God continues to be the main character, by rendering and humbling the nations before his people. Earlier in 11 3, the nations act as the subject of the sentence and have an active part in the tribulation time. In contrast, here in line 8b the nations are the object in the sentence and therefore have a passive role in the time of salvation.

In line 9b “Their dominion shall be an everlasting dominion” (שְׁלֹטְנָה שְׁלֹטֵן), the kingdom of the “People of God” is described once again as an eternal kingdom. This feature stands in contrast to the kingdoms of the tribulation time. Another point of contact is made with the Book of Daniel with the phrase שְׁלֹטְנָה שְׁלֹטֵן, which appears in Dan 4:31 and in Dan 7:14.⁴⁷

Finally, the words “and all depths” (וְכָל תְּהוֹמֵי) comprise the end of the preserved fragment. What these words refer to and what might follow remains a mystery.

47 Cf. Puech, DJD 22:175; Steudel, “The Eternal reign,” 516; Kratz, “Son of God and Son of Man”.

8 The Notion of “Collective Messianism” Revisited

In the following and final section, I would like to move away from the fascinating world of 4Q246 with a brief excursion to the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, the word משיח appears 39 times.⁴⁸ The messianic concept in the Old Testament does not include the same understanding that was established later on. In the later tradition, the term Messiah is attributed to an eschatological figure that causes or contributes to salvation.⁴⁹

Before briefly exploring the Old Testament for traces of the idea of collective messianism, I would like to present Ludwig Monti's definition of messianism and collective messianism.⁵⁰ In his article “Attese messianiche a Qumran: una comunità alla fine della storia” from 2004, Monti defines messianism and collective messianism in the following way:

Messianic expectations defined as concepts expressing the certainty of the coming of a new fortunate world. The establishment of this world depends on one or more mediators of salvation endowed with God's special gifts.⁵¹

Furthermore, he defines collective messianic expectations:

Collective Messianic expectations can be defined as those Messianic concepts in which the establishment of salvation occurs through the action of the people of God.⁵²

48 Lev 4:3, 5, 16; 6:15; 1 Sam 2:10, 35; 12:3, 5; 16:6; 24:7 (2x), 11; 26:9, 11, 16, 23; 2 Sam 1:14, 16, 21; 19:22; 22:51; 23:1; Isa 45:1; Hab 3:13; Ps 2:2; 18:51; 20:7; 28:8; 84:10; 89:39, 52; 105:15; 132:10, 17; Lam 4:20; Dan 9:25, 26; 1 Chr 16:22; 2 Chr 6:42.

49 Cf. Florentino García Martínez, “Two Messianic Figures in the Qumran Texts,” in *Current Research and Technological Developments on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen V. Ricks, STDJ 20 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 14–40 (19).

50 Ludvig Monti, “Attese messianiche a Qumran: una comunità alla fine della storia,” *Hen* 26 (2004): 25–62.

51 “Attese messianiche: quelle concezioni in cui si esprime la certezza dell'avvento di un mondo felice, all'instaurazione del quale contribuiscono in maniera decisiva uno o più mediatori di salvezza dotato/i da Dio di particolari carismi” (Monti, “Attese messianiche,” 28, my translation).

52 “Attese messianiche collettive: quelle concezioni messianiche in cui l'instaurazione della salvezza avviene attraverso l'azione del popolo di Dio” (Monti, “Attese messianiche,” 28, my translation).

Three passages in the Old Testament use the word משיח (singular or plural form) of a collective entity. In two cases the word refers to “the people of God” and in the last case to “the prophets.” Additionally, the War Scroll also has a reference to a collective entity (possibly also the prophets) and the term משיח in column 11, lines 7–8.

יְהוָה עֲזָרָתוֹ וּמָעוֹז יְשׁוּעוֹת מְשִׁיחוֹ הוּא

The Lord is the strength of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed. (Ps 28:8)

אַל-תִּגְעוּ בַּמְשִׁיחִי וְלֹא-יֵאֵי אֶל-תִּרְעוּ

Saying, “Touch not my anointed ones, do my prophets no harm!” (Ps 105:15)

יֵצְאתָ לַיֵּשֶׁעַ עֲמֹד לַיֵּשֶׁעַ אֶת-מְשִׁיחֲךָ מִחֲצֶת רֹאשׁ מִבֵּית רָשָׁע עָרוֹת יְסוֹד עַד-צִוָּאר

You went out for the salvation of your people, for the salvation of your anointed. You crushed the head of the house of the wicked, laying him bare from thigh to neck. (Hab 3:13)

וירד מיעקוב והאביד שריד והיה אויב ירשה וישראל עשה חיל וביד משיחיה
חוזי תעודות הגדתה לנו ק[צי] מלחמות ידיכה

It will come down from Jacob, it will exterminate the remnant of the city, the enemy will be its possession, and Israel will perform feats. And by the hand of your anointed ones, seers of decrees, you taught us the ti[m]es of] the wars of your hand ...⁵³ (1QM 11:7–8)

53 It is not altogether clear whether the last words of line 7 (וּבִיד מְשִׁיחֶיהָ) are the beginning of a new sentence, as most translations assume. In any case, the first part of the text is an adaptation of Num 24:18–19. Notably, the sequence has been altered, to make the sentence culminate with the mention of Israel (and not an individual ruler). Cf. Steudel, “The Eternal Reign,” 523.

9 Concluding Remarks

In this article I have demonstrated a reading of the preserved text of 4Q246 as a narrative. My reading has shown that the small fragment has a simplistic and repetitive vocabulary. This feature creates small but imperative movements within the narrative both with regard to the time of tribulation and the time of peace. The destruction is described as a rage approaching earth and spreading from the top down and infecting the cities. The uprising of the “People of God” causes the time of peace, and it happens within earth and spreads and repels the destruction in the opposing direction. Furthermore, I have sought to demonstrate the decisive role of the “People of God” in the eschatological scene of 4Q246 regardless of how the “Son of God” figure is identified. This interpretation seems doable in the light of the narrative structure of 4Q246 itself, and of the Old Testament and the War Scroll. Consequently, the idea of collective interpretation presents itself as the most attractive option.

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