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## CRITICAL NOTES

### “HOLY ONES ON HIGH” IN DANIEL 7:18

The phrase קדישי עליונין in Dan 7:18 (cf. vv 21, 22, 25, 27) has been much discussed since M. Noth revived O. Procksch's suggestion that it referred not to Israel or to faithful Israelites but to celestial beings.<sup>1</sup> The discussion has focused on the first element in the phrase and, in particular, on whether קדישין more naturally denotes celestial or earthly beings. Such questions have overshadowed issues raised by the second element in the phrase.

עליון is a Hebraism, so that philologically the phrase is an odd one; it occurs only here and may be a distinctive expression used among those for whom the book was written, but this does not affect the questions raised by its interpretation. The construct has generally been assumed to have possessive significance, and the standard translation is “the holy ones of the Most High.” My concern here is with grammatical questions raised by this assumption.

Bauer and Leander understand עליונין as a case of the attraction of a singular noun to the plural of a preceding construct, though they do not offer parallels.<sup>2</sup> GKC §124q and E. König provide a number of parallels from Hebrew,<sup>3</sup> but all are examples of expegetical or adjectival constructs (what GKC §128k calls “merely formal genitives”), where the assimilation is fairly natural. None is possessive (or for that matter objective or partitive), where the number of the absolute noun has a significance of its own. The most interesting of the parallels is בני אלים in Pss 29:1; 89:7, because there is some uncertainty over whether to take אלים here as plural by attraction or as plural in its own right.<sup>4</sup>

It has been supposed that the use of קדושי עליון in CD 20:8 supports the traditional understanding of קדישי עליונין in Dan 7:18,<sup>5</sup> but it may do the opposite. A writer who wishes to refer to “the holy ones of the Most High” in Hebrew does so by using the singular עליון, which suggests that עליונין would not naturally be taken to have a singular reference.

<sup>1</sup> M. Noth, “Die Heiligen des Höchsten, in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (TBü 6; Munich: Kaiser, 1957) 274–90 = “The Holy Ones of the Most High,” in *The Laws in the Pentateuch and Other Studies* (trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas; Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966) 215–28; O. Procksch, “Der Menschensohn als Gottessohn,” *Christentum und Wissenschaft* 3 (1927) 425–43; 473–81 [not available to me]; “Christus im Alten Testament,” *NKZ* 44 (1933) 57–83.

<sup>2</sup> H. Bauer and P. Leander, *Grammatik des Biblisch-Aramäischen* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1927) 530.

<sup>3</sup> E. König, *Historisch-kritisches Lehrgebäude der Hebräischen Sprache* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1895) 2. 438–39.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. GKC §124q; P. C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50* (Word Biblical Commentary 19; Waco, TX: Word, 1983), on Ps 29:1; F. M. Cross, “אל, 'el,” *TDOT* 1. 242–61.

<sup>5</sup> J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel* (HSM 16; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977) 125.

As an alternative understanding of the plural, J. A. Montgomery, among others, takes עליונין as plural of majesty.<sup>6</sup> There are also several objections to this suggestion. This usage, too, is difficult to parallel, except for the well-known convention of using the plural אלהים to denote the one God (and the rarer convention of using ארנים or בעלים to refer to a human master). GKC §124h refers to several examples of such a use of קדושים, but none is clearly parallel to עליונין in Dan 7:18. In Josh 24:19 the word does refer to God, but it is plural by attraction to אלהים itself, which it follows, agrees with, and qualifies; there is no ambiguity about it. In Hos 12:1 [11:12] קדושים is likely a genuine plural, whether it denotes celestial or earthly beings.<sup>7</sup> קדושים in Prov 9:10; 30:3 may also be taken as genuine plurals.<sup>8</sup> Further, it is questionable whether Biblical Aramaic uses the plural of majesty of אלה. Bauer and Leander 87f take the view that plural אלהין always means “gods.” If this is so, it makes it unlikely that Biblical Aramaic would use עליונין assuming that the reader would understand it as having singular reference. Certainly the unquestionable allusion to the Most High in Dan 7:25 uses the regular singular עליא, as CD 20:8 uses עליון.

If no other understanding of קדישי עליונין suggested itself, we might have to accept the traditional translation and one of these understandings of the grammar. In fact, however, there is no difficulty involved in taking עליונין as a genuine plural referring to beings who are “[on] high.”<sup>9</sup> According to M. Jastrow, the term is common as a noun in Postbiblical Hebrew to denote celestial beings.<sup>10</sup>

Grammatically, the most obvious understanding would then be to take the construct phrase as partitive, so that it translates as “holy ones among ones on high.” Belief in divisions within the celestial world becomes common in Jewish apocalypses, and the phrase would refer to a particular group of celestial beings.

Given that קדישין is widely used of celestial beings in general, however, and that Daniel does not refer elsewhere to divisions within the celestial world, another understanding suggests itself. The phrase should indeed be taken as an example of the use of a second plural in a construct chain when the expression as a whole is plural, as Bauer and Leander suggest, but the second plural is expegetical or adjectival, like other instances in GKC §124q. The phrase is equivalent to קדישין עליונין and means “high saints,” “holy ones on high.” The phrase as a whole is thus indeterminate:<sup>11</sup> cf. compound expressions such as עתיק יומין and בר אנש (vv 9, 13).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>6</sup> J. A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; New York: Scribner, 1927) ad loc.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. H. W. Wolff, *Dodekapropheten 1 Hosea* (2d ed.; BKAT 14/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1965) = *Hosea* (trans. G. Stansell; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974) ad loc.

<sup>8</sup> So G; see M. H. Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts* (VTSup 2; Leiden: Brill, 1955) 14, on Prov 30:3; also the occurrence in IQSb 1:5.

<sup>9</sup> So J. Calvin, *Praelectiones in librum prophetiarum Danielis* (Geneva: Laon, 1556 [= Corpus Reformatorum 68 (Calvin Vol. 40; 1889) 517–722; 69 (Calvin Vol. 41; 1889) 1–304]) = *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Daniel* (trans. T. Myers; 2 vols; Edinburgh: CTS, 1852–53), and A. Lacocque, *Le livre de Daniel* (CAT 15b; Neuchâtel: Delachaux, 1976) = *The Book of Daniel* (trans. D. Pellauer; London: SPCK; Atlanta: Knox, 1979) ad loc.

<sup>10</sup> M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim . . .* (New York and Berlin: Choreb; London: Shapiro, 1926) 1083.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. H. L. Ginsberg, *Studies in Daniel* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1948) 17, 71 n. 46a.

<sup>12</sup> Against G. F. Hasel (“The identity of ‘the saints of the Most High’ in Daniel 7,” *Bib* 56 [1975]

The question of who is referred to by the phrase “holy ones on high” must be considered in the light of its broader context in Daniel 7. On its own account, however, while it *might* denote living earthly beings seen as exalted in God’s sight or by their association with God (cf. the collocation of עליון and עם קדש of Israel in Deut 26:19), it would more naturally suggest beings who are celestial in some way—angels or glorified Israelites.<sup>13</sup> It might even be that עליונין functions to remove some of the ambiguity which otherwise attaches to קדושין, and which recent scholarship has rediscovered: the “holy ones” of whom it speaks are not beings on earth but ones “on high.”

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173), who seems to misread F. Rosenthal, *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1961) 47; and see Bauer and Leander, *Grammatik*, 89. (On the traditional understanding of עליונין, however, Hasel is right that it could be treated as a proper name, so that the whole phrase would be determinate; the translation “*the* holy ones of [*the*] Most High” would then be justified.)

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Collins, *Apocalyptic Vision*, 123–52.