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# DIVINE CREATION OF THE KING IN PSALMS 2:6

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It is a truism that Assyriology and archaeology are two of the fields that have done most to enable scholarship to shed new light on the Bible, despite the fact that it has been thoroughly scrutinized for over two millennia. At times they have made it possible to recognize a solution to a biblical problem that was available all along, but went unrecognized for lack of a parallel to show its plausibility. The present study proposes such a solution to a crux in Psalms 2. It is offered in honor of Miriam and Hayim Tadmor, masters of these fields, in grateful and affectionate tribute for their friendship and for all that I have learned from them.

Psalms 2 responds to a conspiracy by vassal states to overthrow the hegemony of a Judahite monarch.<sup>1</sup> In the course of the psalm, God rebukes the vassals and indicates that He himself **נָסַךְ** the king (v. 6), and the king then quotes God's declaration that he is His son and God's promise of an empire (vv. 7–9).

One of the difficulties in this psalm is the meaning of **נִסְכַּתִּי** in v. 6, **וְאֲנִי נִסְכַּתִּי מֶלֶכִי עַל־צִיּוֹן**, **הַר־קֹדֶשׁ**, "But I Myself have **נָסַךְ** My king on Zion, My holy mountain." The most common English renderings, "set," "put," "installed," "established" and "appointed," which go back to the Septuagint and the Vulgate,<sup>2</sup> have no real lexical basis and seem to have been inferred from the context.<sup>3</sup> The rendering "enthroned"<sup>4</sup> probably reflects the view that **נָסַךְ** is the verbal counterpart of **נָסַךְ**, "prince," "chief."<sup>5</sup> This view, also found in the midrash and endorsed by most medieval Hebrew commentators, is problematic for two reasons: (a) **נָסַךְ** is never used of Israelite rulers<sup>6</sup> and (b) in at least

one passage it seems to refer to officials subordinate to a king (Josh. 13:21). There is no reason to believe that the Davidic dynasty would have considered the noun an appropriate title or a cognate verb suitable for describing their enthronement. The rendering "consecrated" takes the verb to mean "consecrate (as **נָסַךְ**) by a libation," a nuance supposedly derived from the basic meaning "pour a libation."<sup>7</sup> This view faces the same problem regarding the use of **נָסַךְ**, as well as two others: (a) "pour the king" would be an extremely elliptical way of saying "pour a libation to make king," and (b) there is no evidence or reason to believe that libation played a role in Israelite coronation ceremonies. Finally, there is the view that **נָסַךְ** means "anoint," first found in Symmachus and midrashic commentaries on our verse.<sup>8</sup> This view is also problematic for two reasons: (a) it is **נָסַךְ**, not **נָסַךְ**, that means "anoint," and (b) that verb is used only for hygienic anointing,<sup>9</sup> and not ceremonial anointing, which is expressed by **מָשַׁח**.

A new approach was proposed by H. Gese,<sup>10</sup> partially following the Septuagint, which renders the verse as "I have been made/appointed king by Him on His holy mountain." The Septuagint construes the verb as passive and reads the pronominal suffixes as third person (putative *Vorlage* **קֹדֶשׁוֹ** ... **מִלְכּוֹ**), implying that the king is the speaker. Gese proposed that **נִסְכַּתִּי** should be pointed as **נִסְכַּתִּי** and understood as "I (the king) was formed," from **שָׁכַךְ/סָכַךְ**, "weave together." Thus, the verse is to be read as **וְאֲנִי נִסְכַּתִּי מִלְכּוֹ עַל־צִיּוֹן הַר־קֹדֶשׁוֹ**, "But I was created as his king on Zion, His holy mountain." He bases his derivation of the verb from **סָכַךְ** on Ps. 139:13: **כִּי אֲתָנָה קִנִּיתִי כְּלִי־יָדַי תִּסְבְּנִי בַבֶּטֶן**.

אמי, "It was You who created my conscience; You fashioned me in my mother's womb." Ps. 139:13 had already led other scholars to reinterpret נִסְכַּתִּי in Prov. 8:23, which reads:

יהוה קנני ראשית דרכו קדם מפעליו מאז  
מעולם נִסְכַּתִּי מראש מקדמי־ארץ  
באי־תהמות חוללתי...

The Lord created me at the beginning of His course

As the first of His works of old.

In the distant past I was fashioned,

At the beginning, at the origin of earth.

There was still no deep when I was brought forth...

Because of the parallelism with חוללתי and קנני in the adjacent verses, F. Hitzig and B. Gemser<sup>11</sup> had concluded that נִסְכַּתִּי should be repointed as נִסְכַּתִּי, "I was formed," from שִׁכַּח/סָכַח, and since Ps. 2:7 goes on to refer to God's giving birth to the king, Gese argued that the same vocalization should be adopted in Ps. 2:6.

Contextually, the meaning "create," "form," is unexceptional, but Gese's argument requires us to agree that the speaker in v. 6 is the king, despite the fact that v. 5 reads as the introduction to a speech by God, to adopt the Septuagint reading of the pronominal suffixes, to revocalize נִסְכַּתִּי, and to rely on a meaning of סָכַח which is attested only once, in Ps. 139:13. Though each of these problems seems minor, they are nonetheless numerous. The purpose of the present study is to propose a derivation that yields the same meaning while avoiding these problems and is more consistent with the royal rhetoric of the psalm and extra-biblical counterparts. It agrees that נִסְכַּתִּי means "create," but derives that meaning from the well-attested metallurgical sense of נָסַךְ, "pour," "cast," "found," a suggestion already made in Midrash Tehillim but which has rarely figured in the discussion of the psalm since.<sup>12</sup> This sense of נָסַךְ appears in Isa. 40:19 and 44:10 as the verb for making a statue;<sup>13</sup> it underlies the noun מִסְכָּה, "molten image," and is well attested in Ugaritic and Phoenician/Punic.<sup>14</sup>

The aptness of this nuance is indicated by a passage in the Akkadian Tukulti-Ninurta Epic. The epic describes the creation of the Assyrian

king Tukulti-Ninurta I (thirteenth century BCE) by the gods:

By the decision of the Lord of all the lands (Enlil) his (Tukulti-Ninurta's) pouring (*šipikšu*) proceeded smoothly in/through the channel of the womb of the gods. It is he who is the eternal image (*šalmu*) of Enlil...<sup>15</sup>

The motif of divine creation of the king is a common one in Mesopotamian royal inscriptions. The verb used for creation is usually *banû*.<sup>16</sup> Here a different term is used, *šipku*, "pouring," derived from *šapāku*, "pile up," "pour." It is cognate to Hebrew *špk*, "pour," and synonymous with Hebrew, Ugaritic, and Phoenician/Punic נָסַךְ. The fact that the next line says that Tukulti-Ninurta is the "image" (*šalmu*, lit. "statue") of Enlil implies that the term is used here in a metallurgical sense, equivalent to נָסַךְ. As observed by W.G. Lambert, "The context compels a meaning 'create' for *špk* in this context. Probably this is a metaphor from metal casting, as the root is used, e.g., of the manufacture of Gilgamesh's arms... [in Gilgamesh Epic IV, 30–32]."<sup>17</sup> In Akkadian, *šapāku* is used quite frequently in this sense.<sup>18</sup> "Channel" (*rātu*) would thus be used here in its metallurgical sense of a channel through which molten metal is poured into a mold, as noted by Machinist,<sup>19</sup> and the "womb of the gods" would be used metaphorically for the mold. On the other hand, as observed by Machinist, the image of the divine womb calls to mind mythological scenes in which the divine womb/birth goddess gives birth to gods and humans, and this may imply a *double entendre* in which *šipku* is also being used in the sense of "engendering."<sup>20</sup>

To judge from similar passages, the metallurgical sense is primary in the Tukulti-Ninurta Epic. Another Assyrian king, Adad-Nirari II (911–891 BCE), says that the great gods "have perfected (*ušekliluma*) my appearance in every respect, they have shaped (*išpuk*) my lordly body."<sup>21</sup> The metallurgical sense in this inscription is supported by the term for "perfected" (*šuklulu*), which is commonly used in describing the manufacture of statues, as in Sennacherib's description of how he had bull colossi made: "Upon the inspiration of the god, I built clay molds, poured (*aštappaka*) copper

into each, and finished their forms as perfectly (*ušaḳlila*) as half-shekel pieces."<sup>22</sup> The metallurgical sense is also apparent in an Assyrian inscription referring to the creation of gods: "Aššur is the creator (*šāpik*) of the Igigi and the Anunnaki, who molds (*pātiq*) the heaven and the nether world."<sup>23</sup> The parallel verb *patāqu*, "mold," is another term used frequently in metallurgy.<sup>24</sup>

In the context of the Tukulti-Ninurta Epic, the motif of divine creation of the king plays a role reminiscent of Psalms 2 in a number of respects. The epic tells of the Assyrian king's conflict with the hostile Kassite king Kashtiliash, whom he accuses of treaty violation. The passage depicting Tukulti-Ninurta's birth describes his military prowess and his divine or quasi-divine status ("his mass is reckoned with the flesh of the gods" and he is the "image of Enlil," that is, the embodiment of his authority, majesty, or the like).<sup>25</sup> It is followed immediately by a passage declaring that the god Enlil raised him "like a natural father" (*kīma abu ālidu*, lit. "like a father who begot him"), second only to Enlil's first-born (Ninurta), and that no king could compete with him in battle. All this serves to justify Tukulti-Ninurta's preferential status over all opponents, including Kashtiliash, and to assure his victory in battle. In these respects, the epic serves as an apt parallel to Psalms 2, in which the Davidic king, facing a rebellion by his vassals (who have implicitly repudiated their vassal treaties with him), is declared to have been created by God and adopted as His son (v. 7),<sup>26</sup> thereby justifying the empire as his patrimony (vv. 8–9; cf. Ps. 89:28) and showing the futility of the vassals' rebellion (vv. 1 and 4).<sup>27</sup>

In light of this use of the synonymous *šapāku* in similar contexts, it is reasonable to conclude that the MT of Ps. 2:6 should be retained and אָנִי מְסַכֵּתִי מֶלְכִי interpreted as "But I Myself created my

king...".<sup>28</sup> By the same derivation, the MT form נִסְכַּתִּי in Prov. 8:23 can be explained as a *nif'al* of נָסַךְ, meaning "I was created." This being the case, the derivation of תְּסַכְנִי in Ps. 139:13 should also be reconsidered. The Masoretic vocalization implies derivation from שָׁכַךְ/סָכַךְ, "weave together," for which appeal is made to Job 10:11: (Lenin-grad: תְּסַכְנִי וְגִידִים וְבָעֲצָמוֹת וְבָשָׂר וְתָלְבִישֵׁנִי וְבַעֲצָמוֹת וְבָשָׂר וְתָלְבִישֵׁנִי) "You clothed me with skin and flesh and wove me of bones and sinews." However, Job 10:11 involves a unique and very specific metaphor which is not necessarily presupposed by Ps. 139:13. In view of the parallelism with קָנָה in the latter verse, as in Prov. 8:23, and the fact that the verb describes an action that took place in the womb, as in the Tukulti-Ninurta epic, it is quite plausible that the verb underlying תְּסַכְנִי is נָסַךְ and that it was originally vocalized תְּסַכְנִי.

Since the motif of the divine creation of the king has not been identified elsewhere in the Bible, it is natural to wonder whether it was borrowed from elsewhere. If so, the parallels cited above would make Mesopotamian, perhaps specifically Assyrian, royal propaganda a likely source. But determining when Israelite psalmists were likely to have been aware of such Mesopotamian parallels is inseparable from the difficult question of the date of Psalms 2.<sup>29</sup> These questions would take us too far afield to be pursued here.

The motif of the divine creation of the king in Psalms 2:6 is another example, along with the reference to the king as God's son in v. 7, of ancient Near Eastern royal motifs paralleled in the psalm, and another reminder of how much the psalms reflect the elevated attitude toward kingship presumably held in the royal court of Jerusalem, as distinct from the more reserved view often expressed elsewhere in the Bible.<sup>30</sup>

## NOTES

1 Many scholars believe the occasion for such a psalm would have been the enthronement of a new king, since subject states would see the death of the previous king as an opportunity for rebellion, and in v. 7 God speaks of making the king His son "this day" (see, e.g., H. Gunkel, *Die*

*Psalmen* [5th ed.], Göttingen, 1968, p. 5; A. Weiser, *The Psalms* (Old Testament Library), Philadelphia, 1962, p. 109; contrast H.-J. Kraus, *Psalmen*, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1966, 1:13–14). But rebellions are not planned only when monarchs die, but whenever they are perceived as weak.

- Jer. 27 describes an occasion in Zedekiah's reign when several states of the Levant conferred in Jerusalem about rebelling against Nebuchadnezzar II. From Jeremiah's symbolic use of "thongs (מסרות) and bars of a yoke" (Jer. 27:2) and his exhortation to the plotters to submit to the yoke (על) of the king of Babylon (vv. 8,11,12), it is evident that their plans amounted to exactly the same as the kings' in Ps. 2:3: "Let us break the cords of their (in this case, the Babylonians') yoke, shake off their ropes from us" (בנתקה את מוסרותינו ונשליכה ממנו עבתינו). Historians presume that the meeting in question took place in Nebuchadnezzar's eleventh year (594/593 BCE); contrary to Jer. 27:1a, which implies Nebuchadnezzar's ninth year) and was inspired by a short-lived rebellion in Babylonia the previous winter (e.g. J. Bright, *A History of Israel* [3rd ed.], Philadelphia, 1981, p. 329; M. Cogan and H. Tadmor, *II Kings* [Anchor Bible 11], New York, 1988, p. 322). Nor does "this day" in v. 7 indicate that the rebellion took place at the time of the king's enthronement. Instead, it is part of a quotation: in the context of the psalm the king is speaking during the rebellion and quoting the imperial promise that God made earlier, at the king's enthronement.
- 2 LXX καταστάθη and Vulg. *constitutus sum*, both construing the verb as passive. The same meaning is given, though in the active voice, by Pesh אקִימת.
  - 3 Delitzsch starts with the normal meanings of נָסַךְ and holds that "the meaning of pouring wide and firm (of casting metal, libation, anointing)... goes over into the meaning of setting firmly in any place," an inference he seeks to justify with semantic parallels from other Hebrew and Latin words (F. Delitzsch, *Psalms*, Vol. 5, in C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, Grand Rapids MI, 1983). F. Brown, S.R. Driver and C.A. Briggs (*A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Oxford, 1906) derive the verb from a putative III נָסַךְ, "set," "install," which they find attested elsewhere only in Prov. 8:23 in the equally difficult נִסְכָּתִי.
  - 4 *The New English Bible*.
  - 5 Yalqut Psalms sec. 620, and Midrash Tehillim 2:8, third explanation; Ibn Ezra; Kimhi, commentary and *Sefer Hashorashim*; Meiri; Metzudat Zion. This view may also be reflected in the Targum's רִבִּיתִי (see M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*, New York, 1950, p. 1441c, *Pa'al*, second definition "2" [a typo, I assume, for "3"]), but see below regarding "anoint."
  - 6 Josh. 13:21; Ezek. 32:30; Ps. 83:12; Micah 5:4. נָסַךְ also appears in the Aramaic Ahiqar, line 119, see A.E. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.*, Oxford, 1923, p. 216. In Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian inscriptions, *nasiku* appears as a title of Aramean sheikhs, see J.A. Brinkman, *A Political History of Post-Cassite Babylonia 1158–722 B.C.*, Rome, 1968, pp. 273–275; *AHW*, p. 754a. That the term does not refer to kingly status is indicated by Brinkman's observation that "[s]ome tribes have more than one sheikh (*nasiku*), and as many as six are attested for one group" (p. 273). He thinks it plausible that "sheikhs in the larger [tribes] generally ruled over sub-tribal units and that only smaller groups ... had a single sheikh" (p. 275).
  - 7 W. Gesenius, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament*, bearb. von F. Buhl (3rd ed.), p. 664 (*la sainte Bible*, Paris, 1961) (*sacré*); H.J. Kraus, *Psalmen* (Biblicher Kommentar Altes Testament), Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1966; see C. Dohmen, art. נָסַךְ *nāsak*, in G. Botterweck *et al.* (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament IX*, Grand Rapids MI, 1998, p. 460. Some, following LXX, read נִסְכָּתִי מֶלְכִי, "I was consecrated as his king."
  - 8 Symmachus renders ἐξπύσα. Yalqut Psalms sec. 620 and Midrash Tehillim 2:8 paraphrase as אַמְשַׁחְתִּיהָ; this is probably the intention of the Targum's רִבִּיתִי as well, see M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period*, Ramat Gan, 1990, p. 514, s.v. 2# רִבִּי; Jastrow (above, n. 5, *Dictionary*), p. 1441c, *Pa'al*, second definition "2". This view is echoed in a marginal note in the King James Version, *The Complete Bible: An American Translation* (ed. J.M. Powis Smith *et al.*, Chicago, 1975) and *Biblia del Peregrino* (ed. L. Alonso Schökel, Bilbao, 1998) (*ungido*).
  - 9 Deut. 28:40; 2 Sam. 14:2; Micah 6:15; Ruth 3:3; Dan. 10:3; 2 Chron. 28:15.
  - 10 H. Gese, "Natus ex Virgine," in H.W. Wolff (ed.), *Probleme biblischer Theologie G. von Rad zum 70. Geburtstag*, Munich, 1971, pp. 81–82.
  - 11 F. Hitzig, *Die Sprüche Salomo's*, Leipzig, 1858, 77, cited by Gese; B. Gemser, *Sprüche Salomos*, 2nd ed., Tübingen, 1963, p. 46.
  - 12 Midrash Tehillim ed. Buber 2:8 (p. 14a); Yalqut Psalms sec. 620, where נִסְכָּתִי is defined in Aramaic as אַתְכַתִּיהָ, "I cast, or molded, him," citing the phrase עָגַל מִסַּכָּה (Exod. 32:4) as evidence of this meaning.
  - 13 On Deutero-Isaiah's familiarity with the Akkadian terminology referring to craftsmen, with comments about Isa. 40:19, see I. Eph'al, "Isaiah 40:19–20: On the Linguistic and Cultural Background of Deutero-Isaiah," *Shnaton* 10 (1990), pp. 31–35 (Hebrew).
  - 14 See C. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook*, Rome, 1965, s.v. *nsk*; J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions*, Leiden, 1995, pp. 735–736.
  - 15 W.G. Lambert, "Three Unpublished Fragments of the Tukulti-Ninurta Epic," *AfO* 18 (1957–58), pp. 50–51, lines 9–10. See also P.B. Machinist, *The Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta I. A Study in Middle Assyrian Literature* (Ph.D. diss., Yale University), 1978 (my thanks to Prof. Machinist for kindly sending me the pertinent pages of his dissertation); *idem*, "Literature as Politics: The Tukulti-Ninurta Epic and the Bible," *CBQ* 38 (1976), p. 462; B. Foster, *Before the Muses* (2nd ed.), Bethesda MD, 1996, 2:215.

- 16 CAD B, 87d–88a, 94c, 238b.
- 17 Lambert (above, n. 15, “Three Unpublished Fragments”), p. 50, note to line 9. Jonas C. Greenfield, in his first published article, noted that *nsk, špk, ptq* (see below) and several other Semitic roots “belong to the semantic range ‘to throw, sprinkle, pour (liquids), shoot, cast (metals), mold, create’” (“Lexicographical Notes I,” *HUCA* 29 [1958], 218, n. 10, reprinted in S. Paul *et al.* [eds.], *Al Kanfei Yonah*, Jerusalem, 2001, p. 668).
- 18 CAD Š/1, p. 418cd; Š/2, p. 71bc.
- 19 Machinist (above, n. 15, “Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta I”), p. 196. For this sense of *rātu*, see CAD R, 220ab.
- 20 Machinist (above, n. 15, “Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta I”), pp. 195–197, comparing scenes in the Sumerian myth of Enki and Ninmah and the Atrahasis Epic. See J. Klein, “Enki and Ninmah,” in W.W. Hallo and K.L. Younger, Jr. (eds.), *The Context of Scripture*, New York, 1997, 1:517, lines 24–37 and n. 14; W.G. Lambert and A.R. Millard, *Atra-Ḥasis. The Babylonian Story of the Flood*, Oxford, 1969, pp. 56–62.
- 21 O. Schroeder, *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur historischen Inhalts*, Leipzig, 1922, Vol. II, 84:7, cited in CAD Š/1, 418d. As noted by Machinist, the creation of other kings is also described in terms of the manufacture of a statue, such as Gilgamesh (above, n. 15, “Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta I”), p. 197; see J.H. Tigay, *The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic*, Philadelphia, 1982, 142 and 264 (Gilgamesh Epic I, ii, 2–3, using *šalmu*; for the verb *šutešbū*, “complete, carry out according to plan,” used of craftsmen, see E.A. Speiser, “Akkadian Myths and Epics,” *ANET* [3rd ed.], 62, n. 32; *AHw*, p. 1108a), 153 and 268 (Hittite version, lines 4–5, 7, using *ALAM* = *šalmu*).
- 22 D.D. Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib*, Chicago, 1924, 109: vii, 19. For this and other examples, see CAD Š/3, 224ab.
- 23 Luckenbill (above, n. 22), 149: v, 3, cited in CAD Š/3, 418 end.
- 24 *AHw* 847c, s.v. *patāqu* I, sec. 3b and 4, and 5b. Cf. Greenfield (above, n. 17). *Patāqu* is also used of the creation of the archetypical king in the myth published by W.R. Mayer, “Ein Mythos von der Erschaffung des Menschen und des Königs,” *Orientalia* 56 (1987), pp. 55–68; see p. 56, lines 33', 36'.
- 25 Machinist (above, n. 15, “Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta I”), pp. 196–198. For the metaphoric sense of *šalmu* applied to kings, see also J.H. Tigay, “The Image of God and the Flood: Some New Developments,” in A.M. Shapiro and B.I. Cohen (eds.), *Studies in Jewish Education and Judaica in Honor of Louis Newman*, New York, 1984, pp. 170–174; E.M. Curtis, *Man as the Image of God in Genesis in the Light of Ancient Near Eastern Parallels* (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania), 1984.
- 26 As is widely recognized, God’s statement that He has begotten (לָמַד) the king “this day” (v. 7) implies that He is

not the king’s biological father from birth, but adopted him at his enthronement (see also the dynastic oracle to David in 2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 89:27–28; and 1 Chron. 17:13; 28:6). There is also a consensus that adoption is implied by the formula “you are my son.” See S.M. Paul, “Adoption Formulae: A Study of Cuneiform and Biblical Legal Clauses,” *Maarav* 2 (1980), pp. 173–185; T. Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel*, pp. 108–109 and 61, n. 30; cf. J. Tigay, “Adoption,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 2: 300–301. God’s adoption of the king is often considered to be a metaphoric or spiritual reflex of the ancient Near Eastern notion (itself possibly metaphoric in some cases) of the king as the gods’ son, see H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, Chicago, 1948, pp. 299–301; W.W. Hallo, *Early Mesopotamian Royal Titles*, New Haven, 1957, pp. 134–136; A.W. Sjöberg, “Die göttliche Abstammung der sumerisch-babylonischen Herrscher,” *Orientalia Suecana* 21 (1972), pp. 87–112; Kirta (Keret) Epic, *KTU* 16:10–11, 20–23, trans. D. Pardee in Hallo and Younger (above, n. 20), 1:339. Especially pertinent in connection with “this day have I begotten you” is the view that in Egypt the king’s divine birth does not take place when he is first born, but only at his coronation (P.C. Craigie, cited by J.K. Hoffmeier, “Son of God: From Pharaoh to Israel’s Kings to Jesus,” *Bible Review* 13/3 [June 1997], p. 48). For a strong, and in many respects convincing, critique of the view that Ps. 2:6 and its biblical parallels refer to adoption, see J.J.M. Roberts, “Whose Child is This? Reflections on the Speaking Voice in Isaiah 9:5,” *Harvard Theological Review* 90 (1997), pp. 115–129. However, I do not believe that Roberts adequately accounts for “this day.”

Incidentally, Weinfeld holds that the biblical references to king as God’s son have nothing to do with the ancient Near Eastern notion of the king as the gods’ son, but are modeled on covenants of grant in which the donor adopts the recipient in order to provide a legal basis for transferring a grant (property, dynasty, etc.) to him. See M. Weinfeld, “The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East,” *JAOS* 90 (1970), pp. 184–203, esp. 190–194; “Addenda to *JAOS* 90 (1970), p. 184ff.,” *JAOS* 92 (1972), pp. 468–469. For a critique of this position, see G. Knoppers, “Ancient Near Eastern Royal Grants and the Davidic Covenant: A Parallel?” *JAOS* 116 (1996), pp. 670–697.

27 According to Ehrlich, “futility” is expressed not only by לָמַד, “vain things,” but also by the first word in the psalm, לָמַד, which he renders as “vergeblich,” based on the use of לָמַד in Targ. Jon. to 1 Sam. 12:21; Isa. 2:22 and the use of לָמַד in Gen. Rab., ch. II. See Jastrow (above, n. 5, *Dictionary*), s.v. לָמַד II and s.v. לָמַד.

28 The significance of God’s creating the king on “Zion, My holy mountain” (v. 6b) is unclear, but it is noteworthy that the Sumerian king Gudea of Lagash (late 22nd century BCE) claims, in a passage reminiscent of both Ps. 2:7 and

the passage from the Tukulti-Ninurta Epic, to have been born in a sanctuary. Addressing Gatumdu(g), the goddess of his city, he says: "I have no mother, you are my mother, I have no father, you are my father, you had the seed of me implanted in the womb, made me to be born from the sanctuary" (Gudea Cylinder A, iii. 6–8, in D.O. Edzard, *Gudea and His Dynasty*, Toronto, 1997, p. 70; cf. p. 79, col. xvii, 12–14). A hymn of Shulgi, King of Ur (ca. 2094–2047) apparently claims that he too was born in a temple. See J. Klein, "The Birth of a Crown Prince in the Temple: A Neo-Sumerian Literary Topos," in J.-M. Durand (ed.), *La Femme dans le Proche-Orient Antique* (RAI 33), Paris, 1987, pp. 97–106; *idem*, "The Birth of Shulgi in the Temple of Nippur," in Hallo and Younger (above, n. 20), 1:552–553 and literature cited therein.

29 Judahite awareness of Assyrian royal propaganda is manifest in the eighth century BCE. See P.B. Machinist,

"Assyria and its Image in First Isaiah," *JAOS* 103 (1983), pp. 719–737. But this by no means settles the question. If the situation presupposed by the psalm — an uprising of vassal states against the Davidic monarchy — is a real one, it would seem to reflect the period following Solomon's death, when the Davidic-Solomonic empire fell apart. In that case, it would be harder to make the case for direct awareness of Assyrian royal propaganda.

30 See D.J.A. Clines, "The Psalms and the King," in his *On the Way to the Postmodern: Old Testament Essays 1967–1998* (JSOT Supplement 292), Sheffield, 1998, 2:687–700. For a new perspective on the royal background of Psalms, see M. Greenberg, "Hittite Royal Prayers and Biblical Petitionary Psalms," in K. Seybold and E. Zenger (eds.), *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung*, Freiburg, 1994, pp. 23–26.