

WONDERS IN THE HEAVENS AND ON THE EARTH: APOCALYPTIC IMAGERY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.
The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the
LORD (Joel 2:30–31 [3:3–4]).

The Lord's words through the prophet Joel typify the popular conception of earth's great apocalyptic climax. These and similar images are projected not only from many a pulpit but in the literature of both the religious¹ and secular realms.² The source of such end-time imagery is not difficult to ascertain, for it is found in several biblical texts in both testaments.

Nevertheless, the isolation of a distinctive apocalyptic genre and the question as to what properly constitutes an apocalypse has not met with universal consensus.³ While several noted study groups have contributed to the clarification of these problems, the precise identification of apocalyptic genre and literary features remains at issue.⁴ As for the OT, in addition to the problem of the dating of apocalyptic, questions concerning the origin and transmission

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¹ See, for example, E. Hindson, *End Times, The Middle East & The New World Order* (Wheaton: Victor, 1991) 142–144; J. F. Walvoord, *Armageddon Oil and the Middle East Crisis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980) 151–157. P. Boyer observes, "As the twentieth century ends and the portentous year 2000 looms, all evidence suggests that fundamentalist apocalyptic interpretations, endlessly refashioned, infinitely adaptable, and seemingly impervious to intellectual challenge, will retain their grip on the popular imagination, as they have for centuries" (P. Boyer, "The Growth of Fundamentalist Apocalyptic in the United States," in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, Vol. 3 [ed. S. J. Stein; New York: Continuum, 1999] 176).

² See, for example, C. Berlitz, *Doomsday: 1999 A.D.* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1981). For an incisive analysis of mankind's fascination with the end, see R. Kyle, *The Last Days are Here Again* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998).

³ Although aimed particularly at NT apocalyptic, the carefully researched historical review by R. E. Sturm is quite helpful. See his observations in R. E. Sturm, "Defining the Word 'Apocalyptic': A Problem in Biblical Criticism," in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament* (eds. J. Marcus and M. L. Soards; JSOTSup 54; Leiden: Brill, 1997) 17–48.

⁴ Study groups relative to apocalyptic from the Society of Biblical Literature published their findings in *Semeia* both in 1979 and 1986. The Uppsala Colloquium on Apocalypticism published its findings in D. Hellholm, ed., *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1983). In addition to these sources, the standard introductions to the study of OT apocalyptic include J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1984); P. D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975); *Old Testament Apocalyptic* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987); L. Morris, *Apocalyptic* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972); M. G. Reddish, ed.,

of such literature have also occupied the efforts of scholars. In truth, all of the above questions have a direct bearing upon one another.

This study does not re-examine the question of the genre of apocalyptic *per se* but instead focuses on its imagery. In so doing, it attempts to account for the origin and transmission of prominent imagery in those OT passages deemed to be apocalyptic. Having done so, a final question as to a general hermeneutical approach to such imagery is considered.

This study began by isolating distinctive imagery that occurs repeatedly, but with varying emphases, in contexts often labeled apocalyptic. It proceeded by tracing these features backward to a point where they intersected in an extended context. The paper presents the results of the research in inverse fashion, first noting these images in their primary concatenation and then showing representative appearances of them in succeeding literature that demonstrates their transmission to the prophets for use in eschatological settings.

The thesis of this paper is that much of the imagery of OT apocalyptic appeared provisionally in the epic literature commemorating the exodus event.⁵ As a major covenantal theme, its familiar images provided a ready vehicle for the judgment and salvation oracles of the early pre-exilic prophets, especially as the two became intertwined in the prophetic kingdom oracles.⁶ Their utilization there, in turn, furnished a natural development into the more spectacular, universal, and often ethereal tone that gave impetus to an emerging apocalyptic in the prophets of the pre-exilic and exilic periods.⁷ The overarching rationale for the ready transmission of this imagery lies in the fact that it symbolizes the activity of Israel's Divine Warrior and Redeemer who brought her into covenant union with himself.⁸ Thus the

Apocalyptic Literature: A Reader (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980); and D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964). See also several articles by J. J. Collins, "Apocalyptic Genre and Mythic Allusions in Daniel," *JSOT* 21 (1981) 83–100; idem, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel* (Harvard Semitic Monographs 16; Missoula: Scholars, 1977); idem, *Seers, Sybils & Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* (JSJSup 54; Leiden: Brill, 1997).

⁵ For the suggestion that Israel's exodus from Egypt culminating in the conquest of the promised land was preserved in epic-like fashion, see R. D. Patterson, "The Psalm of Habakkuk," *Grace Theological Journal* 8 (1987) 163–194.

⁶ For the term "kingdom oracles," see my remarks in "Old Testament Prophecy," in *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible* (eds. L. Ryken and T. Longman, III; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993) 296–309; and "Prophecy in the Old Testament," in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (eds. L. Ryken, T. Longman, III, and J. Wilhoit; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998) 668–670.

⁷ For the concept of an emerging apocalyptic in the seventh century BC, see R. D. Patterson, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* (Chicago: Moody, 1991) 285–288; D. L. Christensen, "Zephaniah 2:4–15; A Theological Basis for Josiah's Program of Political Expansion," *CBQ* 46 (1984) 669–682; D. S. Russell, *Method and Message* 90–91. Among others who note a strong continuity of themes that ultimately appear in apocalyptic, see P. D. Hanson, *Dawn* 12; and R. Youngblood, "A Holistic Typology of Prophecy and Apocalyptic," in *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration* (ed. A. Gileadi; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988) 213–221. From an earlier time one may note also F. Lucke who apparently viewed apocalyptic as not only a development of prophecy but a degeneration, a view subsequently held by such scholars as J. Wellhausen and B. Duhm in Germany and H. H. Rowley in England. See the evaluation by R. E. Sturm, "Defining the Word 'Apocalyptic'" 18–22.

⁸ See the informative study by T. McComiskey, *The Covenants of Promise* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985) 49–50, 55–57.

employment of the imagery finds it unifying factor in the person and teleological purposes of Israel's delivering God.

I. THE PERSISTENCE OF EXODUS IMAGERY
INTO THE ERA OF THE WRITING PROPHETS

Several of the features relative to the exodus event were so striking that they were repeatedly rehearsed in later OT accounts.

1. *Images related to the celestial realm.* The ninth plague provided the pre-climactic event in the whole series that culminated in the death of Egypt's firstborn. The three days of darkness (Exod 10:21–23; cf. Ps 105:28), as well as the darkness over the pursuing Egyptian forces (Exod 14:19–20), would prove to be a harbinger of other such times in Israel's history. For example, as the armies of Egypt pursued the fleeing Israelites, "The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side" (Exod 14:19–20).⁹

The poet's depiction of Joshua's later victory over the Amorites who fled after their loss at Gibeon appears to favor the idea that the shining of the sun and moon was veiled by the Lord's sending an unparalleled storm with hailstones that killed the greater part of the Amorite forces (Josh 10:9–15).¹⁰ Similarly, the poem recounting the victory of Deborah and Barak over a Canaanite army is described in terms of a mighty storm in which the heavens fought against Sisera and his troops (Judg 5:20–21).¹¹

Among the prophets, Habakkuk notes God's use of the storm and the apparent stoppage of the sun and moon in his recounting of the exodus story (Hab 3:9–11). If, as I have suggested elsewhere, Hab 3:3–15 does point to the preservation of Hebrew epic material commemorating the exodus, it may provide the exemplar for the poetic description in Josh 10:12–13.¹² In any case, Yahweh's use of celestial weaponry, whether in darkness or blackening storm, is well attested in the pre-exilic prophetic literature. Thus in announcing the doom of Babylon Isaiah predicts,

The stars of heaven and their constellations
will not show their light.

⁹ Unless otherwise noted, all Biblical citations are taken from the NIV.

¹⁰ Many other suggestions have, of course, been put forward. See R. G. Boling and G. E. Wright, *Joshua* (AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1982) 282–288; J. J. Davis, *Conquest and Crisis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1969) 66–70.

¹¹ See R. D. Patterson, "The Song of Deborah," in *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg* (eds. John S. and Paul D. Feinberg; Chicago: Moody, 1981) 138, 144–145. A poetic description of a storm that included hailstones is known from Ugarit. See P. C. Craigie, "Three Ugaritic Notes on the Song of Deborah," *JSOT* 2 (1977) 33–49. For other notices of God's utilization of the thunderstorm as a battle weapon in the exodus epic-tradition, see Pss 18:7–15[8–16]; 77:16–18[17–19]; 144:4–6.

¹² The archaic language of Hab 3:3–15 and other literary fragments commemorating the exodus event argue strongly for just such a possibility. See R. D. Patterson, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* 122–125, 267–272.

The rising sun will be darkened
and the moon will not give its light (Isa 13:10).

In a mood reminiscent of God's judgment during the time of the exodus event God warns Egypt,

When I snuff you out, I will cover the heavens
and darken their stars:
I will cover the sun with a cloud,
and the moon will not give its light.
All the shining lights in the heavens
I will darken over you;
I will bring darkness over your land,
declares the sovereign LORD (Ezek 32:7–8).

Similar phraseology is used by Isaiah of that coming day of the Lord against Babylon (Isa 13:9) and is a common refrain in the prophets concerning the coming judgment against God's people (e.g. Isa 5:30; Jer 13:16; Joel 2:10; Amos 5:18–20; 8:9–14).

As such it became readily available for use in the prophetic kingdom oracles. Looking beyond the immediate scene, the prophets foresaw a day of the Lord when God's people would be delivered from great danger at the hands of the surrounding nations and live in everlasting peace, felicity, and security in their own land. Thus Joel reports that in that great day of final decision the sun, moon, and stars would be darkened so as to shine no longer (Joel 3:15 [4:15]). Afterward, however, kingdom blessings would ensue with the Lord dwelling forever amongst his redeemed people (Joel 3:17–18, 20–21 [4:17–18, 20–21]).

2. *In the terrestrial world.* Although no specific mention of an earthquake is recorded in the historical account of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, such is known to have occurred as Israel encamped at Mount Sinai (Exod 19:16, 18). In addition, it is described in several epic pieces retelling the exodus event. Thus the Song of Deborah speaks of a great quake in connection with Israel's wilderness trek.

O LORD, when you went out from Seir,
when you marched from the land of Edom,
The earth shook, the heavens poured,
the clouds poured down water.
The mountains quaked before the LORD, the One of Sinai,
before the LORD, the God of Israel (Judg 5:4–5).¹³

Likewise, the psalmist sings of a quake in connection with the stoppage of the Jordan River that enabled Israel to cross over on dry ground and enter the promised land.

¹³ Similar language may also be found in Ps 68:7–8[8–9]. The exodus experience appears to be the force of the psalmist's poetic words in Ps 18:7–15[8–16] (cf. 2 Sam 22:8–16), who picturesquely applies the Lord's earlier deliverance of Israel to his own plight. Here again the motif of the Divine Warrior is evident.

The sea looked and fled,
 the Jordan turned back;
 The mountains skipped like rams,
 the hills like lambs.
 Why was it, O sea, that you fled,
 O Jordan, that you turned back,
 You mountains, that you skipped like rams,
 you hills, like lambs? (Ps 114:3–5).

An earthquake also appears to be the understanding of the prophet Habakkuk who reports that when God led his people from Teman, “He stood, and shook the earth; he looked, and made the nations tremble. The ancient mountains crumbled and the age-old hills collapsed” (Hab 3:6).

It is not surprising, then, that as one of God’s weapons an earthquake is featured in the prophetic oracles of judgment. Isaiah uses it in announcing the judgment of Babylon (Isa 13:13), as well as that of Israel and its oppressors (Isa 29:6). All of this provided an appropriate vehicle for prophecies dealing with end-time events in that day when “the LORD will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; the earth and the sky will tremble” (Joel 3:16 [4:16]).

Somewhat of an anomaly in events relative to the terrestrial world preserved in the records of the exodus event is the miraculous parting of the waters of the Red Sea. The record of Israel’s deliverance and the Egyptians’ defeat there obviously was of prime importance to the exodus account (Exod 14:21–31). It formed the theme of Moses’ later song concerning that occasion (Exod 15:1, 4, 8, 10, 19), as well as the contemporary report of that time (Exod 15:19).¹⁴

Such a wondrous event was naturally preserved in Israel’s memory (Deut 11:4) and in later historical accounts (Josh 4:23; 24:6–7) and Psalms (Pss 66:6[7]; 77:19[20]; 78:12–14; 106:7–12; 136:13–15). Yet it does not appear in the kingdom oracles. This is perhaps to be accounted for by the singularity and unrepeatable finality of this aspect of Israel’s redemptive experience. Although the theme of a second exodus may be found in this literature (e.g. Jer 23:3; Zeph 3:19–20), the return of a remnant from many nations may well be incompatible with a Red Sea crossing.¹⁵

¹⁴ For the suggestion that Moses’ song was later embedded into the historical account of the activities at the Red Sea and took its theme from Miriam’s song which was sung on that occasion, see my remarks in “The Song of Redemption,” *WTJ* 57 (1995) 53–61.

¹⁵ On the other hand, Yahweh’s victory over the sea is found not only in literature recounting the exodus event (e.g. Pss 18:5[6]; 114:3–6; Hab 3:15) but in texts dealing with his control over the elemental forces of nature (e.g. Isa 27:1; Nah 1:4). The sea also forms a setting for Daniel’s prophecy of the sequence of nations and Jeremiah uses it in his denunciation of Edom (Jer 49:21). For discussion, see J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 722. J. J. Collins suggests that ancient combat myths were transformed by the Hebrew psalmists to praise God’s triumph over the elemental forces of chaos. This was subsequently appropriated by the prophets for predictions of a future judgment that will eventuate in a drastic change in mankind’s total experience. Collins traces the emergence of such “proto-apocalyptic” in the late sixth and early fifth centuries BC (J. J. Collins, “From Prophecy to Apocalypticism: The Expectation of the End,” in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism* [Vol. 1; ed. J. J. Collins; New York: Continuum, 1999] 129–161).

3. *In the animal world.* The second through the eighth plagues against Egypt concerned the world of creatures. These plagues were remembered by subsequent generations (e.g. Ps 105:29–35; cf. Ps 78:45–48). One of these, the locusts, became a notable symbol of God's devastating judgment. Thus Amos points out that God had at times utilized locusts to devour Israel's fig and olive trees, but it had proved to be of no avail; for they refused to turn back to him in repentance (Amos 4:9–10). Likewise, Amos reports that in his day God had contemplated sending yet another locust attack to devour the first sprouting of the spring crop; such had been averted, however, because of Amos's intercession (Amos 7:1–3).

When a devastating locust swarm, so great as to be virtually unprecedented, swept across the land (Joel 1:2–12), the prophet Joel recognized it as the threatened judgment of God (Deut 28:38–42). For a still unrepentant people, who failed to recognize the spiritual barrenness of their hearts reflected in the land now devastated by the locusts, it could only mean one thing. Should genuine repentance not be forthcoming, a worse plague lay imminently on the horizon (Joel 2:1–11). Here, in a dramatic allegory, the prophet weaves together many strands drawn from the early exodus account. The coming day of the Lord would not only feature locust-like invading armies but their appearance would be heralded by a day when the celestial luminaries would no longer shine. For the Lord, the Divine Warrior will thunder before his great army in the darkened sky above a convulsing earth below. Joel 2:1–11 forms a textual mine for his own kingdom oracles that follow in 2:28–3:21 [3:1–4:21] as well as for Zephaniah's prophecies. Joel's perception of the day of the Lord, not only in its historical realization (Joel 1:15) but in its progressively unfolding culmination in the eschatological future, allows the theme of the day of the Lord itself to become a vehicle for the inclusion of many features taken from the exodus. This in turn promoted its use in the quasi-apocalyptic literature emerging in late OT times.¹⁶

4. *In the socio-political realm.* The first of the plagues against Egypt was the turning of the Nile to blood (Exod 6:19–21; 7:14–21). The blood-red appearance of the water due to reddish soil, as well as the flora and fungi that inhabit the water, was known to occur from time to time.¹⁷ Now, however, it took on a drastic dimension. For not only did the chemical change

¹⁶ G. B. Caird speaks of a prophetic technique in which events of the present were "seen as an anticipation and embodiment of the universal judgment to come" (*The Language and Imagery of the Bible* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980] 259–260). Illustrative of Caird's diction is the theme of the day of the Lord. Though often used by the prophets, its point of time reference was not always the same. The time envisioned could be present (Joel 1:15), the near future (Isa 13:6, 9; Ezek 13:5; 30:2, 5, 6; Joel 2:1, 11; Amos 5:18, 20; Obadiah 15) or purely eschatological (Jer 30:7, 8; Joel 3:14–15 [4:14–15]; Zechariah 14). In many cases the concept of the future is such that matters relative to judgment and Israel's deliverance are telescoped into one context, the specific details being adaptable to fulfillment anywhere along the prophetic spectrum (e.g. Joel 2:31 [3:4]; Zeph 1:14; Mal 3:1; 4:5 [3:23]; cf. Isa 61:2). The theme is primarily at home in the OT writing prophets, although it is taken up in varying fashion by the NT writers (e.g. 1 Cor 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14, 1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2; 2 Pet 3:10; cf. Matt 24:19–50; 2 Pet 3:12; 1 John 4:17; Rev 6:17).

¹⁷ Conservative commentators of all persuasions discount any literal turning of the water to blood. An interesting passage in *The Admonitions of Ipuwer*, a late middle kingdom Egyptian text,

kill the fish but the putrefaction of the water made it undrinkable. This first of the plagues declared the presence of the Divine Warrior, as well as his war against the gods and institutions of Egypt.

The plague was rehearsed by the later psalmists (Pss 78:44; 105:29; 114:3), and the prophets made clear allusions to it and the whole plague series (e.g. Ezek 5:17; 28:23). Blood and bloodshed became part of prophetic judgment oracles symbolizing the violence and terror of warfare.¹⁸ As such it became readily available for those judgment oracles that form a crucial part of the kingdom oracles. Indeed, the horror of warfare was viewed as that out of which would come a purified people upon whom God could shed his end-time blessings. Thus Joel speaks of the coming day of "blood and fire and billows of smoke" (Joel 2:30 [3:3]) to emphasize the human carnage and gutted cities that would result from God's hand of judgment. Joel also reports that the moon will be turned to blood, the bloody moon doubtless signifying the presence of God in awesome judicial power (Joel 2:31 [3:4]).¹⁹

As in the time of the exodus (Exod 15:7; cf. Hab 3:8, 12), the judgment oracles often carry a note concerning God's anger against sinful people. In the oracle against Babylon noted above (Isa 13:9–10), Isaiah asserts that in the coming day of the Lord the Babylonians will find it to be "a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it." Micah proclaims that God "will take vengeance in anger and wrath upon the nations that have not obeyed me" (Mic 5:15). In a great kingdom oracle, Jeremiah looks forward to a future day when Jerusalemites who had felt the anger and wrath of God (Jer 33:5; 42:18; cf. Dan 9:16) for their idolatrous ways (cf. Deut 11:16–17; 29:22–29) will be brought back to live again in their land in safety (Jer 32:37). Thus this familiar image of God's anger against sinful nations, which was so evident in the time of the exodus and became part and parcel of God's covenant with Israel, finds familiar expression in the prophetic oracles and in the eschatological kingdom oracles.

To be noted also in connection with God's person is the image of fire. Not only did the Lord descend upon Mount Sinai in fire (Exod 19:18; Deut 5:23–24), but he guided the Israelites by night in a pillar of fire (Exod 13:22; 40:38). In a fragment drawn from the exodus epic the psalmist portrays God's presence with consuming fire coming from his mouth (Ps 18:8[9]; cf. 2 Sam 22:9). Because the image of fire often symbolizes God in his judicial action (e.g. Ps 50:3–4), it follows that fire would readily appear in the prophetic judgment oracles (e.g. Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14; 2:2, 5; Nah 1:6; 3:15) and in the judgment aspect of kingdom oracles (e.g. Joel 2:31 [3:4]; cf. Mal 4:1).

reports: "Lo, the river is blood, as one drinks of it one shrinks from people and thirsts for water." See M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings* (3 vols.; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973) I:151. The symbolism of blood, though with differing force, is of crucial importance to other Biblical passages, especially those in a redemptive context.

¹⁸ See P. Tribilco, "Dām," in the *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (ed. W. A. VanGemeren et al.; 5 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997) I:963–966.

¹⁹ The blood-red appearance may describe the effects of an eclipse or dust thrown in the air due to an earthquake. For details, see my remarks in "Joel" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (ed. F. Gaebelin et al.; 12 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985) VII:256. For similar cosmic portents in connection with the death of Julius Caesar, see Ovid, *Metamorphosis* XV:790.

In contrast with these largely negative images contained in Israel's exodus experience, God sounds a positive note. Out of the awesome and spectacular events that took place at that time God would provide a new home for his people (Exod 3:8; 6:8; 12:25). That promise and hope, which was often held out to the people along the way (e.g. Lev 23:10; Num 14:8; Deut 11:8–12; 28:1–14), became realized at the time of the conquest (cf. Josh 1:11 with Josh 21:43–45). Accordingly, the land became a paradigm of hope for the prophets. For they saw that after the Lord's chastening judgment he would restore his people to their land, bless them abundantly, and bring in everlasting peace and felicity.²⁰

Thus Isaiah proclaims God's ultimate intention for Israel: "Instead of their shame my people will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace they will rejoice in their inheritance; and so they will inherit a double portion in their land, and everlasting joy will be theirs" (Isa 61:7; cf. Isa 60:21; 62:4). Isaiah likewise foretells God's promise of restoration to the land (31:17) where all of the promised blessings of God will be theirs (33:10–14).

While similar promises may be found in various prophecies (e.g. Mic 4:1–8), they become tightly entwined in the kingdom oracles. Blended together as one with oracles of judgment, the resultant extended revelation declares God's purpose all along the way was not only to chasten his people by driving them from their land but ultimately to restore them to it. Once at home in the land, God's redeemed and renewed people will live there in perpetuity and know the blessings of everlasting security. Then they will be able to live faithful and productive lives. The fruitfulness of the land in that day will be symbolic of the surety and felicity of their existence with God (e.g. Isa 65; Jer 30; Joel 2:28–3:21 [3:1–4:21]).

In one of the loveliest of the kingdom oracles, Ezekiel portrays God's leading and blessing of his people as that of a good shepherd caring for his flock (Ezek 34:12–15). The Israel that must be judged (34:1–10) will ultimately know the peace, joy, and security which only the Shepherd can give (34:11–16, 25–31).²¹ Through all of this the image of the land stands as crucially important: the purpose which Israel's Redeemer had originally planned for them but which idolatrous Israel had forfeited will ultimately be realized by a regenerated people living upon a refreshed land forever (Ezek 36:24–31; 37:21–28).²²

In sum, it may be said fairly that all of the above imagery or themes connected with the exodus event became an integral part of the prophets' rep-

²⁰ For a study of the prophetic salvation oracles, see C. Westermann, *Prophetic Oracles of Salvation* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991). As VanGemeren remarks, "The oracles of salvation announce a new era in which the eschatological salvation breaks through into human alienation" (W. A. VanGemeren, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990] 79).

²¹ For the significance of Ezekiel 34 to OT theology, see E. Martens, *God's Design* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 193–196.

²² For the importance of the theme of the land to OT studies, see W. C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978); idem, "The Promised Land: A Biblical-Historical View," *BSac* 138 (1981) 302–312.

ertoire. Their utilization in the eschatological oracles of judgment and salvation, particularly as brought together in the kingdom oracles, made them prime material for the emerging apocalyptic of the later OT era.

II. EXODUS IMAGERY PRESERVED IN OLD TESTAMENT APOCALYPTIC

The above imagery associated with the exodus event assumed a new dimension as the prophetic writings took on an apocalyptic tone. Whereas other prophetic oracles dealing with the end times, including kingdom oracles, considered Israel's fate relative to its being in the midst of other nations (cf. Joel 2:28–3:21 [3:1–4:21]; Amos 9), the apocalyptic spirit widened to view Israel *and* the nations. Indeed, the perspective of apocalyptic assumed a more universal and terminal outlook (e.g. Isa 60:19–20; Dan 7:18, 23–27). It is not surprising, then, that the above imagery associated with the exodus and preserved by the prophets would become more intense and picturesque. New features would, of course, also be added.

1. *In passages deemed apocalyptic by some.* Prominent texts often put forward as apocalyptic include Isaiah 24–27; 60–66; Ezekiel 38–48; Zeph 1:14–18; and Zechariah 14. Features common to later apocalyptic can be found in each of these passages. Nevertheless, none of them would appear to qualify as apocalyptic in the strictest sense. Each can certainly be considered to be a kingdom oracle with heightened imagery. It is that imagery which arrests our attention here.

For within these texts one may also find the imagery traditionally associated with the exodus event. Thus in the celestial realm Isaiah predicts that in that day when the Lord punishes the earth, “The moon will be abashed, the sun ashamed” (Isa 24:23). Because the Lord himself will dwell among a redeemed people, his glorious presence will eclipse the shining of the celestial luminaries:

The sun will no more be your light by day,
nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you,
For the LORD will be your everlasting light,
and your God will be your glory.
Your sun will never set again,
and your moon will wane no more;
The LORD will be your everlasting light,
and your days of sorrow will end (Isa 60:19–20).

In the terrestrial realm, Isaiah speaks of a cataclysmic earthquake that will so convulse the earth that it will be totally devastated (Isa 24:1–3, 19–20). In the socio-political sphere, the imagery of bloody warfare is also carried forward. Isaiah prophesies the intrusion of God into the affairs of men. It will be a time of his wrath, for when the Lord comes to punish the sinful people of the earth, “the earth will disclose the blood shed upon her; she will conceal her slain no longer” (Isa 26:21). At that time God's enemies will know the fire of his punishment (Isa 26:11).

Ezekiel prophesies that in those end-time days a vicious invader named Gog will bring a vast invasion force against Israel but will be met by the fiery wrath of God (Ezek 39:6). In that day there will be a great earthquake which will convulse the land of Israel and the face of the entire earth causing great devastation and terror to all. Thus God will “execute judgment upon him with plague and bloodshed” (Ezek 38:22). So great will be the loss of life, that the birds and animals of prey will gorge themselves on flesh and blood until they are thoroughly satiated (Ezek 39:17–20). It will take seven months to bury the fallen bodies that remain (Ezek 39:12–14).

Much of this imagery is found in Zeph 1:14–18. Building on details found in Joel 2:1–2, 11, Zephaniah prophesies that the great day of the Lord will be one of darkness and gloom, clouds and blackness, and of terrible warfare resulting in “blood being poured out like dust” (Zeph 1:17). It is a day of earth’s climactic end when “in the fire of his jealousy the whole world will be consumed, for he will make a sudden end of all who live in the earth” (Zeph 1:18b).²³

Nor are the salvation oracles that formed the second, more positive aspect of the kingdom oracles absent in these prophets. Isaiah pictures the land now cleansed of invaders as one of lush productivity. Even death itself will not only be swallowed up forever (Isa 25:6–7) but Israel’s dead will live again (Isa 26:19). God’s people will then rejoice in his salvation (Isa 25:9), Israel’s former disgrace will be taken away (Isa 25:8), and the people of the world will learn of God’s righteousness (Isa 26:9). Moreover, “All mankind will come and bow down before me, says the LORD” (Isa 66:23; cf. Zech 14:16).

The eternal bliss of God’s people is related at length in Isaiah 60–66. For example, Isaiah declares that God’s people and land, once called “deserted” by the nations, will take on new names: “But you will be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the LORD will take delight in you, and your land will be married” (Isa 62:4). God’s people will again live in the land of promise and enjoy its great fertility (Isa 65:9–10). And not only that, but God will create a new heavens and earth, and establish a Jerusalem over which he himself will rejoice (Isa 65:17–23; cf. 66:12–13). All nature will be transformed (Isa 65:25), and so sweet and intimate will the fellowship of God and his people be that “before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear” (Isa 65:24).²⁴

Ezekiel 38–39 also ends on a positive note. For it finishes with God’s promise that he will return his people to their land and pour out his spirit upon them (Ezek 39:25–29; cf. Joel 2:28–29 [3:1–2]). Many contend that Ezekiel 40–48 should be considered apocalyptic. Certainly in keeping with

²³ For a defense of Zephaniah’s dependence upon Joel, see my remarks in *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* 321. If such is the case, Zephaniah’s prophecy constitutes a new *traditum* transformed by exegetical *traditio* from the earlier *traditum* in Joel. A similar *traditio* is noted by Fishbane in the case of Ezekiel’s use of Zephaniah (cf. Ezek 22:25–28 with Zeph 3:3–4). See M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985) 461–463.

²⁴ The familiar call-answer motif often speaks of intimacy of fellowship (e.g. Job 14:14–15; Pss 17:6–15; 91:14–16; Isa 65:14). Similarly, in one of Jeremiah’s kingdom oracles the people of Jerusalem are said to reflect the coming Messiah’s character so greatly that the city itself will be called by the same name attributed to him: “The LORD Our Righteousness” (Jer 33:16; cf. 23:6).

a common image in apocalyptic the revelation in these chapters is mediated through a heavenly being (Ezek 40:3–4), and Ezekiel is taken on a visionary journey in which he tours the new Jerusalem. The section ends on the high note of Israel's worship experience in the end times.²⁵

The salvation oracle may also be found in the further prophecies of Zephaniah. Having announced the frightful day of the Lord (1:14–18) with implications for the near future with respect to the surrounding nations (2:4–15) and Jerusalem (3:1–7), Zephaniah exhorts his people to wait on the Lord as their only source of help and hope (3:8). Thereafter he provides a two-part salvation oracle in which he first promises Israel's restoration as a holy people to their land (3:9–13). In the second part (3:14–20) he pictures Israel's rejoicing over their renewed good fortune. Surely their great hope lay in God himself, for "The LORD, the King of Israel is with you; never again will you fear any harm" (v. 15).

In all of the above instances the case for considering the texts as apocalyptic is that they express a greater degree of universality, finality, and figurative excess than standard kingdom oracles. Nevertheless, one hesitates to term them anything other than texts that bear some features and images of later apocalyptic. They are probably best viewed as kingdom oracles that contain features of an emerging or quasi-apocalyptic genre.

2. *In Daniel 7–12.* The most commonly accepted pericope considered as apocalyptic is Daniel 7–12.²⁶ Here indeed the tone takes on an aura of the mysterious. No longer does one see simply the standard messages of judgment and hope that characterize the kingdom oracles. Rather, the prophetic word is portrayed in a kaleidoscope of symbolic features and fantastic images. For example, the future of the whole world is presented either as a series of four epics, the character of which is depicted by various strange beasts, or seventy periods of sevens culminating in the defeat of an evil world spearheaded by a wicked anti-god ruler (Dan 9:24–27).²⁷

While periodicity is known outside of apocalyptic texts, the setting is vastly different in Daniel 7. For example, in Daniel 2 the dream concerning

²⁵ See, for example, L. Cooper, *Ezekiel* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994) 352–353. Daniel Block categorically denies any apocalyptic or even eschatological interpretation in these chapters, although admitting that there are futuristic and stylized elements here. He himself prefers to consider them a vision report. See D. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 494–509. See also J. J. Collins, *Daniel With An Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) 78–80; H. Parunak, "The Literary Structure of Ezekiel's MAR'OT 'ELOHIM," *JBL* 99 (1980) 69–73. For the other-worldly journey as a second major type of apocalyptic beside the historical apocalypse, see Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination* 4–8.

²⁶ Thus J. J. Collins remarks, "The BOOK OF DANIEL contains the only full-blown example of apocalyptic literature in the Hebrew Bible" (*Apocalyptic Imagination* 68). Many scholars resist labeling Daniel 7–12 as apocalyptic. See, for example, E. Heaton, *Daniel* (TBC; London: SCM, 1967) 34–35; P. R. Davies, "Eschatology in the Book of Daniel," *JSOT* 17 (1980) 37–38. For the significance of Daniel 7, see R. D. Patterson, "The Key Role of Daniel 7," *Grace Theological Journal* 12 (1991) 245–261.

²⁷ The symbolism of seventy is widespread, being attested not only often in the Scriptures (e.g. Exod 1:5; Lev 25:9–12; Deut 10:22; Ps 90:10; Isa 23:15–17; Jer 25:11–12; 29:10) but in Jewish apocryphal, pseudepigraphical, and Qumranic literature (e.g. 1 Enoch 10:12; 89–90; 91:1–17; 93:1–10;

four kingdom eras, represented by the various parts of the colossal image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, is easily interpreted by Daniel. For God himself answers Daniel's prayer in a night vision. In Daniel 7, however, the prophet remains perplexed until an angelic interpreter arrives with the needed interpretation. The literary genre of the two chapters is different as well. Chapter two is clearly a court tale, whereas chapter seven is a symbolic dream vision.²⁸

Not only the feature of periodicity but the numeric symbolism assumes increased importance in Daniel, with numbers such as four, seven, ten, and seventy being particularly important. New, too, are the distinctively cosmic setting in these chapters (e.g. 7:9–10; 8:13–14; 10:13–11:1; 12:1) and the extensive emphasis upon heavenly beings who serve as interpreters for Daniel (e.g. 7:15, 27; 8:15–26; 9:20–27; 10:4–12:13). Especially noteworthy is the material recorded in Daniel's vision in chapter seven. There we are informed of the presence of God, the Ancient of Days (vv. 9–10), and the coming of a messianic figure described as one "like a son of man." To this one is given an everlasting kingdom and authority over all nations and people (vv. 13–14).²⁹

Much of the imagery noted above that flowed down from the exodus accounts into the prophetic repertoire and reached its apex in the kingdom oracles is strangely absent from Daniel. Rather than spectacular changes in the heavenly sphere, we learn of One who comes on the clouds (7:13) and of believers who will "shine like the brightness of the heavens" (12:3). Instead of terrible earthquakes or swarms of locusts devastating the landscape, we are introduced to ferocious beasts. These, however, merely symbolically represent the character of succeeding nations/epochs. Although warfare that comes to an ultimate climax takes place, no report of bloodshed is forthcoming.

What remains as a constant thematic feature is God's sovereign control over the affairs of nations. The Divine Warrior will realize his teleological purposes through the final defeat of his enemies and those of his people. It will be a time of great wrath (11:36) in which godlessness will be subdued and righteousness will triumph (7:26–27; 9:24–27; 11:36–12:3). Then the final judgment will take place in which resurrected saints and sinners alike

T. Levi 16:1; 17:1–18:2; 4Q180, 1,9; Jubilees, *The Manual of Discipline*, and *The War Scroll*). See further J. Goldingay, *Daniel* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1989) 232–233. For the widespread attestation of a sequence of four empires, both in Jewish and non-Jewish sources, see W. Baumgartner, "Zu den vier Reichen von Daniel 2," *TZ* 85 (1960) 17–22; D. Flusser, "The Four Empires in the Fourth Sibyl and in the Book of Daniel," *IOS* 2 (1972) 148–175; M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1969) 335–336; and J. W. Swain, "The Theory of Four Monarchies, Opposition History Under the Roman Empire," *Classical Philology* 35 (1940) 1–21.

²⁸ See further R. D. Patterson, "Holding on to Daniel's Court Tales," *JETS* 36 (1993) 445–454.

²⁹ The messianic interpretation is vigorously denied by J. J. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination* 82–83. His suggestion that an angel will be installed as an everlasting world ruler, however, seems forced at best. For a defense of the traditional messianic view, see G. Beasley-Murray, "The Interpretation of Daniel 7," *CBQ* 45 (1983) 44–58; S. R. Miller, *Daniel* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994) 206–210; G. VanGronigen, *Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990) 810–818.

are assigned their final destiny in everlasting life or contempt (12:2–3; cf. Matt 13:43).³⁰

Thus a distinct difference can be seen between the imagery in Daniel's apocalyptic material and that of the preceding eschatological prophecies. Yet one cannot simply maintain that apocalyptic genre therefore belongs to a later time when imagery like that found in Daniel would be more prevalent.³¹

Particularly telling are the imagery and themes found already in Zechariah, a prophetic writing from the fifth century BC. For example, as did Daniel (7–12) so Zechariah sees a series of spectacular visions which can only be answered by heavenly beings (Zechariah 1–6). In this regard both Daniel and Zechariah anticipate standard features of the full-blown apocalyptic literature of a later period. If fifth-century Zechariah evidences themes and imagery of the later apocalyptic genre, Daniel cannot be arbitrarily assigned to a later date.

Moreover, Zechariah's fourteenth chapter not only gathers up many of the features found in various earlier prophets but introduces new elements as well. In that chapter one encounters several features that show the author's flare for the fantastic. Thus an unusual happening will occur in the sky. For it will be a day not marked by daytime or night (vv. 6–7). On earth a cataclysmic earthquake will take place, splitting the Mount of Olives in half so as to form a vast valley (v. 4). Like the other prophets, Zechariah foresees a climactic battle with the enemy forces of all nations attacking Jerusalem. Like Ezekiel and Daniel, Zechariah predicts the defeat of those armies, but here the enemy is defeated by the intervention of God with his heavenly host (vv. 3–5).

After the defeat of the enemy, changed conditions will occur both physically and socially. For fresh water will flow out from Jerusalem to seas on the west and east, and God himself will reign as king over the earth (vv. 8–9). It will be a scene of eternal holiness with all nations coming to worship God in Jerusalem; everyone and everything will reflect the innate holiness of God (vv. 16, 20–21). In harmony with all of the earlier prophecies deemed apocalyptic, Zechariah's perspective is universal and final.³²

Thus Zechariah's perspective illustrates well the imagery and themes common to the kingdom oracles of standard prophetic eschatology and an emerging apocalyptic tone. As such it reinforces Oswalt's contention that "the apocalyptic understanding did not replace the prophetic one but rather existed beside it, enriching and expanding it, but never supplanting it."³³

³⁰ J. Baldwin observes that wise believers in every age should give "especially thoughtful attention to the word of God, for this wisdom is the wisdom of God. . . . Those who lead others to righteousness, then, are those who demonstrate their faith and encourage others to faith, and this the humblest believer can do" (*Daniel* [TOTC; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1978] 205, 206).

³¹ Arguments for the date of Daniel are not the focus of this paper. I have defended the sixth-century date of Daniel elsewhere, and it is assumed in the discussion here. See my remarks in "Court Tales" 445–454 and "Key Role" 245–261.

³² See further E. Merrill, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (Chicago: Moody, 1994) 348–350, 353–354.

³³ J. N. Oswalt, "Recent Studies in Old Testament Apocalyptic," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies* (ed. D. W. Baker and B. T. Arnold; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999) 389–390.

The later intertestamental and NT apocalyptic literature also has many affinities of imagery and themes not only with Daniel but with standard eschatological prophecy, including the kingdom oracles. Thus when God's wrath will be poured out upon a sinful world, the luminaries will be darkened, earthquakes with their accompanying terror will take place, and there will be widespread war with its attendant horrors of blood, fire, and great destruction (see e.g. Apocalypse of Zephaniah 12:1–8; Apocalypse of Elijah 5:7; 2 Baruch 27:8; 1 Enoch 1:3–9; 90:18–19; 100:2–3; 102:1–2; Matt 24:15–31; Mark 13:14–27; Luke 21:20–27; Revelation 6, 8–9; 11:15–19; 14:14–20; 16:1–19:21).

Accordingly, the omission of much of the earlier prophetic imagery, as well as the presence of many new images in Daniel, is not to be explained primarily on the basis of conditions that supposedly post-date the OT era by several centuries. The origin of Daniel's apocalyptic imagery is better sought in the author's need to provide God's revelation in a manner that would meet the needs of the contemporary social and cultural contexts in which he ministered. Since the setting of Daniel 7–12 is Babylon in the time of the closing years of the Neo-Babylonian era and the onset of the Persian empire, this would seem to provide the logical context to begin such a search.

Important for our purposes is the fact that many of the distinctive features of Daniel's apocalyptic are known in Mesopotamian sources dated over many centuries. Thus the feature of periodicity is attested in Assyrian texts dated to the seventh century BC and the Uruk Prophecy from the sixth century BC.³⁴ Goldingay asserts that "by c. 300, this historical outline has become a formal scheme of four empires, Assyria, Media or Babylon, Persia, and Greece, to which Rome is later added."³⁵ The features of animals representing kings or kingdoms, so prominent in Daniel seven and eight, and a god setting on a throne and acting in judgment, are now attested in the seventh century BC piece known as "The Vision of the Netherworld."³⁶

In an insightful dissertation presented to the University of Uppsala, Paul Porter finds interesting parallels between the imagery of the beasts in Daniel seven and eight in the ancient *summa izbu* ("if an anomaly") texts. Here "anomalous human and animal births and their bearing on future affairs of both individuals and states are delineated."³⁷ Some of these are

³⁴ See further J. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989) 218–220; J. Baldwin, "Some Literary Affinities of the Book of Daniel," *TB* (1979) 77–99; W. Beyerlin, *Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978) 118–122.

³⁵ J. Goldingay, *Daniel* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1989) 41.

³⁶ For English text, see ANET 109–110. For discussion of its relation to Daniel, see H. S. Kvanig, *Roots of Apocalyptic: The Mesopotamian Background of the Enoch Figure and of the Son of Man* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1988) 389–441. J. J. Collins wisely cautions against too ready an association of parallels between the Netherworld text and Daniel, pointing out the possibility of various sources as precedents on which Daniel could have drawn. He suggests, "A more plausible background is found in biblical prophecy (i.e., Hosea 13:7–8)" (*Daniel in Hermeneia* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993] 295). Collins is inclined to assign the animal tradition to ancient Canaanite origins as adjusted to Israelite needs.

³⁷ P. Porter, *Metaphors and Monsters* (Toronto: privately distributed, 1985) 16.

attested from as early as the middle Assyrian period and flowed down through the first millennium BC. Although Daniel need not necessarily have borrowed the concept of animals = kings from these texts, Daniel's use of them would be well understood by his audience.

Assuredly it cannot be demonstrated that Daniel directly borrowed any of the imagery found in these Mesopotamian sources. Nevertheless, the point is that one does not have to look further afield to explain Daniel's choice of imagery. Nor does one need to assign any late first-millennium BC date to Daniel on the basis of observed differences between his imagery and that of the kingdom oracles. It is sufficient to suggest that such imagery was readily available and understandable in the social context in which Daniel served and that he modified it in accordance with his own theological and ethical purposes.³⁸ Indeed, critics who admit the striking resemblance of some of Daniel's imagery to that in Mesopotamian texts may find their case for a late date for Daniel considerably weakened. "This resemblance proves to be a considerable embarrassment to those who accept a second-century date for the writing of Daniel. How did a Jewish author in Palestine at that time become so fully acquainted with Babylonian texts?"³⁹

III. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

1. *Summary.* Our study has demonstrated that a strong case can be made for the origin of Hebrew apocalyptic in its own prophetic literature, particularly the kingdom oracles. In some cases it was part of an inner development that transpired over many centuries. Evidence for this can be seen in the transmission and adaptation of imagery drawn from the exodus event.⁴⁰

Thus the Divine Warrior who brought the plague of darkness upon Egypt is he whose day of judgment is accompanied by darkness (Amos 5:18). Such is dramatically presented in Joel's prophecy (Joel 3:15-16 [4:15-16]) and in the emerging literature of apocalyptic (Isa 24:23). The God whose presence in the exodus event set the earth to trembling (Ps 114:3-5) and who employs it in judging the nations (Isa 13:13) will do so again in the future (Joel 3:16 [4:16]), bringing devastation to the whole earth (Isa 24:13). The God who called on the world of creatures to plague Egypt has done so at various times in Israel's history, as noted by poet and prophet alike (e.g.

³⁸ J. Baldwin remarks, "It is becoming an accepted fact that the date of Daniel cannot be decided on linguistic grounds, and that the increasing evidence does not favour a second-century, western origin" (*Daniel* 34-35).

³⁹ Baldwin, "Literary Affinities" 97.

⁴⁰ The rationale for the use and development of such imagery probably is attributable not only to the foundational nature of the exodus to Israel's redemptive experience but its ongoing perpetuation as a distinctive motif. Thus E. Speiser points out that "the remembrance of the Egyptian experience becomes the other dominant note in all biblical history, a note that is echoed through all the portions of the Scriptures and made into a recurrent refrain together with the covenant between God and Abraham" (E. Speiser, "The Biblical Idea of History in its Common Near Eastern Setting," in *Oriental and Biblical Studies* [ed. J. J. Finkelstein and M. Greenberg; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1967] 202). See further the discussion below and the remarks in notes 42 and 43.

Ps 78:45–48; Joel 1:2–12; Amos 4:9–10), and can do so again (Amos 7:1–3). Likewise, God's victory over Egypt in the exodus event and the liberation of his people was but a harbinger of the defeat of the enemy, not only in Israel's subsequent history (Isa 13:9–10; Mic 5:15) but in the eschaton (Isa 26:11; Ezekiel 38–39).

Although Daniel largely tends to neglect much of this imagery, preferring to employ images, themes, and features more familiar to his contemporaries, these traditional images were by no means dropped from the prophetic vocabulary. For they formed a ready place in the literature of the intertestamental and NT eras. Rather, it seems apparent that God impressed Daniel to do what all those who convey his revelation must of necessity do. For in accordance with the need to communicate meaningfully in the cultural/social context one finds oneself, imagery must be adapted appropriately.

Traditional imagery and thematic elements were perpetuated not only in the judgment oracles but also in the salvation oracles. Yahweh is declared to be both the Divine Warrior and the Divine Redeemer. The God who delivered his people out of Egypt and brought them to the promised land will care for his scattered people once more. He will regather them and bring them to their land. There they will again know his abundant blessings (Ezekiel 34). Such is graphically portrayed in many passages associated with an emerging apocalyptic tone (e.g. Isa 62:4–5; Zeph 3:14–20). In similar fashion Grace Edwards writes,

Through references to the Exodus in these materials, through repetition of phrases used in conjunction with references to the Exodus, and through Exodus theology reflected in conceptions of Yahweh, it is clear that the ancient myth of deliverance was the determining fraction in the resultant Israelite faith in an active, redeeming, self-revealing deity.⁴¹

Although we noted new imagery in the case of Daniel 7–12, the basic presentation of God as Divine Warrior and Redeemer permeates the whole section. Some of the features of the exodus even find new applications, such as attention to the sea and to the One who comes in the clouds.⁴²

The unifying factor in all of this is the sovereign God himself. He who has been Israel's Divine Warrior and Redeemer since the nation's birth is ever active in the affairs of his people. It is he who will bring his teleological purposes to their intended consummation. In that day all wickedness will

⁴¹ Grace Edwards, "The Exodus and Apocalyptic," in *A Stubborn Faith* (ed. E. C. Hobbs; Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1956) 37. Edwards makes the case that the exodus theme provided the catalyst that allowed prophecy to develop into apocalyptic. This took place amid theological developments during the transitional era of the sixth century BC. Particularly representative of this development is the well-known Psalm of Habakkuk.

⁴² As noted above, the sea was a traditional image of chaos in the Semitic world (cf. Job 7:12; Ps 74:12–14; Isa 27:11; Jer 51:22). For its relevance to Daniel, see J. J. Collins, "Apocalyptic Genre and Mythic Allusions in Daniel," *JSOT* 21 (1981) 83–100. The imagery of one riding on the clouds was quite at home in northwestern Semitic, being attested not only of Baal in the Ugaritic texts but of Yahweh in the OT (e.g. Ps 68:4[5]); Isa 19:1; Nah 1:3). See further, *ANET* 134 and my remarks in *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* 33–34.

be quenched, and God's righteous people will enjoy the benefits attendant to God's glorious presence.

That the imagery associated with the exodus would have a prominent place in the later OT oracles should come as no great surprise. Indeed, the hope of deliverance common to God's people has its foundation in the redemptive work of the sovereign and omnipotent God who redeemed his people out of Egypt. Thus M. Erickson points out that "the one great event of the Old Testament, the one act of God, is the exodus. . . . The postexodus accounts are to be understood as their interpretation of subsequent events through the perspective of the faith they had gained in the exodus."⁴³

Appearing ubiquitously in the pentateuchal narratives of Exodus through Deuteronomy, the motif of the exodus deliverance is taken up subsequently in every historic period and type of literary genre, whether the historical books (e.g. Josh 24:5–16; 1 Sam 12:6–8; 1 Kgs 8:16), the writings (e.g. Pss 78:12–16, 42–55; 81:5, 10; 105:23–45) or the prophets (e.g. Isa 63:11–14; Jer 23:7; 32:17–23; Ezek 20:5–12; Dan 9:15; Hos 11:1–4; Mic 6:4–5; etc.). Accordingly, M. Fishbane appropriately observes that the motif of the exodus "recurs in texts of each generation."⁴⁴ It would be strange indeed if the images of the exodus were not an integral thread in the fabric of the eschatological oracles.

2. *Conclusions.* Based upon the evidence presented above, no need exists to posit the origin of Hebrew apocalyptic in literature external to its tradition.⁴⁵ This is not to say that Biblical writers did not adapt themes, imagery, or features drawn from other cultures, particularly those who ministered God's message in a foreign context, such as the case of Daniel in Babylon. Nevertheless, P. D. Hanson wisely cautions:

⁴³ M. J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987) 108, 109. Similarly, G. Vos develops the thought that the principles inherent in the exodus deliverance were "made regulative of all future salvation and bind things past and things to come indissolubly together" (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948] 125). See Vos's extended treatment of the subject on pp. 124–137. See also "Exodus, Second Exodus," in *Biblical Imagery* 253–255.

⁴⁴ M. Fishbane, *Text and Texture* (New York: Schocken, 1979) 121. Fishbane devotes an entire chapter to the exodus motif. It is only natural, then, that the exodus is drawn upon for use in the NT. Thus F. F. Bruce points out the importance of the exodus motif to the teachings of Jesus and the apostles. "Jesus' contemporaries freely identified Him as a second Moses—the expectation of a second Moses played an important part in popular eschatology at the time—with the expectation of a second Moses went very naturally the expectation of a second Exodus" (F. F. Bruce, *New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973] 49). Similarly, W. VanGemeren speaks of a third exodus: "Just as the restoration from exile was like a second Exodus, so the coming of Christ is like a third Exodus because he has come to lead sinners—Jews and Gentiles—into the full experience of salvation" (W. A. VanGemeren, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990] 276).

⁴⁵ As noted above, the sea was a traditional image of chaos in the Semitic world (cf. Job 7:12; Ps 74:12–14; Isa 27:11; Jer 51:22). For its relevance to Daniel, see J. J. Collins, "Apocalyptic Genre and Mythic Allusions in Daniel," *JSOT* 21 (1981) 83–100. The imagery of one riding on the clouds was quite at home in northwestern Semitic, being attested not only of Baal in the Ugaritic texts but of Yahweh in the OT (e.g. Ps 68:4[5]; Isa 19:1; Nah 1:3). See further *ANET* 134 and my remarks in *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* 33–34.

Scholars must exercise extreme caution not to invent instances of influence or borrowing or even to overemphasize them. Such caution will best be maintained if each apocalyptic writing of each apocalyptic movement is understood within its broadest diachronic and synchronic context.⁴⁶

Nor is it necessary to hold to a late date for Biblical passages displaying apocalyptic imagery and themes. This is true even of Daniel 7–12.⁴⁷

Likewise, the presence in OT prophecy of imagery that emerged with increased intensity and universality in apocalyptic need not be attributed to any wholesale incorporation of imagery drawn from earlier Canaanite precursors. The vast differences between Israelite and Canaanite cultures as well as religious outlook precludes any such suggestion. Again, this is not to say that certain features were not occasionally adapted by Hebrew prophets in accordance with the constraints of the context in which they ministered.

It is sufficient to note that major images and themes found in eschatological prophecies have already appeared in texts detailing the formation of the Israelite nation. Such were not only utilized in literature recording the exodus event but drawn upon subsequently by Israel's historians, storytellers, and poets. They, in turn, preserved and transmitted them to the writing prophets. There they became part of standard portrayals of end-time events. Once used in this fashion, they were readily available for incorporation into the emerging apocalyptic of later OT times.⁴⁸ Not only the persistence of some imagery across the centuries but the fact that the Biblical writers utilized current images and themes (e.g. the day of the Lord) or even introduced meaningful images (e.g. the Ancient of Days, Dan 7:9, 13, 22) makes the conclusion that apocalyptic was an inner Hebrew development virtually inescapable.

This conclusion largely compliments the findings of others who have suggested that Hebrew apocalyptic grew out of OT prophecy. Thus J. C. VanderKam observes that "the Hebrew Bible supplies the foundation for later Jewish apocalyptic writing and thinking. . . . In general the sequence in prophetic eschatology of decisive judgment followed by extraordinary renewal for a purged remnant is reflected in even stronger form in the apocalypses."⁴⁹

⁴⁶ P. D. Hanson, "Apocalyptic Literature" 480.

⁴⁷ J. Baldwin cites the opinion of F. M. Cross that the sixth century BC becomes a focal point for the type of apocalyptic found in Daniel: "I think that it is accurate to say that it is in this late exilic and early post-exilic literature that we detect the rudimentary traits and motives of apocalypticism" (*Daniel* 53 citing F. M. Cross, "New Directions in the Study of Apocalyptic," *JTC* 6 [1969] 161).

⁴⁸ As noted above, the underlying theological perspective in all of this centers in the sovereign God, Israel's Divine Warrior and Redeemer. For the motif of the Divine Warrior, see F. M. Cross, "The Divine Warrior in Israel's Early Cult," in *Biblical Motifs* (ed. A. Altman; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966) 1–10; T. Longman, III, "Psalm 98: A Divine Warrior Victory Song," *JETS* 27 (1984) 267–274; and T. Longman, III and D. G. Reid, *God is a Warrior* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

⁴⁹ J. C. VanderKam, "Messianism and Apocalypticism," in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism* (Vol. 1; ed. J. J. Collins, New York: Continuum, 1999) 196, 197. Among earlier writers one may also note R. H. Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (2 vols.; London, 1913); H. H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic* (Greenwood, S.C.: Attic reprint, 1980); D. S. Russell,

One note of caution, however, must be sounded. As mentioned above, the emerging apocalyptic tone in the later pre-exilic period did not replace nor render obsolete OT prophetic eschatology, particularly the kingdom oracles. Rather, it existed alongside of standard prophecy while at the same time forging new directions in its development into the full-blown apocalyptic world view of a later era.

The question of a general hermeneutical approach to this imagery remains. How are we to understand the exodus-type imagery that was preserved over the passing centuries and found an eventual home in the eschatology of the later Hebrew prophets? The persistence of these images strongly suggests that they had become a body of stylized vocabulary that the prophets had at their disposal to express God's judgment and saving activities.⁵⁰ The freedom and variety with which they were utilized suggests further that although they had become a conventional part of eschatological predictions, they are not to be viewed as a blueprint of concrete details relative to end-time events.⁵¹

Indeed, literal exegesis would dictate that due to the genre in which such images appear, they should be understood as representing areas of God's superintending activity. Therefore, they should not be interpreted in a slavishly literalistic manner.⁵² This is especially true of OT apocalyptic. Thus our study confirms the observation of D. Brent Sandy, "The words of apocalypses must be interpreted in the special context of apocalyptic genre, which generally means that words will not designate what they normally would in other literature."⁵³

Rather than being preoccupied with the fantastic imagery or rich symbolism associated with end-time prophecy, we may do better to follow Habakkuk's reaction to his rehearsal of the exodus event as it impinged on Judah's coming judgment. Come what may, the prophet declares, "I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior" (Hab 3:18). It is sufficient for us to live faithfully while placing our confident hope in that Divine Warrior and Redeemer who will intervene once more to bring earth's history to its God-intended goal.⁵⁴

Method and Message; and G. E. Ladd, "Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?" *JBL* 76 (1957) 192–200. On a different basis P. D. Hanson remarks, "That prophetic tradition lies in the background of most apocalyptic writings is clear and indeed the important connection between biblical prophecy and Jewish apocalyptic can be demonstrated by tracing the unbroken development leading from prophetic eschatology to apocalyptic eschatology" (P. D. Hanson, *Old Testament Apocalyptic* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1987] 33). See also Longman and Reid, *Warrior* 62–63.

⁵⁰ See the discussion in "Apocalypse, Genre of" and "Apocalyptic Visions of the Future," in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* 35–37, 37–38.

⁵¹ A similar note of caution is sounded by D. Brent Sandy and M. Abegg, Jr., "Apocalyptic," in *Cracking Old Testament Codes* (ed. D. Brent Sandy and R. L. Giese, Jr.; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995) 177–196.

⁵² For the distinction between "literal" and "literalistic" exegesis, see K. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998) 310–312.

⁵³ D. Brent Sandy, "Apocalyptic in Daniel and Non-literal Fulfillment: Toward a Hermeneutic for Apocalyptic" (unpublished paper read at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, 1992) 4–5.

⁵⁴ For a similar sentiment, see Kyle, *Last Days* 198–201.