INVESTIGATING APPARENT COMMONALITIES BETWEEN THE APOCALYPTIC TRADITIONS FROM IRAN AND SECOND-TEMPLE JUDAISM

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university for a degree.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to investigate the possible influence of Iranian apocalyptic on the Judaean apocalyptic literature, which was widely disseminated in the Near East during the Hellenistic and Roman phases of the Second Temple Period (*c*. 539 BCE-70 CE).

The similarities between Zoroastrianism and Judaism have been the object of scholarly study for more than a century. Iranologists such as Zaehner, Widengren and Boyce were particularly partial to the notion that Zoroastrianism influenced Judaism. They felt such influences were an inevitable consequence of the Judaeans living under Achaemenian rule for almost two centuries, and in close proximity of Persian communities for some centuries after the demise of the Achaemenid Empire. They based their conclusions on literary parallels between some key biblical passages and Persian literature, linguistic evidence and the obviously dualistic nature of both religions. Recently, however, this point of view has come in for criticism from biblical scholars like Barr and Hanson, who have pointed out that many seemingly Iranian concepts could as easily have emanated from other Near Eastern influences or evolved from within the Judaean tradition.

The similarities between the Iranian and Judaean world-view are particularly apparent when considering the apocalyptic traditions from Zoroastrianism and Judaism: Both traditions view the course of history as a pre-determined, linear process in which good and evil are in constant conflict on both a physical and metaphysical level, until a great eschatological battle, introduced by a "messiah" figure, will rid all creation of evil. A judgment of all humanity and resurrection are envisaged in both traditions, as well as an utopian eternal life free of evil.

However, it is very difficult to prove that these two apocalyptic traditions are in any way related, as most of the apocalyptic works from Iran are dated considerably later than the Judaean apocalypses, which mostly originated during the Hellenistic period. The apocalyptic phenomena within the two traditions are also not always entirely similar, raising the possibility that they are indeed not the result of cultural interaction between the Iranians and Judaeans. Furthermore, one must also consider that many

phenomena constituting apocalyptic occurred widely during the Second Temple Period in the Ancient Near East, on account of the general state of powerlessness and disillusionment brought about by the Macedonian conquest of the Achaemenid Empire and the resulting political unrest.

This study investigates the relations between Judaeans and Iranians under Achaemenian rule, the political and religious background and apocalyptic traditions of both these peoples in an attempt to ascertain whether Iranian beliefs did indeed influence Judaean apocalypticism. These investigations will show that, given the cultural milieu of the Ancient Near East in the Second Temple period, contemporary Greek evidence of Zoroastrian beliefs and the interpretative bent of Judaean scribal and priestly classes, there is a strong likelihood that seemingly Iranian concepts in Judaean apocalypticism were indeed of Iranian origin.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie tesis ondersoek die moontlikheid dat die Iranse apokaliptiese tradisie 'n invloed op die Judese apokaliptiese literatuur gehad het. Judese apokaliptiese geskrifte is wyd geproduseer en gereproduseer in die Ou Nabye Ooste tydens die Hellenistiese en Romeinse fases van die Tweede Tempeltydperk (c. 539 v.C.-70 n.C.).

Die ooreenkomste tussen Zoroastrisme en Judaïsme word al vir meer as 'n eeu bestudeer. Iranoloë soos Zaehner, Widengren en Boyce was van mening dat die Zoroastristiese invloed op Judaïsme 'n vanselfsprekende uitvloeisel was van die feit dat die Judeërs vir meer as twee eeue onder heerskappy van die Ou Persiese Ryk geleef het, en dat die Judeërs ná die ondergang van dié ryk steeds na aan Persiese gemeenskappe geleef het. Hulle het hulle gevolgtrekkings gebaseer op literêre parallelle tussen sekere Ou-Testamentiese tekste en Persiese tekste, linguistiese data en die duidelike dualistiese aard van albei godsdienste. In die afgelope paar dekades het hierdie afleidings egter onder skoot gekom van Bybelse geleerdes soos Barr en Hanson, wat uitgewys het dat heelwat konsepte wat op die oog af van Iranse oorsprong is, net so maklik vanuit die Judese tradisies kon ontwikkel het.

Die ooreenkomste tussen die Iranse en Judese wêreldbeskouing is besonder merkbaar wanneer 'n mens die apokaliptiese tradisies van die Zoroastrisme en Judaïsme met mekaar vergelyk: Beide tradisies sien die gang van die geskiedenis as 'n voorafbepaalde, lineêre proses waarin goed en kwaad in konstante konflik verkeer op 'n fisiese sowel as metafisiese vlak, totdat 'n eskatologiese stryd wat aangevoer word deur 'n messiasfiguur alle bose magte vir altyd verslaan. 'n Oordeelsdag en opwekking uit die dode word ook voorsien in albei tradisies, asook 'n ewige, utopiese bestaan sonder enige kwaad.

Dit is egter baie moeilik om te bewys dat hierdie twee apokaliptiese tradisies enigsins verwant is, omdat meeste van die apokaliptiese werke uit Iran hulle oorsprong heelwat later het as die Judese apokaliptiese tekste, wat hoofsaaklik in die Hellenistiese tydperk ontstaan het. Die apokaliptiese verskynsels binne die twee tradisies stem ook nie altyd heeltemal ooreen met mekaar nie, wat beteken dat hulle moontlik nie die resultaat van kulturele interaksie tussen die Iranese en die Judeërs is

nie. Verder moet 'n mens in ag neem dat baie verskynsels wat as apokalipties gesien kan word tydens die Tweede Tempeltydperk in die Ou Nabye Ooste voorgekom het weens die algemene gevoel van magteloosheid wat deur die verbrokkeling van die Agemeniede Ryk en die gepaardgaande politieke onrus teweeggebring is.

Hierdie tesis ondersoek die verhoudinge tussen die Judeërs en die Perse onder die Agemeniede Ryk, die politieke en religieuse agtergrond en apokaliptiese tradisies van albei hierdie volke in 'n poging om vas te stel of Iranse konsepte inderdaad 'n invloed op die Judese apokaliptiek kon gehad het. Die studie sal toon dat gegewe die kulturele milieu van die Nabye Ooste tydens die Tweede Tempeltydperk, Griekse geskrifte oor die Zoroastristiese geloof en die interpretatiewe neiging van die Judese priesterklasse, is daar 'n baie goeie moontlikheid dat oënskynlik Iranse konsepte wat in Judese apokaliptiek voorkom inderdaad van Iranese oorsprong is.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 General background

The notion that there are strong resemblances between Judaism and Zoroastrianism has been a well-known fact of both Jewish and Iranian scholarship for many years (Barr 1985: 204). It is possible to draw parallels between the two religions even without having made a very thorough study of either. Both postulate a supreme deity who created the universe, who has angels or other lesser divinities by his side, whose creation is threatened by an evil alter-ego, with the human world as the chief battlefield between these two forces.

Although the eschatology of a great day of judgment at the end of history was not very well-developed in the Old Testament (Otzen 1990: 190), Judaism's most successful offshoot, Christianity, certainly contains a linear view of history that starts with the fall in Genesis and ends with the good god's conquest of evil in Revelations (Nickelsburg 2003: 145-146).

Another, perhaps less immediately obvious resemblance between the two religions is that they both contain strong elements of the apocalyptic. Both were, as it were, founded on an apocalypse – Zoroastrianism on Ahura Mazda's revelations to the prophet Zoroaster, and Judaism on Yahweh's appearance on Mount Sinai and the divine law he gave to the Judaeans as evidence of his covenant with them.

References to the Persians often crop up in scholarship on Judaean apocalypticism from the Second Temple Period, e.g. in the scholarship of John J. Collins, Florentino García Martínez and Benedikt Otzen, even though apocalypticism was primarily a phenomenon that became widespread, (at least as far as can be gathered from preserved texts), during the Hellenistic kingdoms' domination of the Near East – *after* the demise of the Achaemenid empire.

It is very tempting to label anything vaguely dualistic and relating to a complex spirit world as having been influenced by Persian thought, even though the biblical rhetoric of prophets and seers setting up heroes and their adversaries against one another is almost as old as Near Eastern writing. However, is it justified to label all references to angels (and a cosmic fight between good and evil) in Judaean apocalypticism to be of Persian origin?

Ollson (1979: 30) pointed out that apocalypticism is in fact a universal phenomenon that tends to manifest itself in times of political and social instability when a particular cult or cultural identity strives to assert itself by re-applying traditional thought and tradition to a new reality. The Judaeans had been subject to many cultural and religious influences due to their geographical location – they encountered the empires of the Hittites, Assyrians and Babylonians, traded with the Phoenicians and Egyptians (Kuhrt 1995: 417-418), and were surrounded by several native groupings who were probably closer-related to them than the authors of the Old Testament might have liked to acknowledge (e.g. the Edomites, Moabites, Samaritans, Ammonites, Philistines and Canaanites).

In order to form a clear answer on whether apocalypticism in Judaism has a significant proportion of its roots in Persian religion, it is necessary to examine closely the interaction between the Persians and Judaeans, consider their attitudes towards one another and bear in mind the duration of Persian rule, the policies of the Achaemenid Empire and the state of the Judahite cult when Judaean exiles started returning to Judah. One also needs to take into account possible intermediaries by which Iranian thought might have been transferred to the Judaeans.

Unfortunately, just about all of these factors have been subject to heavy debate due to the fact that the source materials are, in the case of the Persians, very thin on the ground and, in the case of the Judaeans, problematic to mine for historical data. In both Judaean and Persian cases, relatively little source material has been over-interpreted due to the fact that there are so many gaps in the narrative supplied by these sources, leaving much to speculation (Grabbe 1992: 101; Niehr 1999: 228).

Historiography is a multi-faceted discipline, and even today it is hardly possible to form a truly unbiased view of events as they unfold, despite well-formed bureaucracies that file millions of documents recording governmental decisions, treaties, correspondence and contracts. The only way to penetrate the smoke and mirrors of ideology and self-interest is to examine the consequences of events within a broader spectrum, which could take many decades to become apparent.

At the time when Judah was called Yehud and paid tribute to Persian governors and satraps, there were more weighty issues to be documented than the relationship between the Judaean and Persian cults – we read in Nehemiah (5.1-5) that Judaeans were so indebted by their burden of tribute that they had to sell their children into slavery; there was undoubtedly friction between the Judaeans who had not been taken into exile at Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Jerusalem and those who were left behind (Grabbe 2004: 144). This much is implied early on in Nehemiah 2.11-18, where Nehemiah secretly goes and inspects Jerusalem's walls without notifying the authorities, which indicates a decided lack of trust between Nehemiah's faction and the pre-existing local authorities.

Judah was battered and bruised, reduced from a proud kingdom to a series of tiny agricultural settlements in which a depleted population performed subsistence farming (Grabbe 2004: 206). For the priestly and scribal classes, the most pressing job at hand was ensuring the survival of the cult, restoring national pride and drumming up support (and, of course, funds) for the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem, the heart of Yahweh's cult, and the fortification of the city – a symbolic show of pride and status (a city with no walls, after all, advertised that it had nothing worth protecting)[1].

Fortunately we have apocalyptic texts from both the Persian and Judaean religious tradition. Although they are, in the case of Persian texts, limited, and in the case of Judaean texts, mostly believed to have originated after Persian rule, they are preserved

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[1] Archaeological evidence suggests that Nehemiah built a fortification wall around Jerusalem, which would in turn suggest that Jerusalem did not have a wall when he arrived (Widengren 1977: 502).

well enough to divulge the traditions from whence they stem and the state of mind of their authors.

The subject matter of this study straddles a number of distinct fields of study:

- Achaemenid history
- Iranian apocalyptic
- Judaean history in the Hellenistic period
- Judaean apocalyptic
- Comparative religious studies of the religions of the Ancient Near East

Due to the limited scope of this study it is not possible to deal equally thoroughly with all of these subjects. I have, however, tried to concentrate as much as possible on relevant aspects of all of the above.

1.2 Research problem and methodology

From as early as the late 19th century, scholars studying Iranian religion have remarked on similarities between Iranian and Judaean religion (Barr 1985: 202). From about the latter half of the 20th century, Iranian influences have also often been cited in the growing body of scholarship on Judaean apocalypticism (Collins 1998: 29). The research problem that occupies this study is whether or not the various similarities between Iranian and Judaean apocalypticism can indeed constitute proof that Iranian apocalypticism had a material impact on Judaean apocalypticism.

Developing a research methodology looking at one particular aspect of religion that grew out of a particular world-view within a very particular historical background is no easy task. Bleeker has pointed out that however impartial scholars may try to be, "everyone looks at the subject of his study from his own angle, even the students of natural science who were formerly supposed to be absolutely unbiased". Consequently, he says, a scholar should "acknowledge that his method is coloured by his personal outlook on the material which he handles" (Bleeker 1971: 10).

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Religion is important in this study, as it is both the background against which apocalypticism occurs and a force which can drastically influence the outcome of a study based on religion because it is one of the most fundamental determinants of a researcher's personal outlook.

Furthermore, it is difficult to place religion within any particular field of scientific research. Tracy puts it thus: "Religion as a phenomenon is extraordinarily difficult to interpret, insofar as religion radicalizes, intensifies and often transgresses the boundaries of those other central human phenomena to which religion is necessarily related (art, science, metaphysics, ethics-politics)" (1984: 289).

Cavanagh defines religion as "the varied, symbolic expression of, and appropriate response to, that which people deliberately affirm as being of unrestricted value for them" (1978: 19). Geertz says religion, "like the wider cultural system of which it is a part, affirms notions of what reality is all about, what it *means* and how one is to act within it" and that "sacred symbols function to synthesize a people's ethos" (Geertz 1979: 81).

Further complicating matters is the fact that most religions have an inherent pluralism: "Within most major religions there are in fact several ways to be religious. Such familiar contrast terms as the prophetic-ethical trajectory of a religion as distinct from the mystical-metaphysical-aesthetic trajectory in the same religion, or such classic religious types as prophet or reformer as distinct from priest, sage, mystic, are sufficient indication that within most major religions, there exists in fact a pluralism of ways of being religious" (Tracy 1984: 90). This is particularly relevant when considering that both Second Temple Judaism and most possibly Zoroastrianism too were diverse cults, with regional and factional variations, and that both religions would have developed a great deal within the timeframe under discussion in this study.

This field of study has not been free of bias. Barr noted that religious-historical studies concerned with Iranian-Judaean influence have been coloured by personal ideology,

citing as examples R.J. Moulton, whose personal religious beliefs caused him to misinterpret the relation of Zoroastrianism and Christianity in its historical context, and R.C. Zaehner, who he believes may have assigned to Zoroastrian influence aspects that could equally well have evolved within Judaism on account of a personal dislike of the Old Testament. Barr does however concede that ideological problems have been less of a problem with comparisons between Judaism and Iranian religion than with comparisons between Judaism and Greek thought (Barr 1985: 203-204).

In designing a methodology for this study, I propose to use a **plurality of approaches**, bearing in mind Epp's cautionary note on the eclectic approach to textual problems used in New Testament scholarship, which is equally relevant to using a plurality of approaches to research methodology in general: "… by its very nature (an eclectic approach) tries in one way or another to utilize *all available approaches* (my italics) to textual problems" (Epp 1976: 211). When fusing different methodologies in one study, there is a definite risk of bending the data in the direction the researcher wants it to go, instead of using a constant and tried-and-tested methodology for measuring the available data. However, given the broad aims and space constraints of this study, and the nature of the material under investigation, I believe such an approach is warranted.

In this study, three actions must be performed. Firstly, it is necessary to **establish the historical parameters** within which apocalypticism occurred. Secondly, one must **investigate the phenomenon of apocalypticism** within these parameters. Thirdly, it is necessary to **compare these phenomena** with one another to establish whether they are indeed in any way similar.

In order to do justice to an investigation of the phenomenon of apocalypticism (the second proposed step of this study), it is necessary to follow a **phenomenological** approach. Lacey defines this as follows: "(Phenomenology) at first emphasized the description of human experience as directed onto objects, in the sense in which thoughts or wishes have objects, even if unreal ones. In Husserl the emphasis shifted away from the mere *description of experience* towards a *description of the objects of experience* (my

italics), which he called phenomena. Phenomena were things which appear. He saw them in fact as essences which the mind intuited, and the task of phenomenology was to describe them" (1986: 158).

Bleeker said the phenomenology of religion starts from "the conviction that it is more important to try to understand the unique quality of religious phenomena than giving too much attention to outward traits of resemblance". He argues that "one gets a deeper insight into the meaning and the structure of religious phenomena" by severing the facts from their historical context "and combin(ing) (them) in an ideological connection" (Bleeker 1971: 14).

Phenomenological investigation is not an **empirical** action (i.e. the view that either our concepts or our knowledge are based on experience through the senses (Lacey 1960: 55)), but an *a priori* ('prior to experience') one (Lacey 1960: 158) – in other words, concepts of which "we do not use the senses to find whether an argument is *valid*" (Lacey 1960: 9).

Given all the scholarship already generated on the supposed Iranian legacy within Judaean apocalypticism, it would be tempting to skip to the proposed third step necessary in this study, simply retrieve from the scholarship all the convincing arguments in favour of Iranian influence and weigh them up against one another. However, the pitfalls of such an approach have been pointed out resoundingly by James Barr, in his critique of K.G. Kuhn's work in his study *The Question of Religious Influence: The Case of Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity* (1985). Kuhn used what can be termed a **thematic approach** to argue for similarities between Iranian texts and the Dead Sea Scrolls. He lined up "marked similarities between Iranian texts and the Dead Sea Scrolls" in order to argue in favour of possible Iranian influence on Judaean religion. Barr pointed out that all that would be necessary to challenge such an argument is "a reasonable hypothesis that can provide an explanation (of such seemingly 'Iranian' phenomena) through internal Jewish development" (Barr 1985: 205). In the quoted study, Barr went

on to find that some of these traits occupied vastly different positions and meanings within the two religious traditions that were being compared to each other.

Barr, in investigating the possible influences in these three religions, used a combination of phenomenological and empirical thinking. In refuting Kuhn's work, he used a phenomenological point of departure to show an ideological dissimilarity between the notion of dualism in Judaism and dualism in Zoroastrianism (Barr 1985: 226). In arguing against the receptiveness of Judaeans to Zoroastrian ideas, he makes use of an empirical approach, studying the Old Testament texts and finding very little evidence of Persian religion (Barr 1985: 229).

Historical investigations are by their very nature empirical. Historians use archaeological and textual evidence from a multiplicity of sources to construct historical narratives; they use their senses to acquire knowledge. It is impossible to have *a priori* knowledge of how an ancient culture functioned. In the current study, it is therefore necessary to follow an **empirical** approach to the historical data *around* the apocalypticism in order to establish the historical parameters within which it took place. Thus, the influential *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, which originated with the late 19th- and early 20th century at Göttingen, looked at Christianity and the various religious movements around it in a historical manner (Chapman 2000: 257). Bleeker describes history of religions as "an empirical science (that) (…) does not pronounce any value judgments, but tries to describe the course of events in an unbiased way, as the students of every segment of historical studies are bound to do" (1971: 11).

While it is possible to adequately describe the position of apocalypticism within the context of the religious texts using a phenomenological approach, one would become unstuck when attempting the first step necessary in this study – establishing the historical

parameters. Given the particular nature of the sources involved, an empirical approach indeed seems essential[2].

Once the historical parameters have been established and the phenomena of apocalypticism investigated and described, it would be possible to approach the comparison of the phenomena phenomenologically too, as it would then be possible to treat the various manifestations of apocalypticism as phenomena, even if it was necessary to use an empiricist approach to locate it within the world of ideas.

Looking at specific methodology, a **text-critical** approach would have been the first choice in approaching this study, using a number of representative texts from both the Iranian and Judaean apocalyptic traditions. Emmanuel Tov defines the procedure of textual criticism as operating on two levels, the first being the collation or examination of original texts and the second ascertaining which is the more original reading of such a text (Tov 1992: 409). In the current study this is not an option, as the author does not have sufficient linguistic knowledge to analyse both original Iranian and Judaean texts, and there is, in any event, a very real possibility that such an approach would yield data far too extensive to be contained within the limited scope of this study. Instead, a **text-historical** approach is proposed, using original texts in translation for a **close reading** of two typical[3] apocalypses, one from each culture, supplemented by an **empirical** approach to the historical context.

In the interests of brevity, it will be necessary, once I reach the third step of this study, namely comparing the apocalyptic phenomena in the different cultures, to consider these phenomena in a **thematic** way. It will be possible to escape what García Martínez helpfully calls the "apples and pears" scenario (2005: 45), as all data would have been weighed both within a phenomenological and an empirical context.

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[2] The historical sources involved in this study are probematic – the problems associated with them will be discussed more fully in the chapters on Iranian sources and Iranian apocalypticism (Chapters 3.1, 5.1 and 8.1.3).

[3] "Typical" is here used in the broadest possible sense. As will be seen in the next chapter, it is virtually impossible to describe any text as a "typical apocalypse" due to the great variance within the genre, but in this case I use the word "typical" as the two selected texts are often cited in scholarship and meet most of the characteristics that scholars commonly ascribe to apocalyptic texts.

ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

This study will seek to elucidate the relationship between Iranian and Judaean apocalypticism in the following way:

Chapter 2 deals with the definition of apocalypticism, within the context of traditional and recent scholarly positions. It is instructive that one of the studies used refers to apocalypticism as a "slippery term" (Webb 1990: 115).

Chapter 3 explores the sources available when investigating the historical background and apocalypses of the Iranians during the Achaemenid- and Parthian periods and Judaeans in the Second Temple Period (*c*. 550 BCE-70 CE).

Chapter 4 deals with the historical background to Iranian-Judaean contact in the context of the Achaemenid Empire and the position of Yehud and the exiled Judaeans within the imperial structure.

Chapter 5 investigates Iranian apocalypses mentioned most often in scholarship and seeks to identify distinctive attributes from both translations of original texts and scholarship.

Chapter 6 investigates Judaean apocalypticism in the same manner.

Chapter 7 views these two traditions in the broader context of contemporary Near Eastern societies.

Chapter 8 involves a close reading of two apocalypses that can be considered typical of the genre, namely the Iranian *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* and the Judaean War Scroll (1 QM) from Qumran.

Chapter 9 takes stock of the arguments in favour of and against an Iranian link with Judaean apocalypticism in order to reach a conclusion.

CHAPTER 2: ON APOCALYPTICISM

An overview of definitions and scholarship on apocalypticism

The word 'apocalyptic' is derived from the Greek verb *apokalyptein*, which means 'to uncover something that has been hidden'. Within the Jewish context it is associated with the revelation of divine secrets. It was used by early Christians as a designation of the Revelation of St John, leading to the term's transfer on Jewish apocalyptic writings. Modern scholarship uses the word 'apocalyptic' "as a collective designation, encompassing both the apocalyptic literature and the intellectual currents which produced it" (Otzen 1990: 158).

This scholarly use has, however, created problems of its own:

> An author might use 'apocalyptic' to refer to a particular literary work, a literary genre, a single idea, a set of motifs, an ideology, a sociological phenomenon or something else.
>
> (Webb 1990: 115)

Apocalyptic literature, by its very nature, is a mercurial phenomenon. One apocalyptic text could mean different things to different people. Thus the Revelation of St John, surely the best-known apocalyptic text in the Western world, is for some a cause for comfort, as the end of the world has been mapped out and believers are therefore safe. For some, this apocalyptic text is a call to action, as heathens must be saved from an eternity of hell. For some, Revelation is a cause for anxiety and change, because if you don't mend your ways, you might end up in hell. For some, it could be the foundation of an ideology that can be used as an excuse to condemn others, be they non-Christians, particular ethnic groupings or even sects who have similar beliefs as you do, but differ on small points of interpretation. For some, apocalyptic texts mean absolutely nothing.

Therefore, it is probably no surprise that the terms apocalyptic (both used as noun and adjective) and apocalypticism too have come to mean different things to different people.

Even on a cursory reading of the scholarship on apocalypticism, these terms signify a confusing array of phenomena, and have been attributed a legion of different definitions and characteristics. The term is so broad and could mean so many things that it is not even always clear what an author means when using the term. It also does not help that the texts commonly classified as "apocalyptic" comprise a vast and very varied range. No wonder scholars have difficulty even in agreeing on what exactly the term means, and at which point a text should be characterised as apocalyptic.

This much became especially clear at the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism, held in Uppsala, Sweden, between 12 and 17 August 1979. At this landmark event in the study of apocalypticism, scholars could not even agree upon a definition of apocalypticism, and instead, in the words of the editor of the proceedings, "there seemed to be a consensus that for the time being, '*contra definitionem, pro descriptione*' would be the appropriate way to pursue investigations in the field of Apocalypticism" (Hellholm 1979: 2).

The earliest 20th-century definitions of apocalypticism, by Philipp Vielhauer and Klaus Koch, classified texts as apocalyptic by using lists of traits, such as pseudonimity, determinism; accounts of heavenly visions; cyclical discourse; surveys of history in future form divided into segments; pessimism in the current status quo; catastrophe; and an expectation of the end of the world and a Messiah (Sanders 1979: 448). This was problematic, due to the wide range of traits in these apocalyptic texts – this definition neglected other ideas and motifs prominent in some of the apocalypses: "revealed things, astronomy, meteorology, uranography, cosmology, the secrets of nature and wisdom and other esoteric lore" (Stone, in Webb 1990: 119), mysticism, existential anthropology and historiography (Webb 1990: 119). Seeing apocalypticism just in terms of eschatology would therefore be an oversimplification.

This was followed by M. Stone and Paul Hanson, who tried to get out of the dilemma by calling for a distinction between apocalyptic eschatology (an expectation of the end of the world, which determines religious perspective), apocalypticism (a "sociological

ideology" of an oppressed grouping) and the literary genre of apocalypse (Sanders 1979: 450). But this could become problematic, as such a definition could blur "the distinction between the idealization of the ideology and the social realities of the movement" due to "blend(ing) ideology with the social phenomenon of apocalyptic movements". Webb argues that "apocalypticism as an ideology is first and foremost the ideology of the literary genre apocalypse" (Webb 1990: 116). Because apocalypticism is first and foremost a literary phenomenon, and neither Qumran and early Christianity can be "characterized as apocalypse-producing movements", one should not use the term apocalypticism to describe social phenomena.

In reaction to this, Christopher Rowland moved towards another extreme, proposing a "literary-form approach", in which the theme of the communication from heavenly beings becomes more important than eschatology. But this approach would end up "describing a much wider body of literature than that normally (is) considered to be part of the apocalyptic genre", underplays the important role of eschatology in the apocalyptic genre and fails to distinguish apocalypses from "other forms of revelatory literature" existing at the time (Webb 1990: 120).

E.P. Sanders responded by calling for an "essentialist" definition – the combination of revelation with the promise of restoration of harmony and reversal of harm – but he concedes such a definition does not explain a great deal of the material found in the apocalypses (Sanders 1979: 458). Webb notes that these attributes are true of a wider body of literature than what is normally considered to be apocalypses and ignores other major themes such as cosmology (Webb 1990: 121).

Collins held that "apocalypse is not simply 'a conceptual genre of the mind' but is generated by social and historical circumstances. On the broadest level 'the style of an epoch can be understood as a matrix insofar as it furnishes the codes or raw materials – the typical categories of communication – employed by a certain society'." (Collins 1998: 22). Collins chaired the Apocalypse Group of the Society of Biblical Literature which came up with a definition that took cognisance of earlier definitions: "An

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apocalypse is defined as: '*a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world*'" (Collins 1998: 5). Schematically, it can be represented as follows (table adapted from Webb 1990: 125).

A MANNER OF REVELATION	1. Medium by which revelation is communicated	1.1 VISUAL REVELATION in the form of * visions; and/or * epiphanies (describing apparition of mediator) 1.2 AUDITORY REVELATION usually clarifies the visual by * speech by mediator; or * dialogue between mediator and recipient 1.3 OTHERWORLDLY JOURNEY into heaven, hell or other remote/mythical places
	2. Otherworldly mediator communicates the revelation	
	3. The human recipient	3.1 Pseudonymity 3.2 Disposition of recipient (circumstances, emotions) 3.3 Reaction of recipient (often awe and/or perplexity)
B TEMPORAL AXIS CONTENTS OF REVELATION	4. Protology	4.1 Theogony and/or cosmogony 4.2 Primordial events having paradigmatic significance
	5. History, viewed as:	5.1 Explicit recognition of the past, or 5.2 *Ex eventu* prophecy
	6. Present salvation through knowledge	
	7. Eschatological crisis	7.1 Persecution and/or 7.2 Other eschatological upheavals (disturbing the order of nature or history)
	8. Eschatological judgment and/or destruction upon:	8.1 The wicked or the ignorant 8.2 The natural world 8.3 Otherworldly beings
	9. Eschatological salvation, which may involve:	9.1 Cosmic transformation (renewal of entire world) 9.2 Personal salvation (resurrection in bodily form, or other forms of afterlife such as exaltation to heaven with angels)
C SPATIAL AXIS	10. Otherworldly elements	10.1 Otherworldly regions 10.2 Otherworldly beings (angelic or demonic)
D PARANAESIS	11. Paranaesis/exhortation by mediator to the recipient	
E CONCLUSION	12. Instructions to the recipient 13. Narrative conclusion	

This matrix of characteristics makes allowances for the fact that not all apocalypses contain otherworldly journeys, that some have historical review as part of their eschatology and others not, that some contain only personal eschatology, and that some contain a varying amount of esoteric arts and sciences, and may or may not contain supernatural characters.

However, this definition did not consider the function and purpose of apocalyptic – consequently, Hellholm proposed to add to the definition that apocalypse was "intended for a group in crisis with the purpose of exhortation and/or consolation by means of divine authority". Webb is not even entirely satisfied with this, as "it combines social setting with literary function" (Webb 1990: 124).

Webb is correct – one can never completely understand the sociological setting in which apocalyptic texts are composed with the available sources. However, this should not prevent one from trying to understand it regardless. Forming usable theories on the reasons that any phenomenon existed in ancient societies is an important part of scholarship, as it broadens our understanding of these societies, and ourselves. One could, for example, see the Uruk Lament solely as a literary work, but one cannot escape the fact that the lament was motivated by historical events that had a profound influence on the Fertile Crescent in the second millennium BCE, and that by virtue of having been written down it provides a vivid window on the way the people in the city states of Sumer and Akkad thought in those times.

When investigating Judaean apocalypticism in relation to particularly the Achaemenid Empire, the motive and social setting of the apocalypticism become very important. One grouping would not have been allowed itself to be influenced by another group's beliefs had there not been meaningful interaction between the two, nor if the influenced party hadn't experienced the influence as meaningful.

In the case of the Judaeo-Persian mutual influences, one has to stand back, make many (informed) assumptions and see the history in very broad brush-strokes, simply because

there are many aspects of the relationship between these two entities that simply cannot be clarified until new source materials come to light. This study, therefore, cannot afford itself the luxury of being too rigid in terms of what it sees as apocalyptic, or entertain too many reservations on what it deems proper to consider as "fully" apocalyptic when looking at apocalyptic texts, as it seeks to place apocalypticism in a much broader context, of which much unfortunately has to be surmised.

Getting back to the social function of apocalypticism, Benedikt Otzen provides a useful definition.

> The emergence of apocalyptic speculations and of apocalyptic literature is a sign of crisis. The crisis is the catalyst which sparks off the speculations, and apocalyptic literature performs its function in times of crisis: it exhorts its readers to bear their troubles. Jewish apocalyptic does so by making examples of historical figures of Israel's past, and it comforts by showing how the one who adheres the God of Israel and to the Law always receives his reward in the end, no matter how many perils he is first obliged to suffer. But at the same time – and this is the essence of apocalyptic – it reveals the secrets of existence. It does not display these secrets to some 'coolly curious eye', but, once again, only to those who have begun to backslide and abandon hope because of their trials. Such people require to be convinced that the whole of existence has been organized in accordance with the divinely derived world order, that heaven and earth are governed by divinely appointed natural laws and that the course of history was settled once and for all by God at the beginning of time. (1990: 157)

Early in the 20th century, the general scholarly belief was that apocalypticism was a continuation of prophecy, like H.H. Rowley who asserted the following in 1944: 15: "that apocalyptic is the child of prophecy, yet diverse from prophecy, can hardly be disputed"; scholars at the time thought that apocalyptic and eschatology were one and the same, and that eschatology was the central element of prophecy (Otzen 1990: 164).

In the 1960s Otto Plöger and P.D. Hanson asserted that the development of apocalyptic literature went hand in hand with a "chasm separating two main groups" within the Judaean populace: On the one hand there was the "establishment" – the priestly aristocracy and the upper classes, who moved for a religious and social status quo; on the

other was a group excluded from the establishment, interested in ancient prophetic writings and drawn particularly to eschatological sections depicting a glorious future for the chosen people (called 'visionaries' by Hanson (Otzen 1990: 165-166)). Plöger and Hanson differed, however, on the catalysts that turned prophecy into apocalypticism and gave rise to the opposition between the two groupings in the Judaean population: Plöger ascribed it to Persian influences, while Hanson ascribed it to "old motifs from Canaanite-Israelite mythologies" (Otzen 1990: 167).

Gerhard von Rad, in turn, asserted that the roots of Judaean apocalyptic literature lay rather in Old Testament Wisdom Literature, asserting that there was a fundamental difference between prophecy and apocalypticism: prophets understood history as a series of events in which God leads his people towards the goal he had set for them, while the apocalyptic writer is not primarily interested in the history of Israel, but in a cosmic event in world-history in which earthly empires had to be felled so God's empire could be established. He held that the point of apocalyptic literature was to engender an understanding of the world and an understanding of history (Otzen 1990: 168-169).

But ultimately, one cannot escape the Near Eastern context in which the Judaean apocalypses originated – apocalyptic thought and literature in times of socio-political upheaval has been found in many different cultural scenarios (Ollson 1979: 24). The transition from the evidently *laissez-faire* government style of the Persian Achaemenid Empire in Yehud (*c*. 550-320 BCE) to the turmoil throughout the Near East that followed the ascendance of the Greeks in the region had a tremendous impact on the entire region, not just the Judaeans, and John J Collins has demonstrated movements similar to Judaean apocalypticism from Egypt to Mesopotamia: "Most of the features by which apocalyptic is usually distinguished from prophecy – periodization, expectation of the end of the world, after-life, esoteric symbolism, dualism etc – are found throughout the Hellenistic world and must be considered representative of the *Zeitgeist* of late antiquity. The fact that these features became prominent in Judaism only after the exile, at a time when they were also widespread in the neighbouring religions, cannot be entirely coincidental." (Collins 1975: 33).

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CHAPTER 3: SOURCES

Considering the available sources on Iranian-Judaean contact

3.1 Persian and Zoroastrian sources and their problems

An enduring problem of studying any aspect of history involving the Old Persian or Achaemenid Empire, especially its relationship with its relatively insignificant province of Yehud, is the comparative lack of primary sources. Unlike preceding Near Eastern empires, notably the Assyrians and Babylonians, few official records and no royal chronicles of the early Achaemenid empire survive which can provide a narrative history of the empire.

Instead, the historian has to piece together a narrative of the establishment, functioning and policies of this vast political entity from diverse source material scattered unevenly over the empire, and writings of foreigners who had had close dealings with the empire (Briant 2002: 5-6).

Among the sources that have been longest known and studied are those of Greek historiographers. The most valuable for the period under discussion are Herodotus and Xenophon.

Herodotus, author of the enormous *History* was born a Persian subject in Asia Minor in about 484 BCE, and it is believed he had known eminent Persians. Among his Persian acquaintances were Zopyrus, a grandson of the captor of Babylon and possibly other eminent Persians living in the west of the empire. He is also believed to have had access to Persian government documents from Sardis (Myres 1953:159-160)), which he may have used in compiling his history. The mountain rites of sacrifice he describes in the first book of his History (1.131-140) were still to be found in pockets of rural Iran in the middle to late 20th century (Boyce 1984a: 296). History has judged him to be a diligent and thorough scholar, but given the tribalist nature of the early Achaemenid empire

(Dandamaev & Lukonin 1989: 303), it is quite likely that he did not absorb the full intricacies of Persian society.

Xenophon *Cyropaedia* deals with the life of Cyrus II (Cyrus the Great), who defeated first the Medes and then the Babylonians to found the Achaemenid empire, but it is first and foremost a literary work, a romance (Briant 2002: 6) that aims to give Thucydides' "own imaginative conception of a benevolent despotism" (Cook 1985: 207).

Another oft-quoted Greek source is **Ctesias**, a doctor in the court of Artaxerxes II (405/404-359/358 BCE) who lived about a century after Herodotus, penned a *Persica* and claimed to have access to Persian royal records. He recounted many tales of debauchery involving the wives, concubines and eunuchs at the court of the Great King. But judged against Assyrian and Babylonian texts and Old Persian inscriptions which overlap with Ctesias' narrative, many specific points of information he gives are false, and, in the words of J.M. Cook, "on balance, it seems most prudent to disregard him as a serious historical source" (Cook 1985: 206).

The history of the Egyptian official and court physician **Udjahorresnet**, a Saïte courtier who defected to the Persians and later on seems to have influenced Cambyses' religious policy in Egypt (Bresciani 1985: 506) is particularly useful, as it explains in detail the careful combination of intelligence, propaganda and military force Cambyses employed to win over his subjects (Dandamaev 1989: 75-76).

There is a wide range of other citations and mentions of Persian history and religion in later Greek writings, such as **Alcibiades** (from some time after 374 BCE), **Theopompos** (380 BCE) and **Aristotle** (before 322 BCE) (Boyce 1982: 107-108), and even some Old Testament texts like **Daniel** and **Esther**, but these references are often incidental in narratives of other entities, or devices in conveying a message that has nothing to do with the Achaemenid Empire.

In order to form a picture of a state and a people, it is imperative to use sources generated by the people itself, and here it becomes problematic. Much of the Persian history and culture was transmitted orally (Briant 2002: 6; Boyce 1984b: 1-2), and only a small number of royal inscriptions survive.

The most famous Persian-origin documents date from relatively early on in the empire, namely the inscriptions of Darius I and his son Xerxes I. Darius I's' inscription at **Behistûn** and Xerxes I's *daivā* **inscription** both have a religious-political import, but are also clearly propagandistic devices aiming to project a certain image of the Great King to his subjects.

A helpful discovery in the study of the function of the empire has been the **multilingual administrative tablets found at Persepolis** in the 1930s, which have contributed greatly to form a picture of the day-to-day running of the empire, such as land grants, taxes and temple grants, tribute and accounts of government storehouses, in addition to **archives at Murašû** in Babylonia and **Aramaic documents from Egypt** (Briant 2002: 5, 8-9, 390).

But Briant points out that evidence on this vast empire is scattered unevenly "in space and time" – documents from the central authority are mostly concentrated within the period from Cyrus's conquest of Babylon to the mid-5th century, the time at which the Persepolis documents were written, and there are parts of the empire that have virtually no documents from the time of the Achaemenid empire, notably the satrapies of the Iranian Plateau, Central Asia and the Indus Valley (Briant 2002: 8-9). Given the size of the empire, its long duration, the variety of peoples it ruled over and its varied way of dealing with different subject peoples, it is very difficult to form a comprehensive picture of what this empire looked like.

Sources on the ancient Persian religion Zoroastrianism are also ambiguous and problematic. It is believed that only a quarter of the original Zoroastrian (Avestan) canon survived repeated onslaughts by Islam. This canon, known as the Great Avesta (Boyce 1984b: 3), was compiled during the Sasanian period (third to seventh century CE) and

contained the most important principles and beliefs of the religion. Of the Great Avesta, only the following portions survive due to the fact that they were in constant devotional use and were contained in manuscripts other than the copies of the **Great Avesta** that probably resided in religious libraries (Boyce 1984b: 3).

• The **Avesta** is a compilation of holy works held to have been partially composed by Zoroaster and partly inspired by his teachings, which originated in an oral tradition, and were handed down in a religious tradition for many generations. Indications are that they were written down for the first time only in the fifth century CE, and the oldest extant manuscript dates from 1323 CE (Boyce 1984b: 2).

• The **Gathas** are a collection of short hymns also believed to have originated with Zoroaster, in which the prophet addresses the deity Ahura Mazda, conveying visions of the god and his purposes through poetry that seems to form part of an ancient tradition of priestly poetry of which no other examples survive (Boyce 1984b: 2).

• The **Yasna** was the liturgy of daily Zoroastrian religious observances. Composed in the ancient east-Iranian language of Avestan, these seem to be made up of ancient texts composed to accompany traditional fire and water rites that precede Zoroaster. This part of the Yasna is referred to as the Gathic portion, while there is also a Younger Avestan portion, which is of varying age and content and was added over many centuries (Boyce 1984: 2). An extended version of the Yasna and the Venidad (discussed below), known as the Visperad, was solemnised on the seven very holy days of the faith (Boyce 1984b: 2-3).

• The **Yashts** were hymns to lesser Zoroastrian deities, and some of them date back to the Indo-Iranian period (*c*. 2000 BCE). Some parts were considered very holy and were transmitted in the Younger Avestan tongue, while less holy passages were transmitted in a more fluid way and evolved with the spoken language of the priests (Boyce 1984b: 2).

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• The **Venidad** was probably compiled in the Parthian period and are concerned mainly with purity laws as a means of combating the forces of evil (Boyce 1984b: 2).

• The **Nyayesh and Gah** were formulaic prayers said to particular deities (the sun, Mithra, the moon, the waters and fire) which contain verses from the Gathas and Yashts, and the Gah were similar prayers to be said at the five different divisions (gah) of every day, invoking minor deities watching over those particular times of day. These prayers were contained in a common book of prayer called the Khorda or Little Avesta, which had additional Middle Persian texts (Boyce 1984b: 2-3).

There are many later texts that provide important information on Zoroastrianism originated in the Middle Persian/Pahlavi period (*c.* 9th century CE) (Gnoli 1987: 579). Of these, the most important were the **Pahlavi Zands**. These are interpretative, theological texts that discuss the original texts listed above. There are Zands for extant Avestan texts, as well as for the lost Avestan texts, which offer a second-hand version of these original texts. Of these, the most important is probably the **Bundahishn** or Creation, dealing with Zoroastrian creation mythology and beliefs (Boyce 1984b: 4).

Unfortunately, even the oldest of these texts were only committed to writing many centuries after the period during which the Persians came into contact with the Judaeans and could have had the opportunity to transfer some of their philosophies. Despite the diligent preservation of ancient portions of the Zoroastrian and pre-Zoroastrian teachings, it is virtually impossible to know if, and to what extent, these philosophies changed from the time of Zoroaster's life (about 1400-1000 BCE, according to Boyce[4]), to the Achaemenid Empire (itself disputed), and then to the time they were committed to writing.

Given the multitude of cultural and religious influences the Persians were exposed to after the life of Zoroaster and the small body of texts that survive to detail the religion,

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[4] Boyce 1984c: 75.

we have to accept that many question marks remain over the history of Zoroastrian beliefs.

3.2 Sources detailing the Judaeans' position and activities under Achaemenid rule

This section does not aim to be an exhaustive survey of biblical, Judaean and non-Judaean sources on Judaean contact with the Persian empire, but rather aims to highlight the principal sources for this history and demonstrate by way of specific examples the use and pitfalls of biblical writings in reconstructing a Judaean history from this period[5].

Unlike Zoroastrianism, Judaism had, from relatively early on in its history, a scribal and theological tradition. This means that we do have a reasonably clear narrative history of the Judaeans in the Persian period, thanks largely to the Old Testament books of Ezra, Nehemia, Malachi and parts of Isaiah.

However, these narratives were not written with dispassionate history in mind, but were preoccupied with the religious-national ideals of the Judaeans, particularly the preservation of their history, cult and culture preceding Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Israel in 587 BCE; and restoration of the seat of the cult of Yahweh religion in Jerusalem following the destruction of the temple and the deportation of a disputed number of the Judaeans[6]. This means that there are many matters on which the Judaean authors might have exaggerated the pre-eminence of the Judaeans in the broader context of the Persian empire and the favours they were granted.

The scribal tradition that preserved so much of Judaean history for modern scholarship also has serious drawbacks: the tendency to write narratives with a subjective and moralistic end rather than a historical one, and a tendency to edit and rework texts

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[5] For a more extensive survey, see Grabbe 2004:70-106 and Widengren 1977: 489-499.
[6] The number of Judaeans deported during the Babylonian exile has recently been adjusted downward; where once it was thought that the majority of the Judaeans were exiled, it is now believed that tens of thousands remained behind, and that mainly the priestly classes and the nobility were deported, most likely to reduce risk of rebellion (Grabbe 2004:285).

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towards a particular teleological end, which means that we often have the work of different authors from different times compiled in a work purporting to be by a single author. This makes the dating of the source material problematic, which in turn casts doubts on how much value can be placed in the writings as a historical source, as it is difficult to determine how close to the times they describe they were written. A good example is the reworking of Ezra and Nehemiah, our primary sources of Persian-period Judaean history (Widengren 1977: 490).

The writing of the Old Testament books is believed to have started during the Babylonian exile, and to have been closed early in the Hellenistic period (Otzen 1990: 61). Bearing in mind the scribal tradition, the fact that Judaean scribes were active in Judah, Babylonia, Egypt and possibly other parts of the Near East during and after the exile, and the fact that it is not always clear when a particular text was reworked, it is very possible that Persian references were slipped into older texts as the scribes and editors (a class very likely to come under various and disparate influences in a milieu as cosmopolitan as the Persian empire) started absorbing these ideas. Thus source material that could arguably date from Persian times crops up in unexpected places that do not deal with Persian-period Judaean history as such, but have embedded in them ideas that may have been of Persian origin (see specific examples below).

3.2.1 Ezra and Nehemia

These two books give a historical account of the history of Judah and Israel from the time the Judaeans returned from exile following the Persian king Cyrus II's conquest of the Babylonian empire in 539 BCE, the re-establishment of Jerusalem's fortifications and temple, their dealings with the Persian authorities, and social, political and religious matters in Judah.

The fact that both Ezra and Nehemia were first and foremost political figures in what was obviously a politically charged period, means that their narratives should be approached with circumspection. Having both been Persian officials, they were obviously of exiled stock and would have encountered many foreign influences aside from their Judaean

upbringing. It would therefore be safe to assume that their ideas and beliefs did not always necessarily agree with those of the inhabitants of the land they were returning to.

It is also obvious from a very cursory reading of these texts that their authors saw things in a very specific, doctrinal way, and that they were quite uncompromising – although new to the city, Nehemiah thought nothing of locking up the city to prevent trade on the Sabbath even though this had obviously been going on before his arrival (Neh 13.15-22), and both Ezra and Nehemia saw it fit to denounce a significant portion of the Judaean population due to their having intermarried with non-Judaean 'peoples of the land'.

Grabbe points out that these two books are much less straightforward historical sources than might be immediately apparent, and points out several parallells between the two texts, which suggests a particular editorial agenda behind them (2004: 72). For ease of reference, Grabbe's comparison is reproduced below:

Ezra	Nehemia
1: royal commission (Cyrus edict)	1.1-2.9: royal commission (by Artaxerxes)
3: task of rebuilding (altar/temple)	2-3: task of rebuilding (repair of wall)
4-6: hindrance by 'enemies'	4,6: hindrance by 'enemies'
6: work completed with God's help	7: work completed with God's help
7-8: Ezra and the law	8: Ezra and the law
9-10: threat from intermarriage	9-10: threat from intermarriage
10: resolution by public pledge	10: resolution by public pledge

Ezra	Nehemia
2: list of returnees	7: list of returnees
2: list of returnees	11.1-12.26: list of returnees
6.16-17: dedication of temple	12.27-43: dedication of wall
6.18: organization of priests/Levites	12.44-47: organization of priestly/Levitical dues
9-10: mixed marriages/threats from 'foreigners'/'peoples of the land'	13: mixed marriages/threats from 'foreigners'/'peoples of the land'

These parallells suggest dynamics other than history at play – the fact that chronology might have an ideological function in which they aim to portray a particular message about events (Grabbe 2004: 72), or at the very least a formula familiar in older Judaean texts – the arrangement and portrayal of events for a particular moral or ideological end, like clothing the Assyrian king as Yahweh's avenger when Israel was overrun by the Assyrians (2 Kings 17.1-8), and Nebuchadnezzar be awarded a similar significance at the fall of Jerusalem (2 Chron. 36.12-19).

3.2.2 Other Old Testament writings

There are other Old Testament writings that provide a less direct and less purely factual account of the Judaeans during Persian occupation.

Isaiah is an important source for Judaean history during the Persian period, with Second Isaiah (Isa 40-55) introducing the messianic expectation among the Judaeans immediately before the downfall of the Neo-Babylonian empire. **Haggai and Zechariah** provide information on the period immediately following the return of the Judaeans from Babylon, and Malachi and Trito-Isaiah (Isa 56-66), while hard to date, providing some information on the internal conditions of the Judaean community (Widengren 1977: 492).

The book of **Esther** has been shown to be fictional, but it manages, in my opinion, to say something about the Judaean attitude towards the Persians (see 4.2.3 (3) below).

Whether Persian ideas had percolated into earlier parts of the Old Testament which describe the history of Israel preceding the Unified Kingdom is closely bound up with the age of these writings. The continuous editing of these works means that Persian-sympathetic scribes with an affinity for Persian religion could easily have slipped these ideas into earlier writings. As such, the **P-document** is believed to contain Persian religious references, and Grabbe argues that it was written during the Persian period (Grabbe 2004: 100), as were **Joel** and **Ezekiel** (their views on eschatology echoing those of Qumranic beliefs (Grabbe 2004: 94, 97)); some have also argued that parts of **Proverbs** and the **Song of Songs** may date from the Persian period (Grabbe 2004: 101, 106).

3.2.3 Non-Biblical sources

• **Josephus** (*Antiquities*, Book XI) gives an account of the history of the Judaean community during the Persian period, from the time of the first imperial Persian king, Cyrus II, to the last, Darius III; occasionally his accounts differ from biblical sources, as is the case with Nehemiah (Widengren 1977: 493-4).

• The **Elephantine papyri** describe Judaean life in this military colony in Egypt during the fifth century BCE, including legal and religious documents (Widengren 1977: 494).

• The **Cyrus Cylinder** is generally thought to form the basis of the Persian government's policy of religious tolerance and allowing exiles to return to their land of origin (Widengren 1977: 494).

• The **Murashū Texts** relate the business activities of Judaeans in Babylon, and indicate that they were well-integrated in the economic life of the Persian empire (Widengren 1977: 494).

Widengren also regards **Aramaic documents from Persian chancelleries preserved in Ezra** (Ezra 6.2-5 and 7.12-26) as non-biblical sources of this history. These comprise Cyrus's decree concerning the Judaeans' return from exile and permission to rebuild their temple, as well as Artaxerxes's rescript of this decree giving Ezra permission to continue his work (Widengren 1977: 494). Given the debate over their authenticity and serious

doubts over the accuracy of the Ezra-Nehemiah texts' history due to ideology of their redactor, I believe they are best regarded as biblical sources.

CHAPTER 4: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Socio-political factors around Persian-Judaean contact and apocalypticism

4.1 The Persians

4.1.1 History of Iran from the establishment of Zoroastrianism until the canonisation of Zoroastrian texts

The Iranian history relevant to this study spans almost two millennia – from the lifetime of Zoroaster sometime between 1400 and 1000 BCE to the writing of the Zoroastrian religious texts in the ninth century CE. During this time, the Persians developed from a semi-nomadic people believed to have come either from the steppes of Central Asia or southern Russia (Dandamaev & Lukonin 1989: 2-3) to an imperial power ruling most of the Near East (Kuhrt 1995: 600-601). After falling to the armies of Alexander the Great, the Persians re-asserted itself as the Parthian Empire and later the Sasanian Empire before becoming a Muslim state after the Arab conquest of 652 CE (Boyce 1979: 145).

It is impossible to deal with such a lengthy history in any detail in this study, but it is necessary to take cognisance of the long time-lapse between Zoroaster's reforms of the pagan Iranian cults and the resurgence of Zoroastrianism under Sasanian rule.

The Persians and Medes were descended from early Indo-European tribes who had once lived on the central Asian plateau, migrated westwards towards the Caucasus and then settled initially on the shores of Lake Urmia (although this has recently been disputed) (Dandamaev & Lukonin 1989: 2-3). They had made their presence felt in the Near East as early as *c.* 1700 BCE, when their horsemen, known as *maryanni*, and armament were key to the success of the Hurrian armies (Widengren 1973: 312).

Both the Persians and the Medes were subject to attacks from the severely expansionist Assyrian Empire from *c*. 700 BCE. Between 615 and 610 BCE[7], efforts by the Medes under Cyaxes and a subsequent alliance between the Medes and the Babylonians led to the defeat of the Assyrian Empire, leading in turn to the ascendancy of the Neo-Babylonian Empire (Briant 2002: 22).

Following a period in which the Achaemenid family consolidated its hold on the Persian tribal system, the Persians, under the leadership of the Achaemenid king Cyrus II, first conquered the Medes and the Neo-Babylonian Empire, establishing Persia as the dominant empire of the Ancient Near East, with its dominion extending as far as Egypt, Anatolia and the Indus Valley (Boyce 1979: 80).

Although the Persian court was clearly subject to much intrigue (Cook 1985: 280), the *Pax Persica* lasted from 550 to 323 BCE, when the Persian army was defeated by Alexander the Great. After Alexander's death, Persia was one of the regions hotly contested by Alexander's generals, the *diadochi*, and it ultimately became a part of the Seleucid kingdom, until the Parthians broke away from Seleucid rule in 247 BCE and re-established Iranian rule as an Eastern counterweight to first the Seleucids and then the Romans. The Parthian royal line was defeated in 224 CE by another Iranian faction, the Sasanids (Boyce 1979: 101), who brought about a "resurgence" of Zoroastrianism in Iran[8] and were responsible for canonizing the Zoroastrian religious texts (Boyce 1984b: 10). The Sasanid kingdom fell to Arab invaders in 652 CE, after which began significant persecution of non-Muslims, causing many Zoroastrians to convert to Islam to escape persecution, enslavement and execution (Boyce 1979: 144-145). However, the religion survived in isolated pockets. With the threat to the survival of the religion came an urge to write down the texts that had been passed on orally for generations (Boyce 1979: 79).

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[7] The Medes under Cyaxes first launched the offensive against Assyria, seizing Arrapha in 615 BCE and sacking Ashur in 614 BCE. After this followed an alliance with the Babylonians under Nabopolassar. The allied Median and Babylonian armies took Nineveh (Briant 2002: 22).

[8] This "resurgence" has been shown to be largely the product of anti-Parthian Sasanid propaganda (Boyce 1984a: 280).

4.1.2 Zoroastrianism in the Achaemenid Empire[9]

A question important to the present study, is the nature and extent of Zoroastrianism in the Achaemenid empire, during whose existence the Iranian culture had the most potential to have a significant influence on neighbouring peoples.

In order to establish precisely what religious philosophy the Achaemenid empire followed during its existence of almost 300 years, it would be necessary to trace the development of the Zoroastrian religion first in Eastern and then in Western Iran, and then examine the development of Zoroastrianism in Western Iran up to and after the formation of the Achaemenid empire, in order to see how the religion's principles and philosophies evolved and were implemented under the government of the Great Kings of Persia.

The available source material, however, leaves large gaps in this chain of events that unfolded between the time that Zoroaster lived (between 1000 and 1200 BCE (Boyce 1975: 24; 1982: 3) and the time of Cyrus the Great's conquest of the Median kingdom in 550 BCE. There exists no written catalogue of the development of the Zoroastrian religion that can, like early Jewish rabbinic and Christian literature, provide an account of cultic development (Duchesne-Guillemin 1969: 323; Gnoli 1987: 579). The nature of the written and archaeological evidence is also of such a nature that it fails to form a cohesive picture of how the state and the state cult interacted, or indeed, precisely what the state cult entailed.

Hence, the precise nature of the Achaemenid kings' religion has been a matter of dispute for almost as long as the existence of Iranian scholarship. The scholarly process of analysing and unpacking the religious philosophy and activities of the Achaemenid empire has had to rely in a large part on heavy interpretation of a very limited body of textual and archaeological remains. This, in turn, has led to a range of widely divergent scholarly views, many of which will have to remain unresolved until more original source material is discovered.

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[9] A description of the religious background to Zoroastrianism follows in 5.2 below.

Zaehner argued that Zoroaster probably lived very shortly before Cyrus, and that the Chorasmian king Vistašpā, whom Cyrus conquered during his consolidation of power over Western Iran, was the same person as the legendary patron of Zoroaster who was instrumental in his cult finding acceptance and converts (1961: 21). This would mean that Cyrus was a Zoroastrian[10]. This chronology is now rejected by most scholars, as most scholars accept an earlier date for Zoroaster, thus leaving Cyrus's religion in dispute.

Duchesne-Guillemin (1969: 325) argued that a Zoroastrian calendar was only introduced during the early Achaemenid period, and that the empire's founding king, Cyrus, could therefore not have been Zoroastrian.

Some schools of thought believe Darius I's repeated references to Ahura Mazda in his inscriptions indicate a departure from the religion of his predecessors, while others use the same data to conclude that Cyrus was a "Mazdean zealot", and that the Achaemenid empire was thus a Zoroastrian entity throughout its history (Briant 2002: 94).

Boyce argues that the occurrence of Avestan names in the Achaemenian family, such as Vistašpā (the son of a cousin of Cyrus I), Cyrus the Great's daughter Atossa (taken to be the Greek rendition of Hutaosā, the queen of the legendary Vistašpā) and Darius's son Pissouthnes (taken to be a rendering of Pišišyaothna, a son of the legendary king Vistašpā), is evidence that the Achaemenid family were already Zoroastrian by the early six century BCE (1982: 41).

Although the royal inscriptions with a Zoroastrian bearing, notably Darius I's Behistûn inscription and Xerxes' *daiva* inscription, are valuable sources on the Great Kings' religion, they cannot be viewed as dispassionate sources on this matter, as they were written with a political agenda. Most of Darius I's inscriptions date from a period when he had to impress upon his subjects the fact that he was divinely ordained to commit

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[10] Boyce disputes whether the places the Zoroastrian texts refer to are indeed the same places Zaehner purports them to be (Boyce 1975:8).

regicide and take over the empire after the death of Cambyses (Kuhrt 1995: 681), whose religious-political inscriptions bear many resemblances to those of his father. Cambyses himself had many reasons to set up the favour of Ahura Mazda against the wickedness of his opponents given that the beginning of his reign saw a dangerous revolt in Egypt, followed by an expensive and largely unsuccessful war against the Greek states (Briant 2002: 525).

It is also not possible to know whether or not Darius or any of his successors subscribed to the same form of Zoroastrianism as is found among modern Zoroastrian communities, as Achaemenid texts with a religious bearing tend to gloss over ritualistic detail and concentrate instead on the religion's dualistic (and much more propagandistically useful) aspect, the opposition of good/Truth (*arta*) and evil/the Lie (*druh*).

Evidence was found at Persepolis of cults devoted to various non-Gathic divinities. This could be a strong indication that pure Zoroastrianism as outlined in the Zoroastrian scriptures was not practised throughout the Achaemenid empire (Schwartz 1985b: 689). It is not possible to say whether this indicates that Zoroastrianism was merely the "government's religion" and that ordinary people carried on observing pagan religions regardless, or whether the existence of these cults reflected the inter-tribal nature of the early Achaemenid empire's power base[11] and were practised by tribes who formed part of the ruling alliance of nobility but were not Zoroastrian.

The Achaemenid kings clearly had no problem with professing submission to foreign deities in order to maintain control of their foreign conquests. They followed the Near Eastern imperial precedents set by the Assyrians and Babylonians by assuming the religious trappings of their subjects. Thus the Cyrus Cylinder, composed after Cyrus the Great (Cyrus II) conquered Babylon in 539 BCE (Briant 2002: 43), styles Cyrus as the

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[11] The core of the Achaemenid empire was by no means a homogeneous entity and was probably dependent on inter-tribal power-sharing treaties, if one is to take into account that the Median empire (which preceded the Achaemenid empire) was believed to have taken the shape of a tribal confederacy characteristic of pre-imperial societies (Dandamaev 1989: 101). This would have required the Persian nobility to assimilate the Median nobility into its top structure (Vogelsang 1992:8-9, 177). This could explain the presence of seemingly foreign cults in the heart of the Persian state.

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Babylonian state god Marduk's beneficiary and the restorer of the cult of Marduk, following the last Neo-Babylonian king Nabonidus's revertion to the ancient moon-cult of Sin and his 10 years of exile from the Babylonian capital (Briant 2002: 42-43).

Cambyses, following his conquest of Egypt between 525 and 522, assumed the Egyptian trappings of royalty by establishing a joint Persian-Egyptian royal house and assimilating Persians into the Egyptian governmental structure (Dandamaev 1989:75-6).

Against this background of the Persian kings accommodating non-Zoroastrian subjects, it is therefore not surprising that the Persian administration reacted favourably in the case of Judaeans at Elephantine requesting permission for their temple to be rebuilt, the returnees in Judah requesting permission to rebuild their temple and city walls (Ezra 4.3-8; 5.17; Neh.2.1-10) and Ezra being given royal permission to enact the law of the Torah in Yehud (Briant 2002: 511).

Did Zoroastrianism spread during the Achaemenid Empire?

Bearing in mind the apparent policy of religious tolerance followed in the Achaemenid empire, and the fact that many Persian influences have been suggested by scholars studying the religions of the Ancient Near East, the question has to be asked how elements from the Zoroastrian religion might have found their way into the religions of their neighbouring peoples[12] if there were seemingly no active efforts by the Persian authorities to establish Zoroastrianism as an imperial religion to be followed by all subjects, be they Persian or not.

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[12] The supposed influence of Persian religion on Judaean apocalypticism will be discussed in Chapter 9 below, but it is worth noting that Boyce finds ample evidence of Zoroastrian influence in early Ionian philosophy, namely **Thales** (whose beliefs echoed the Zoroastrian view of a spherical universe), **Anaximander** (who believed in a divine, "boundless" force behind creation), **Anaximenes** (who taught of an ordered cosmos) and **Heraclitus** (who, among other things, believed that fire was at the core of the universe and dead bodies were impure) (Boyce 1982: 153-161). It does not fall within the scope of this study to interrogate Boyce's conclusions at great length, save to say that given the long shadow that Greek philosophy threw over the Ancient Near East, it is very likely that the Greeks could have been a conduit for Iranian concepts, as both have an Indo-European background.

High-ranking foreigners coming into contact with Persian nobility might gradually have absorbed Zoroastrian principles from being in close contact with them, and that these influences could in time have reached the priestly classes. So, for instance, Nehemiah, as an official at the royal court, would probably have absorbed much of the Zoroastrian purity laws that were presumably followed at court, and this would in turn explain his preoccupation with purity among the Judaeans after his return to Jerusalem (Boyce 1982: 189-190). It is also possible that in order for ambitious foreign subjects to gain advancement in the Persian civil service, they would have had to understand Zoroastrianism or practice it; otherwise they might not have been considered worthy of engaging with Persian nobility.

Zoroastrian ideas could also have percolated into the sensibilities of non-Persians through propaganda; the fact that Cyrus and Cambyses styled themselves as the saviours of the Babylonians and the Egyptians respectively, combined with proselytizing, could have won undecided subjects over to Zoroastrianism in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the time. Boyce argues that both the complimentary attitude of Second Isaiah (Isaiah 40-48) with regard to Cyrus, and a prophecy from *c*. 553 BCE to Nabonidus foretelling the fall of both Astyages and Babylon, were the result of religious and political propaganda done on behalf of Cyrus in Babylon (1982: 43).

Boyce believes that Zoroastrian principles could have gained a foothold in Ionia due to trade contacts, the first point of contact having been the harbour city of Miletus, near the mouth of the Meander (1982: 153). It is not impossible that, as contacts between the Persians and their subject peoples became more sustained due to the consolidation of the Persian empire in the Near East, a process of reciprocal religious influences could have ensued.

As Zoroastrianism was pre-eminently transmitted through oral tradition, it is impossible to establish whether the religion was of an expansionistic bent, whether there were Zoroastrian missionaries active within the empire, or whether the spread of the religion

that might have taken place was due to the state-sponsored religious activities that took place at Persian events.

4.1.3 Zoroastrianism under the Parthians and Sasanians

Alexander the Great's defeat of the last Achaemenid king Darius III was a great blow for the Zoroastrian community – many magi were killed, and because the religion was at that stage transmitted orally, much knowledge was probably lost, and with the establishment of the Seleucid kingdom under Seleucus in 312-311 BCE, the cult became less centralised than it had been under the Achaemenids (Boyce 1979: 78-79). This state of affairs continued after the Iranians claimed back the heartland of the old Achaemenid Empire under the chieftain Arshak, who established the Parthian kingdom that lasted until *c*. 224 CE, when the Parthian royal line was overthrown by the Sasanians (Boyce 1979: 80; 101).

4.2 The Judaeans

4.2.1 Historical background of the Judaeans from the origins of the cult of Yahweh to the Babylonian exile

The history of Israel and Judah up to and during the Second Temple Period can be divided into five periods:

a) The period before the establishment of the United Monarchy

During this phase of history, the Israelite tribes moved into Palestine and assimilated with established Canaanite tribes. The fragmented nature of the various city-states is a possible origin of the notion of the "twelve tribes of Israel" mentioned in the Old Testament (Fensham & Pienaar 1982: 80).

b) The United Monarchy

Unification of these loosely-arranged tribes under one monarchy came about as the tribes became more established and central authority became more practical, and was further necessitated by repeated attacks from the Philistines who tried to conquer Palestine from the coast. The first monarch was Saul, who had considerable difficulties with the Philistines, and only under David (1010-970 BCE) was this threat removed.

Under the rule of David and his son Solomon (970- 931 BCE) Israel became a prosperous state with extensive trade ties and an illustrious royal court. The tax burden to support the sumptuous court fell mainly to the northern tribes, which seemed to have been more wealthy to start off with (Olivier 1982: 122). Unhappiness with the state of affairs would prove the end of the monarchy.

c) The Divided Monarchy

The Divided Monarchy was established when the northern tribes rebelled against Solomon's son Rehabeam, leading to the establishment of the Northern Kingdom (Ephraim or Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah). The weakening of the region was contemporaneous with the ascent of the Assyrian Empire, and eventually in 721 BCE the

Assyrians under Tiglath Pileser III conquered Israel. Many of its inhabitants were exiled and replaced with foreign Assyrian subjects (Fensham & Pienaar 1982: 144).

d) The Babylonian Exile

Judah survived as a political unit until 587 BCE, when the resurgent Neo-Babylonian Empire under Nebuchadnezzar II conquered Judah and deported some of its population to Babylonia. Although the number of Judaeans deported is in dispute (Grabbe 2004: 200-201), this phase of Judaean history has come to play a significant role in the Old Testament.

e) The post-exilic period

This period was initiated in 539 BCE when Cyrus conquered the Neo-Babylonian empire under Nabonidus and issued a decree reversing the exile orders of the Babylonians, allowing the Judaeans to return home (Grabbe 2004: 272). After about two centuries under Persian rule, the Judaeans were thrown in turmoil by the conquest of Alexander the Great and the wars of succession among his generals, the *diadochi* (Grabbe 1992: 213). This period saw a revolt by the Judaeans against the Hellenistic kings, the establishment and demise of the Hasmonean monarchy, the advent of the Roman Empire and the eventual destruction of Jerusalem by Roman soldiers in 70 CE. The Persian, Hellenistic and early Roman phases of this period form a central part of this study and will be further discussed under 4.2.2 and 6.1 below.

4.2.2 Judaean cult and culture in the Second Temple Period

Describing the cultic landscape of the early post-exilic period in Judah is complicated by the fact that, in the words of Niehr, "there was no such thing as normative judaism (*sic)* at that time" (1999: 243), and there is strong evidence of sectarianism, as has already been demonstrated from Ezra and Nehemiah (see Chapter 3 above).

The Israelite religion in antiquity was a "composite quantity" and the component on which the Old Testament focuses, following the progress from Moses receiving the Law from Yahweh on Mount Sinai around 1200 BCE is one of many cults (Otzen 1990: 65).

Most important in this cult was the Torah ("The Law"), which comprises the first five texts of the Old Testament, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy and is still today considered among Orthodox Jews to contain all the information central to the cult (Otzen 1990: 66). Otzen provides a useful description of the relationship between Israel and the Torah.

> If we follow the definition according to which the Law is to the orthodox Jew the entire revelation of God's nature and will, we must acknowledge that the centre of gravity becomes displaced. The Law is then no longer simply the many commandments and prohibitions in the Pentateuch. Rather, it becomes in the widest sense the basis of Jewish existence, the source from which Jews derive their understanding of God, and from which comes their faith in God as the god of the world and of Israel. The many commandments and prohibitions remain, but they are not to be seen in isolation from the account of the God who is the creator and lord of the world – the God who chose Abraham to be Israel's ancestral father, who led the Israelites through the desert away from Egypt, who entered into a covenant with them on Sinai, and who finally gave them the land of Canaan to possess. It is within this salvation-historical framework that the Law, narrowly considered, with all its 613 commandments and prohibitions, is to be understood. The Law is indissolubly wedded to the concept of Israel's election. In the Old Testament, the election of Israel is uniquely bonded to the covenant and means that Yahweh leads his people through history, while his people in return acknowledge him as God and undertake to honour his demands: that is, 'keep the covenant'.
>
> (Otzen 1990: 69)

Yahweh was seen as the creator of heaven and earth, who dwelled in heaven and was the custodian of all wisdom (Otzen 1990: 69-70). The Law was the gift by which Yahweh had chosen Israel as his people and afforded them insight into the divinely-established world order. Trespassing the law was a "disturbance of the world order". If Israel kept to the covenant, it was rewarded. If not, it was punished (Otzen 1990: 73-74).

By the time Judah became Yehud, the Judaean **religious year** contained several temple celebrations:

- The **Sabbath** was observed once a week, a holy day commemorating the Creation; it is believed this day only became a regular feature of Judaean religious life from the Persian period (Grabbe 2004: 220-21).

- Special sacrifices were made on the **day of the new moon**.

- **Passover** was an annual festival celebrating Israel's exodus from Egypt, during which a lamb without defect was slaughtered and the blood painted on the doorframes and no unleavened bread was eaten (Harman 1998: 1043).

- **The Feast of weeks** was associated with the end of the grain harvest and is attested only in Leviticus 23.9-14 (Grabbe 2004: 221).

- **The Day of Atonement** was a special day of expiation, the one day of the year when the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies in the temple (de Vaux 1961: 507).

- The **sabbatical year** was observed every seven years, when the fields were left fallow.

The **priestly classes** were divided into the Zadokites, who could officiate at all temple ceremonies (descended from Zadok, a priest who is mentioned earliest in 1 Samuel 22), the Aaronites, who may have been a rival movement seated at Bethel, and the Levites, who had the "duty of service" in the temple and did not have the same status as the Zadokites (Grabbe 2004: 226-229). There is much scholarly debate over the origins and duties of, and disputes among, the priestly classes, which are not immediately relevant to this study. Sectarianism among the priests has been cited as a contributing factor in the development of notably the Qumran movement, but this aspect will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6. The existence of a **Sanhedrin**, a governing body of the temple, during the Second Temple period (Grabbe 2004: 235), is likewise under dispute (Grabbe 2004: 234) and not of relevance to the current study.

The **high priest**, though always an important figure in Judaean and Israelite religion, became more important in the Second Temple period with the demise of the royal line. In this regard, Niehr argues that the Babylonian conquest did not result in the discontinuity implied by some of the Old Testament sources – he holds that Jehoiachin, the monarch at

the time of Nebuchadnezzar II's conquest of Jerusalem in 587/586 BCE remained a king after being exiled (Niehr 1999: 230)[13].

Niehr argues that the priesthood consolidated its hold on political power in the early post-exilic period – he deduces from Zechariah (Zechariah 4.1-14 and 6.13) that an initial equality between the vassal king or governor and the high priest gradually evolved into a situation where the priestly classes were the *de facto* rulers of Judah, as the civilian leadership were subordinate to Persian authorities (Niehr 1999: 233). In this regard, the high priests' efforts to suppress the cult of the dead kings in Jerusalem (Ezekiel 43: 7-9), could be seen as an expert tactical move to gain a stronger hold over the Judaean populace. Niehr says this development "betrays a priestly ambition to obtain a monopoly of the cult in the Jerusalem temple".

The **temple** was in any event not merely a seat for the religion – throughout the history of the Near East, temples had been both the place where the ruling deity resided, where the king or the ruling classes received legitimacy and a catalyst for economic development (Niehr 1999: 235, 238).

The temple built after the exile was probably similar to the one described in Exodus and Leviticus, but was probably much less elaborate than the first temple. The inner temple was divided into the 'Holy Place', open only to the priesthood, and the 'Holy of Holies', only entered once a year by the high priest on the Day of Atonement, and the place where the Ark of the Covenant was kept in the First Temple (Grabbe 2004: 217). Animal and food offerings were important to the cult in order to atone for sin, with an animal taking the place of humans to atone for sin (Grabbe 2004: 218).

By the beginning of the Persian period, **monotheism** (exclusive worship of Yahweh and the denial of the existence of other gods) was established in the priestly and temple

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[13] Both Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel, who ruled in Jerusalem in the early years of Persian rule, were of Davidic descent, but it is believed that they were the last of the Davidic line to rule in Jerusalem (Niehr 1999: 230). Because the Persian empire often allowed local kings to stay on as vassals, it is very difficult to ascertain exactly when the Davidic dynasty came to an end (Niehr 1999: 231).

establishment, (Grabbe 2004: 243), but possibly not in the broader Judaean community (Niehr 1999: 239). Texts from the military colony at Elephantine indicates Yhw was venerated alongside other deities such as Eshem-Bethel and Anat-Bethel (Grabbe 2004: 241). Niehr is at pains to point out that "there was no such thing as normative judaism (*sic*) at that time", but argues that development "towards an orthodox judaism" happened only between the Maccabean revolt and the reign of the Hasmoneans (1999: 243). Because there are few archaeological remains from this period, it is also difficult to determine whether, and to what extent, the **religion of ordinary people** differed from the "official cult" in Jerusalem (Grabbe 2004: 253).

Angels occur regularly in the Old Testament as heavenly messengers and helpers of Yahweh. Cherubim are mentioned as guardians in Genesis 3 and 1 Kings 6, and as Yahweh's throne-carriers in 1 Kings 6, 1 Samuel 4, 2 Samuel 6 and 22. These messengers may have originated in the Northwest Semitic pantheon and been reduced to angels. Demonic figures are not well developed in the Old Testament, but it is highly possible that both angelology and demonology were developing "fairly rapidly" by the end of the Persian period (Grabbe 2004: 243-244).

In terms of **eschatology**, it seems as if the Judaeans did not believe in life after death during Old Testament times, although there are traces of a cult of the dead that may have occurred in parts of Israelite society, in which the dead could communicate with and influence the living (Grabbe 2004: 247-248).

4.2.3 The position of the Judaeans in the Achaemenid Empire
It is difficult to make a conclusive judgment on the position and standing of the Judaeans and the province Yehud in the Achaemenid Empire for two simple reasons already mentioned: We lack sources on many aspects of the relationship between the Persians and the Judaeans, and the sources we do have do not generally allow a comparison between their version of events and the Persians'.

It is common cause that Judah was part of the Babylonian Empire when Cyrus the Great conquered it, and that it would therefore have been subsumed into the Persian empire along with Babylonia's other subjects at the time of conquest, but scholars are divided on whether Yehud was an independent province or fell under the authority of Samaria. Despite persuasive arguments on either side, it is not possible to conclude either way (Grabbe 2004:142)[14].

1. Ezra and Nehemia

Despite the problems of our main biblical sources of this period (Ezra and Nehemiah), it is probably safe to assume that Judaeans who had been in exile had managed to assimilate themselves into the imperial bureaucracy in the decades of Babylonian rule and the early part of Persian rule, and that there is therefore some truth in the observations Ezra and Nehemiah make about the court and conduct of the Persian king. Given other accounts of the political conduct of the Persian Empire, like the political and diplomatic activities of the Great Kings in Asia Minor following Xerxes' failed military campaign against Greece, winning the loyalty and economic co-operation of some Greek cities in the region (Briant 2002: 560-1), it is not inconceivable that senior Persian officials, or even perhaps the Great King himself, might have used subject people close to his court to help him rule their fellow countrymen. Although there is some dispute as to Ezra and Nehemiah's exact position at the Persian court, the fact that they were sent back to their homeland to effect some sort of Persian rule that was simultaneously ethnically and religiously acceptable to the Judaeans is probably true. Such a move by the Persian king would most certainly be pragmatic, as it would have engendered a positive image of Persian rule among the Judaeans – a much cheaper tactic than outright suppression.

Subsequent editing of the original texts of Ezra and Nehemiah makes it difficult to locate them chronologically – it is not clear which one of the two, Ezra or Nehemiah, first officiated in Judah, nor whether the Artaxerxes referred to in the text of both books is Artaxerxes I or II. It is also not clear whether (as Josephus suggests) both Ezra and

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[14] Grabbe (2004:140-142) provides a succinct analysis on this point; as such, the debate is not of great relevance to the object of this study.

Nehemiah lived and worked during the reign of Xerxes, but Ezra at the beginning and Nehemiah at the end, or whether Ezra lived in the reign of Artaxerxes I and Nehemiah in the reign of Artaxerxes II. Widengren's analysis of scholarship, texts and archaeology concludes that Nehemiah was active during the reign of Artaxerxes I and Ezra during Artaxerxes II (Widengren 1977: 509)[15].

The events these two books describe are very similar, which may indicate that issues in Yehud didn't change much between Ezra and Nehemiah's time, or that the faction represented by these two texts experienced similar problems and had similar aims during the time of Ezra and Nehemia. On the other hand, the similarities between the two books might also simply be the result of the agenda of the person who edited these two texts (presumed to be the Chronicler, who also compiled Chronicles I and II (Widengren 1977: 490)).

Putting these accounts of history together with archaeological evidence, we learn that Judah was probably thinly-populated, with a moderately successful agrarian economy (Grabbe 2004: 207) in which there seemed to be tension between those described in Ezra and Nehemia as 'people of the land' (presumably lower classes who had remained behind during the exile) and those who had returned from exile (what Morton Smith referred to as the 'Yahweh alone' faction)[16].

2. Achaemenid policy towards the Judaeans

It is safe to assume that the Persian kings were not overly concerned with the religion and internal organisation of the Judaeans, besides the fact that they paid their tribute and their cult did not move them to revolt. The imperial policy was meant to create conditions for co-operation with local elites rather than overturning existing social organisations. This included the empire presenting itself as protector of religious sanctuaries (Briant 2002:

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[15] For a complete but concise analysis of this matter, see Widengren 1977: 503-509. Again, the intricacies of this scholarly debate are not central to the object of this study.

[16] The historical models on sectarianism within the Jewish state at this time is thoroughly dealt with in Grabbe 2004: 256-261, as well as Smith 1984: 219-78, Plöger 1968 and others; for the purposes of this study it is important to note that there *was* tension among different parts of the Jewish community in Judah that held different beliefs due to having been subject to different cultural-religious influences. Grabbe cautions that all these various theories should be regarded with circumspection.

79). The absence of any major Persian royal propaganda pieces in Judah can be explained by the great probability that there was no reason for such edifices (statues or inscriptions) in order to subdue the population of Judah, as the Judaeans were apparently a poor people (Nehemiah mentions that Judaeans were so poor they had to sell their children into slavery (Neh. 5.5)) and lacked decisive and military-oriented leadership (Jerusalem, as the main urban settlement in the region (Grabbe 2004: 199) didn't even have a city wall in Nehemiah's time).

Thus, the fact that the Judaeans are not mentioned in either Herodotus's list of satrapies or Darius' inscription at Behistûn is most probably an indication that Yehud was of fairly little consequence to the Persian king, or that he did not see the threat of revolt coming from the Judaeans[17], given the mainly positive light in which the Judaeans regarded Persian rule.

3. Judaeans' experience of Persian rule

The Judaeans' positive experience of Persian rule is evident from the following historical or alleged historical events recorded in the Judaean sources:

- Cyrus the Great allowed the exiled Judaeans to return to their homeland, in terms of a decree which may (most likely) have been a general appeasement of former Babylonian subjects in the interests of re-populating empty or weakened parts of the empire, or (less likely) specifically aimed at the Judaean exiles in Babylonia[18].

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[17] It could also, of course, merely be the result of geography: Despite the Western bias of sources on the Achaemenian empire, it was probably essentially an Iranian empire (Vogelsang 1989: 309), and the Great Kings' most pressing preoccupation in the early decades of the empire was most probably to place their stamp of authority on the Iranian tribes that might arguably challenge their authority. If Yehud was not a threat to the Persian kings' supremacy and the Judaeans a fairly insignificant imperial prize, it would not have been necessary for the Persian King to proclaim himself king over them, unlike the Medes, the Scyths, the Sakas and others mentioned in the Behistûn inscriptions, all of whom were formidable tribes with serious military credentials that were, therefore, possibly very likely to revolt.

[18] Historical sources are silent on the Jewish political sentiment at the time of Cyrus' conquest of Babylonia, but Second Isaiah labels of Cyrus as the messiah and liberator from the Babylonians (Isa. 45.1), hence it is safe to assume that the Judaeans would have welcomed the Persian empire. Given the fact that Babylon destroyed their temple, the Judaeans were probably very much opposed to Babylonian rule, even allowing for exaggeration by prophetic sentiment (Widengren 1977: 518). Supposing there were Judaeans in Babylonia who might have gained prominence in the Babylonian bureaucracy and then switched loyalties to the Persian side when Cyrus took over the Babylonian empire, such a Jewish-specific

- Part of this decree was the handing back of Judaean temple vessels taken from the Judaeans during Nebuchadnezzar II's conquest of Jerusalem (Ezra 6.1-5; Widengren 1977: 496).

- Cyrus gave the Judaeans permission to rebuild their temple (Ezra 1), and a decree authored by Cyrus was discovered at Ecbatana underscoring this (Ezra 6.3-12).

- The Judaeans were so grateful for Cyrus's reversal of the Babylonian exile that they called him the Messiah in a passage of Isaiah that bears strong literary resemblance to the Cyrus Cylinder (Briant 2002: 46).

- Cambyses strengthened the Jewish garrison at Elephantine, which had been established there during Dynasty XXVI. He also built up the Syene Semitic settlement, which had also been established there before the Persian conquest, aiding military and civilian interests (Bresciani 1985: 503).

- Darius II or his officials authorised the religious Feast of Unleavened Bread to go ahead at Elephantine (Briant 2002: 199); and reacted favourably to an appeal for help from the Jewish garrison there after their temple was destroyed (possibly by Egyptian priests at Khnum and the local Persian governor, and possibly as result of local political tensions in which the Judaeans became a scapegoat) (Briant 2002:200).

- Artaxerxes accepted and protected Ezra's 'Law of Moses' (Ezra 7.25-26) (believed to be some incarnation of the Torah, although this is disputed[19]) (Grabbe 2004: 342-3)) as the royal law, probably because it was not in opposition to the Persian law; such a royal law would have included local customs and protected them from "satrapal arbitrariness" (Briant 2002: 511).

- Artaxerxes allowed Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem and rebuild Jerusalem's city wall (Neh.2.1-10).

The Old Testament book Esther, in which the Persian king marries a beautiful young Jewish woman and then helps her avenge her cousin and adoptive father Mordecai after she risked her life by appealing to him, indicates Jewish approval of Persian rule,

proclamation becomes more probable, as the Persian king would have wanted to reward the Judaeans, and not just generally appease them to ensure they didn't revolt.
[19] For a brief summary of the argument, see Widengren 1977: 514-5.

although it has been shown not to be a historical account. Widengren (1977: 493) labels it a "piece of propaganda on behalf of the Purim feast" and points out that Mordechai would have had to be 120 years old and Esther middle-aged in terms of the dates given in the text. But in principle, this tale reflects the pattern of some of the dealings the Judaeans had with the Persian authorities: difficulty and misfortune among the Judaeans leading to an appeal to the king or his functionaries, leading in turn to imperial intervention and a favourable outcome. It also shows some knowledge of the Persian court – the fact that not just anyone may have approached the king and that even in his court there was a particular hierarchy which had to be conformed to, on the pain of death.

4. Possible strategic reasons for Persian policy towards the Judaeans

The Persians may have had some strategic interest in the good opinion of the Judaeans – given the constant risk of Egypt revolting against Persian rule (something that happened on more than one occasion (Briant 2002: 59; 573)) it might have been necessary for Persian troops to cross over and victual on Jewish land to suppress such revolts, or to periodically send regular troops there to garrison. The Jewish garrison at Elephantine could have been of strategic significance in case of an Egyptian revolt, as they would have had generations of knowledge of Egyptian military practice and would have been able to aid Persian forces in suppressing such a revolt if the Persians and the Judaeans had been on good footing[20].

Although the solidarity between the Jewish garrison at Elephantine and the Jewish homeland at Judah is not clear, positive Persian action toward Judaeans in Judah would probably have resonated positively with the Judaeans at Elephantine, and vice versa. An indication of close affinity between the Judaeans and Persians is the fact that the Aramaic of the Elephantine papyri dating from this time indicates a strong Persian linguistic influence (Widengren 1977: 494).

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[20] Grabbe (2001:110) points out that there is no direct evidence of such a military interest, but concedes that it is "possible".

The Judaeans in the province of Yehud did not have much to offer the Persians apart from tribute – they seem to have had little by way of military organisation, comparatively little mineral wealth and, judging by the archaeological evidence of subsistence farming (Grabbe 2004: 202), not a very strong economy. The fact that the Persian authorities were generally well-disposed towards the Judaeans and their cult (despite possible exaggerations on the nature of Persian largesse, as pointed out by Grabbe in 2004: 327) probably contributed greatly to the Judaeans' positive disposition towards the Persians, and could thus also probably have opened the Judaeans up for Persian religious influence.

5. Other factors

There is some archaeological and scribal evidence of a revolt against Persian rule in Yehud, part of the wider Tennes revolt that took place during the middle of the third century BCE; ancient writers do mention the deportation of Judaeans to Hyrcania at this time, but nothing is known of the Judaeans' involvement in the revolt (Williamson 2004: 89).

The Judaean scribal tradition may have provided a platform for Judaean-Persian relations to develop. Scribes would have been needed throughout the empire, and given that probably mainly the higher, educated Jewish classes were exiled (Grabbe 2004: 285) and that a Judaean scribal tradition dates back to at least 700 BCE, judging by ancient Jewish religious scholarship (Otzen 1990: 65), it is highly probable that these scribes could have been Persian officials keeping records at royal stores, trading posts, palace administrations or other parts of the Persian administration.

4.3 Judaeans under Parthian rule

Collins points out that there was considerable negative reaction against Hellenistic rule (Collins 1975: 28) (see 7.1 below), and it is very possible that Judaeans still living in the Seleucid kingdom might have come under the influence of the resurgent Iranian nationalism that eventually led to the Parthian kingdom's secession from Seleucia.

CHAPTER 5: IRANIAN APOCALYPTICISM

5.1 Problems of Zoroastrian apocalyptic accounts

Iranian religion has a long tradition of apocalypticism, believed to have begun during the life of Zoroaster[21] and continuing beyond the last Persian kingdom, the Sasanian, (226-652 CE), when Iran was conquered by Arab armies (Boyce 1984b: 24). The extant corpus of Iranian religious texts includes a significant number of apocalyptic accounts, notably the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* or Bahman Yasht, the *Ĵāmāsp Nāmag* and parts of the *Denkard*, indicating considerable preoccupation with apocalyptic thought throughout Iranian history. This is no surprise, as, in the words of Anders Hultgård, "there is an inner coherence between the beginning and the end that is unique to the Iranian worldview" (2003: 34). Due to the longevity of the Zoroastrian tradition, and the fact that it was for much of its early existence an orally-transmitted religion, all extant Zoroastrian texts, including apocalyptic ones, suffered the same fate as early Judaean and Israelite texts – redaction and translation.

The Zoroastrian religious texts were only canonized during the Sasanian period, between 1600 and 1800 years after Zoroaster's life. Subsequently, it continued developing in response to the threat of encroaching Arab and Muslim traditions (Boyce 1984b: 23-24). The result is that these apocalyptic texts meld Avestan concepts (dating from the time of Zoroaster and the priestly tradition he founded) and historical events that took place during the periods of the Achaemenid empire, the Sasanian empire and thereafter.

The obvious difficulty with analysing these apocalyptic accounts for the purposes of this study – Iranian apocalypticism in the context of the Achaemenid- and Hellenistic periods – is separating the older, pre-Sasanian apocalyptic concepts from those that evolved after the initial period of Judaean-Persian contact. Before tackling this question, however, it is necessary to briefly survey the Zoroastrian religion, establish to what extent

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[21] Zoroaster is believed to have lived between 1400 and 1000 BCE (Boyce 1984c: 75), although this has been a matter of some controversy.

Zoroastrianism contains apocalyptic elements and briefly survey the extant texts that can be deemed to have apocalyptic elements.

5.2 Religious background to the Zoroastrian apocalypses

Zoroastrian apocalyptic tradition goes to the very heart of the religion's theological underpinnings. The Zoroastrian religion is based on the ancient pagan Indo-Iranian cult, which shares many deities and concepts with Vedic Indian concepts (Boyce 1975: 3). However, the prophet Zoroaster introduced radical reforms to this cultic base following a series of revelations to him by the deity Ahura Mazda (Ohrmazd in Pahlavi or Middle-Persian) described in the Avesta (Gnoli 1987: 581). In these reforms, many of the Vedic deities were assimilated into the "new" cult, but all were to be subordinate to the supreme god, Ahura Mazda, who acts through his Bounteous Immortals, Vohu Manah (Good Intention, associated with cattle), Aša Vahišta (Best Righteousness, associated with fire), Khšatra Vairya (Desirable Dominion, associated with the sky), Spenta Armaiti (Bounteous Devotion, associated with the earth), Haurvatāt (Wholeness, associated with water), and Ameretat (Life, associated with plants) (Boyce 1975: 21-24).

The distinctive quality of Zoroastrianism when compared with its contemporary religions is its clearly-defined cosmic dualism: for each good being aligned with Ahura Mazda, there is an evil counterpart aligned with his enemy Angra Mainyu (Ahriman in Pahlavi), who seeks to sully the perfect creation of Ahura Mazda. Because the struggle between good and evil exists both in the spiritual and physical world, Zoroastrianism developed an elaborate system of purity rites (Boyce 1979: 43).

The Zoroastrian theological tradition distinguishes between unlimited time (eternity) and limited time, during which cosmic history takes place. In the first part of the limited time, Ahura Mazda's creation existed in a state of perfection, after Ahura Mazda had struck his adversary dumb. When his adversary, Angra Mainyu, awoke again, he chose to oppose Ahura Mazda. In the second part, called *Gumezisn* or "Mixture", Angra Mainyu and his allies attack and sully Ahura Mazda's perfect creation. This war carries on for three thousand years of "limited time", during which both sides rally the living and the spiritual

world. In the final three thousand years, three "sons" of Zoroaster are each born a thousand years apart to further the struggle (Boyce 1984c: 67). With the third "son" being born, the "Separation" or Saoshyant arrives. This signals the beginning of the final battle between good and evil, when creation is "made wonderful" (*frašgird*), when Ahura Mazda's creation is restored once more to its original, perfect state and good is separated from evil during a great judgment (Boyce 1975: 230-232). It is the nature and progression of this third phase of cosmic history, the end-times, which preoccupy the Iranian apocalyptic traditions.

Describing the Zoroastrian cult itself is problematic, as Barr has pointed out that there is no single Iranian religion, but five different "stages or sets of phenomena":

> (1) the ancient inheritance of pre-Zoroastrian Indo-Iranian religion; (2) the religion of Zoroaster himself; (3) the religion of the Achaemenid emperors, from Cyrus to the coming of Alexander – which at least has the advantage of tangible and datable inscriptional evidence; (4) the later Zoroastrianism, in which – as many see it – deities and mythological elements thrown out by Zoroaster found their way back into the religion; (5) the religion of the Magi, if that is something different.
>
> (Barr 1985: 221)

The cult saw many reforms and changes throughout the centuries, but Zoroaster's original cultic reforms assigned particular times of the day to particular deities and required adherents to pray five times a day (Boyce 1979: 32). There are seven annual religious festivals.

- Mid-spring (*Maidhyoi-zaremaya*), dedicated to Khshathra Vairya and the creation of the sky.
- Mid-summer (*Maidhyoi-shema*).
- Feast of bringing in the corn (*Paitishahya*).
- Feast of the homecoming of the herds from pasture (*Ayathrima*).
- Midwinter (*Maidhyairya*).

- The feast of the *fravashis* (guardian spirits) (*Hamaspath-maedaya*), celebrated on the last day of the Zoroastrian year, the day before the spring equinox, dedicated to Ahura Mazda and his creation.
- The New Day (*No Ruz*) – held at the spring equinox; a celebration of the defeat of the Hostile Spirit, dedicated to fire (Boyce 1979: 33-34).

One of Zoroastrianism's most distinctive external features is the enormous emphasis placed on ritual purity; all aspects of earthly life is considered part of the cosmic struggle against evil, and thus Zoroastrians go to great lengths to live a pure life and keep the six elements of creation (represented by Ahura Mazda and his six Bounteous Immortals) unpolluted. Thus anything unclean needs to be disposed of in special buildings so as to not pollute the earth; no natural water source may be polluted, thus any cleaning needs to be done with water drawn off a natural source; dead bodily matter such as nail clippings and hair needs to be disposed of in a way that it would not pollute either water or soil; dead bodies may not be buried in the earth, but traditionally had to be exposed or placed in a special building. There is not space in the current study to go into the purity rituals and their origins in great detail; it will be discussed again in Chapter 8.1 with specific reference to the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn*.

5.3 Iranian apocalyptic traditions – some examples

Unlike apocalypses from Second Temple Judaean and Israelite communities, Iranian apocalyptic accounts are mostly not independent writings, but are contained in larger works. The *Bahman Yasht* (or *Zand ī Wahman Yasn*) and *Ĵāmāsp Nāmag* are two exceptions which can be considered fully apocalyptic. However, like the other Iranian texts that contain apocalyptic traditions, they too were heavily redacted. Other apocalyptic traditions are contained mainly in the following writings from the 9th century CE:

- the *Denkard* (a 9th-10th century survey of the Zoroastrian religion);
- parts of the *Bundahishn* (from the *Zand* of lost Avestan texts);
- the Pahlavi *Rivāyat* (letters by Iranian priests);
- the *Dātestān ī Dēnīk* (a work of priestly instruction);

- Selections of the priest *Zātspram*;
- *Ayātkār ī Ĵāmāspik*;
- *Mēnōi ī Xrat*;
- *Pand Nāmak ī Zartušt* (Hultgård 1979: 389).

In the Iranian apocalyptic traditions, revelations come to humanity through three figures: Zoroaster, *Vištašpa* and *Ĵāmāspa* (*Vištašpa's* advisor). They take on various forms, including historical narrative, theological *zand* (a theological discussion of a religious text), and question-and-answer conversations between the medium of the apocalypse and Ahura Mazda (Hultgård 1979: 393, 400).

In the Gathic tradition, a great battle is forecast in which the *yazatas* (good spiritual beings) and Bounteous Immortals do battle with Angra Mainyu's evil allies, *devs*, and defeat them. The **Greater Bundahishn** (XXXIV.18-19) speaks of a great fire ordeal in which all the world's metal will be melted, and both the living and the dead will be required to pass through it. "…and for him who is righteous, it will seem as if he is walking through warm milk; and for him who is wicked, it will seem as if he is walking in the flesh through molten metal". The molten metal will also flow into hell and destroy the evil therein (Boyce 1975: 242, 244).

The restoration of the world is also described in **Yasht 19**, where the Saoshyant comes and makes the world transfigured (*frasha*); the world-saviour Astvat-ereta rises up and uses the same weapon Zoroaster's patron Vishtashpa (also spelled "Wištāsp" in some texts) had used in the initial religious wars that had followed Vishtashpa's adoption of Zoroastrian teachings.

> "He will gaze with eyes of wisdom, he will behold all creation, (…) he will gaze with eyes of sacrifice on the whole material world, and heedfully will he make the whole material world undying.
>
> (Yt 19.94, in Boyce 1984b: 90)

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(*Astvat-ereta's comrades will advance, and*) "before them will flee ill-fated Aeshma of the bloody club. Asha (the truth) will conquer the evil Drug (lie), hideous, dark. Aka Manah will also be overcome, Vohu Manah overcomes him. Overcome will be the falsely spoken word, the truly spoken word overcomes it… Haurvatat and Ameretat will overcome both Hunger and Thirst… Angra Mainyu of evil works will flee, bereft of power."

(Yt 19.95-96 in Boyce 1984b: 90)

The **Bahman Yasht** provides an account of Iranian eschatology and consists of four sections, believed to be redacted from different sources, with the final redaction dating from the 9th or 10th century CE, when the Zoroastrian authors were living under Arab rule (Hultgård 1991: 155). This text will be discussed in detail in Chapter 8.

The **Ĵāmāsp Nāmag** was preserved in Pazand, Pahlavi and Persian texts. The narrator is a pseudonymous sage Ĵāmāsp, who is claimed to have written the account during the reign of king Wištāsp, after receiving omniscience by smelling a flower consecrated by Zoroaster during a *drōn* ceremony. It takes the shape of conversations with Zoroaster and Wištāsp (Olsson 1979: 32). It has four sequences.

- The first (2-58) describes the advent of the Arabs and the dissolution, death and disruption of nature that will go together with it (Olsson 1979: 33).
- The second (59-83) forecasts that a false king will take Iran by force and then disappear, giving way to foreign rule, a proliferation of religions and more corruption and conflict with foreigners (Olsson 1979: 34).
- The third (84-87) again speaks of a pretender king emerging from Kust ī Nēmrōz, taking Iran by violence, fleeing and returning with greater forces and causing much misery.
- The fourth part (88-106) tells how the king of Padašuārgar revolts against the foreign oppressors, followed by an account of Pēšyōtan, who will restore order in the country and in nature (Olsson 1979: 37).

5.4 Attributes of Iranian apocalypticism

Iranian apocalypticism is mainly concerned with eschatology. From the apocalyptic accounts available, it is possible to characterise them as containing the following attributes:

- Cosmic dualism and the war between good and evil
- Multiple realms of the war between the forces of good and evil
- Determinism and the periodisation of world history within a linear timeframe
- Tribulations leading up to the end times
- A final battle between good and evil at the end of finite history
- The coming of a saviour
- The cleansing of creation and a final judgment
- Heavenly paradise in the world to come
- Divine revelation and otherworldly journeys (Hultgård 2003: 36-41)

1. Cosmic dualism and the war between good and evil

Within the Zoroastrian cult, Ahura Mazda was regarded as the "one uncreated god" and the "Creator of all else that is good, including all other beneficient divinities", the force of truth in creation. Wholly separated from Ahura Mazda was his adversary, the "Hostile Spirit, Angra Mainyu, equally uncreated, but ignorant and wholly malign" (Boyce 1979: 20-21). It is evident that this cosmic dualism was widely-known in the Iranian world at least as early as the time Darius I wrote his Behistûn inscription, in which his prowess is ascribed to Ahura Mazda and his enemies are seen to be representatives of the "lie" (Briant 2002: 94). It is unlikely that a new king wishing to demonstrate his supremacy after regicide would have used religious imagery that was obscure to the general population.

These are probably the most distinctive attributes of Zoroastrianism. In terms of its cosmic view, all of worldly and spiritual existence revolves around a choice between the truth, *asha*, and the lie, *druj*. Man has a choice between these two poles, and his fate is

ultimately determined by how he chooses. Ahura Mazda, the good lord, is the custodian of the truth and Angra Mainyu is the custodian of the lie (Louw 1997: 30).

This dualism is inherent in both the creation myth and the basis for the apocalyptic beliefs concerning the expectation of the end (Hultgård 2003: 34). Various Zoroastrian texts deal with the dualism at the heart of creation. The *Greater Bundahishn* sets it out quite clearly:

> It is thus manifest, (in the good Religion): Ohrmazd was, forever, at the highest, in the Light, (for infinite time,) owing to omniscience and goodness.
> The Light is the place and location of Ohrmazd; there is someone who calls it 'Endless Light'; and the omniscience and goodness are, forever, of Ohrmazd; there is someone who calls them 'Revelation'; Revelation has the interpretation of both these; one, that of the eternal, of Infinite Time; just as were Ohrmazd, Space, Revelation, and Time of Ohrmazd;(…).
> Ahriman was at the abysmal station in darkness, owing to after-wit and destructive desire.
> His destructive desire is raw; and that darkness is his location; there is someone who calls it 'Endless Darkness'.
>
> (GBd I.1-4)

It is understood that all Ahura Mazda/Ohrmazd's creations are perfect, and all impurity stems from Angra Mainyu/Ahriman's influence. Hence, to reduce anything that might blemish this – dirt, disease, rust, tarnish, mould, stench, blight, decay – an elaborate array of purity rituals need to be practised constantly in everyday life. This still forms an inherent part of the lives of modern practising Zoroastrians (Boyce 1979: 43).

This preoccupation with purity and the exorcising of evil influences points to an important feature of Zoroastrian dualism – that these two diametrically opposed forces Ahura Mazda (sometimes referred to as Spenta Mainyu) and Angra Mainyu are at war:

> Ohrmazd knew, through omniscience: "The Evil Spirit exists, who will defeat and seize, and even intermingle, with envious desire, the eminent supporters, with several eminent agents, to the end;" He created, spiritually, those creatures which were requisite as those agents.
>
> (…)

> The Evil Spirit, on account of after-wit, was unaware of the existence of Ohrmazd; then, arising
> from that abyss, he came to (the precinct of) the luminous (stars). When he saw Ohrmazd, that
> Light, and the unseizable Lustre, he made an attack, for destruction, on account of his
> destructive desire and malicious nature. He, (then,) saw valour and fortitude, which were greater
> than his own, returned to darkness, and miscreated many Devs, destroyers of the creatures, and
> rose for battle.
>
> <div align="right">(GBd I.13; 15-17)</div>

War-imagery is characteristic of Iranian apocalyptic. The *Ĵāmāsp Nāmag* makes reference to Arab invaders (Olsson 1979: 24), whose arrival heralded the beginning of the end of Zoroastrian supremacy in Iran as Muslim rulers assumed control of the land and started persecuting non-Muslims (Boyce 1984b: 10). Similar references to these foreign invaders are made in the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* (Boyce 1984b: 92). Warrior-figures and war heroes are important in Zoroastrian legends, and some of them are expected to return at the final war between good and evil to deliver the world from the grasp of evil, such as Pišyōtan (Boyce 1984c: 61) and Astvat-ereta (Yasht 19).

While much of the cosmic war-imagery in latter Zoroastrian texts can obviously be attributed to the fact that Iranian Zoroastrians were in crisis due to the invasion of foreigners preaching a new religion, Boyce argues that this tendency towards apocalypticism is as old as Zoroastrianism itself. The notion of the fearsomeness of the evil forces opposing the followers of Ahura Mazda, she says, draws directly from the *Gathas*, which precede these Sasanian apocalypses by many centuries (Boyce 1984c: 71). She argues that Zoroaster lived around 1400, at a time of migration and expansion of the Iranians (1984c: 75), when circumstances would have brought the Iranians at odds with their neighbours and various peoples they had conquered or co-opted. Consequently, this could also have been a time of upheaval for the Iranians, a time of crisis; and as we have already seen in the introduction to this study, nations in crisis are the most likely to generate apocalypses (Otzen 1990: 157).

2. Multiple realms of the war between the forces of good and evil

Zoroastrianism sees the war between good and evil occurring on both a physical and a spiritual level. Man has two states in which he exists – the spiritual state of *mēnōg* and the physical state of *gētīg*. These two states are interrelated; man in his physical incarnation is as important to the cosmic battle against Ahriman as the spiritual, as well as being the natural completion of Ohrmazd's universe (Boyce 1976: 230).

The interrelation between abstract and physical is as obvious in the description of the Bounteous Immortals in Zoroastrian texts. They represent both abstract values held to be aspects of Ahura Mazda himself and the guardians or representatives of physical phenomena on the earth (Boyce 1976: 230) (see above, 5.2). The evil being Angra Mainyu/Ahriman, after witnessing the good creations of Ahura Mazda, answers with diametrically opposite beings, so that for every order of benign spirit or creature, concrete or spiritual, an evil antithesis exists.

The following description from the *Greater Bundahishn* illustrates how finely these multiple realms of the war were thought out, with Angra Mainyu's beings ordered against those of Ahura Mazda. Although it is a very lengthy extract, it is worth quoting in full because of the exhaustive combination of abstractions, spiritual beings and concrete beings on both sides of the cosmic war, illustrating the dualism on all levels of existence.

> Just as: Ahriman against Ohrmazd, Akoman against Vohuman, Indra against Ardwahisht, Sauru against Shahrewar, Naonhaithya, he whom they call Taromat also, against Spandarmad, Taurvi-ch against Hordad, and Zairi-ch against Amurdad, Eshm (Aeshma) against Srosh, Falsehood and Untruth against Truthfulness, the Spell of sorcery against the holy Manthra., Excess and Defectiveness against Temperance which is the good Religion, Wicked Thought, Wicked Utterance, and Wicked Deed against Good Thought, Good Word, and Good Deed, Astwihad which is called 'the Wicked Wind' against Ram which is 'the Good Wind', the pathless Varun against Innate Wisdom, Casting the evil eye which is Malignant Glance against Spiritual Sight, Idleness against Diligence, Lethargy against Sleep, Revenge against Peacefulness, Pain against Delight, Stink against Fragrance, Darkness against Light, Poison against Antidote, Bitterness against Sweetness, Parsimony against Charity, Avarice against Discriminate giving, Winter against Summer, Cold against Warmth, Dryness against Humidity, Hellishness against

Heavenliness, Wickedness against Holiness, Apostasy against Piety, Decrepitude against Youth, Night against Day, Unforgiveness against Mercifulness, 'Ganayih', that is, Smiting against Beneficence, Defilement against Purity, Contamination against Religious purification, Discontent against Contentment;

Other Div-ik growths against Yazad-ik growths, such as the Mazendaran Devs and Drujs against the Yazads, the Allotters of Destiny, the Beneficent. Immortals.

Even in the material existence: Darkness came against the Sky, Thirst against Water, Dry impurity, Noxious creatures and Lizard against the Earth, Hunger against the Tree, Hunger and Thirst against Beneficent Animals, Death and Pestilence against Healing, Diseases of various kinds against Mankind, the Extinction and Blowing against Fires, that is, when one makes them burn man and animal for dryness of the corporeal state, Lion and Thieves of the wolf species against Dogs and Animals, Lizard against Fishes, 'Bo' with other winged Noxious creatures against Birds, Wicked Apostates against Holy Men, 'Jahi' against Women, Unrighteous Armament against Righteous Armament, the Destroying Druj against Life promoting Lineage, and other material Drujs against the terrestrial Yazads.

Even in the Firmament: the dark Mihr came against the Sun, and the dark Moon against the Moon having the seed of the Beneficent Animal; they have bound the dark ones to their own ray by covenant; other winged Sorcerers with thirty fold destructive Planets) came (against the Constellations;) the seven Planet Chieftains against the seven Chieftains of the Constellations, such as the Planet Mercury (Tir) against Sirius (Tishtar), the Planetary Jupiter against the 'Seven Bears' (Haptoring), the Planetary Mars against Antares (Vanand), the Planetary Venus against Sataves, Saturn (who is the Chieftain of) the Planetary (Chieftains) against the Lord of Mid-Heaven, even the tailed Dragon and Mush Parik against the Sun, Moon, and Stars.

The Sun has bound Mush Parik to his own ray by covenant, so that she could commit little harm; (when she will get loose, she will allot much injury until recapture.
Also in the Cloud station, Spenjagra came against the Fire Vazisht, Apaus Dev against Sirius and the associates of Sirius.

<div align="right">(GBd V.1-6)</div>

This aspect of Zoroastrianism is distinct from any other religion in the Near East at the time. The Mesopotamian and Greek deities were representatives of natural forces who had to be appeased for agriculture to run smoothly, such as the Babylonian Adad, the

storm god who controls canals and waterways (Dalley 1998: 317) or the Greek Demeter, goddess of agriculture. Assyria's chief deity, Asshur, was a nationalistic god who acted as the champion of his people in their wars against other peoples (Kuhrt 1995: 504). These gods were regarded in the context of either subsistence (the gods have to be appeased for the people to survive) or political domination (the success of the Assyrian empire was one and the same as the success of the god Asshur). Even Yahweh started life as a nationalistic construct – a protector for the Old Testament's Israel and Judah. None of these cults saw the cosmos in the same light as the Zoroastrians – a giant battleground in which every creature, great, small, animate, inanimate, is bound up in a battle for cosmic supremacy.

3. Determinism and the periodisation of world history within a linear timeframe

Hultgård points out that Persian apocaclypticism has an "inner coherence between the beginning and the end": "The creation myth gives meaning to world history at the same time that it divides its course in great periods of world ages and millennia (Hultgård 2003: 34).

Zoroastrianism has a very distinctive and complex understanding of history – it positions itself in the middle, or towards the end, of a cosmic history divided into different stages. Schematically it can be represented as follows:

INFINITE HISTORY	FINITE HISTORY			INFINITE HISTORY
Ahura Mazda's cosmos exists in its *mēnōg* state, completely separate from and free of evil.	**CREATION 3 000 years** Ahura Mazda creates the world in its *gētīg* or physical state. Angra Mainyu is struck dumb by witnessing this physical world.	**MIXTURE 3 000 years** Angra Mainyu re-awakens and launches an attack on the *gētīg* world, polluting it and destroying some of the divinely-created beings.	**SEPARATION 3 000 years** Three saviours are born 1000 years apart to fight evil; in the final 1000 years the saviour arises; evil is eradicated and mankind is judged.	All mankind and good creatures live eternally in an idealized world, an ageless, deathless paradise.

(Table adapted from Hultgård 2003: 34-36 and Boyce 1976: 230-231)

Zoroastrian religion positions its subjects within a 9 000-year period[22] that slots in between two periods that stretch out infinitely. Finite history starts when Ahura Mazda creates the world in its physical state and Angra Mainyu is struck dumb for 3 000 years after witnessing this creation. Ahura Mazda foresees that Angra Mainyu will launch an attack on his perfect creation (GBd I.25-26) and determines that finite history will stretch for 9 000 years – 3 000 dominated by him, 3 000 in a mixed state where evil enters into the world and 3 000 during which the separation between good and evil will start; in this time, three sons of Zoroaster are born 1 000 years apart (Hultgård 2003: 36). A fair proportion of the Iranian apocalyptic texts are concerned with the transition from the "mixture" to the "separation".

The following passage, from the first chapter of the *Greater Bundahishn*, deals with the progress of finite history. The notions that world history is divided into different phases, has a predetermined outcome and the fact that Ahura Mazda has total control over time (GBd I.28) mean that the Zoroastrian view of world history is ultimately deterministic and unchangeable. The following passage underscores the fact that Ahura Mazda is ultimately in control of the entire creation and that ultimate victory in the cosmic war is a foregone conclusion, despite the noxiousness and insidiousness of Angra Mainyu's forces.

> Then, Ohrmazd knew, by means of omniscience: "If I do not fix a period for (his) contest too, he can do so unto My creatures, (as he will lead the onset and everlasting dispute and confusion; and during the confusion, he) can seduce (the creatures), and make them over to himself;" just as, even now, there are many men in the mingled state, who practise impiety more than piety, (that is, they are mostly performing the will of the Evil Spirit).
>
> Thereupon, Ohrmazd spoke to the Evil Spirit: "(I project) the time fixed for the contest in the mingled state, to nine thousand years;" for, He knew that He would render the Evil Spirit useless, by this fixation of time.

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[22] Some texts include the creation of the spirit-world within finite history, making it 12 000 years. Hultgård (2003: 36) notes that the 12 000 year-count only emanates from Islamic and post-Sasanian sources.

Then, the Evil Spirit agreed to that covenant, on account of inability to foresee the end; just as, two men, fighting together, fix up a period, saying: "Let (us) fight such and such a day up till (night)."

Ohrmazd knew this too, by means of omniscience: Within these nine thousand years, three thousand years will pass all according to the will of Ohrmazd; three thousand years (will pass) in the mingled state, according to the will of (both) Ohrmazd and Ahriman; and, in the final contest (He ought to render) the Evil Spirit useless, and He will withhold adversity from the creatures.

(GBd I.25-28)

An alternative account of Zoroastrian finite history occurs in the *Bahman Yasht*, where, as was explained above, the world history is depicted as a gradual deterioration from the golden age of Ahura Mazda to the steel age of Khuzrow (BYt 3.25-28, in Boyce 1984b: 92). Boyce argues that this particular ordering of finite history was a relatively late development of Achaemenid or post-Achaemenid times, taken over from Hesiod sometime around 300 BCE (1984c: 75).

While Zoroastrian authors may have borrowed from foreign sources in likening the ages of the world to metals, the finite delineation of different stages in finite history is a distinctive feature of the religion; Hultgård considers the religion's "inner coherence between the beginning and the end" unique to the Iranian worldview (2003: 34).

4. Tribulations leading up to the end times

Vesci draws a general link between the inherent cosmic dualism of Zoroastrianism and the role of suffering in human existence: "Contrary to many other traditions, Zoroastrianism accepts and meets it, finding for it a place in its own cosmology. Far from being simply the negative result of an act, for such a religion, Evil has its own positive value and has a proper personality. (…) For the Parsis, man cannot assume on himself the paternity of such a great and strong power which is Evil (and suffering derived from it)" (Vesci 1968: 223).

More specifically, Zoroastrian apocalyptic texts see suffering and evil manifestations in history in the same light modern Christian millenarians see them – as "signs of the times". Abnormal natural phenomena, a breakdown in social values, misfortune and hardship are seen as indications that the end of history and a confrontation between good and evil are approaching (Hultgård 2003: 37).

Lincoln, in his study of the Zoroastrian eschatological metaphor of a flattening of the earth (1983: 136-153) focuses on many "end of the world" scenarios in the Zoroastrian tradition that posit the end times as a time of disorder and privation, during which the righteous can expect no justice and the natural order of things is disturbed and inverted. This is vividly illustrated in one of the passages quoted by Lincoln, from the *Jāmāsp Nāmag*:

> And all Iran
> Falls to the hand of the enemy,
> And Aryan and non-Aryan mix together
> Such that non-Aryanhood is indistinguishable from Aryanhood
> And Aryan becomes like non-Aryan.
> In this time, the spiritual ones
> Consider the poor to be fortunate,
> But truly the poor are not fortunate.
> For the noble and the powerful,
> Life is without savour
> And death for them is as pleasant
> As the sight of a son is to a father
> Or a daughter's dowry to a mother,
> The value set for a daughter.
> The son strikes his father and mother,
> And during their life
> He takes authority over the house from them.
> The younger brother strikes his older brother,
> And he takes his wealth from him,
> And for the sake of that wealth, he speaks falsehood.
> Women create souls deserving death.
> The lowly achieve visibility.

(…)

The air is troubled,

A cold wind and a hot wind blow.

The fruits of the plants become scarce

And not one fruit comes from the earth.

Earthquakes become numerous

And cause great desolation.

(*Jāmāsp Nāmag* 12-21; 26-28, in Lincoln 1983: 145-146)

A similar theme occurs in the *Zand ī Vohuman Yasn/Bahman Yasht*:

> The petty ones take the daughters of the nobles and the powerful and the Magi in marriage, and the nobles and the powerful and the Magi go to poverty and servitude, while the petty ones are driven to leadership and foremost station. And the speech of the bearers of the (good) religion, the seal and decision of a just judge, the speech of the just ones and also of the Righteous becomes (regarded as mere) rabble-rousing, while the speech of the petty ones, the slanderous, the perverse, the mockers, and that of the Lie are regarded as just judgments and truth.

(*Zand ī Vohuman Yasn* 4.35-37, in Lincoln 1983: 147)

Both these texts deal with the breakdown in social order: Aryans are mixed with non-Aryans, and thus their sanctity is sullied. Families are torn apart by dishonesty and greed, those traditionally held in high regards are belittled and negated to the periphery of society and nature stops following its expected course, leading to famine, suffering and death. There is also mention of foreign invasions, such as the "Chionites and Turks" mentioned in the *Greater Bundahishn* (GBd XXXXXX.26) (Hultgård 2003: 38).

This tendency probably arose as a reaction to the difficult circumstances in which many of these apocalypses were written.

5. A final battle between good and evil at the end of finite history

The determinist history described in (3) above is heading inevitably towards its conclusion. The eschatological war between the forces of Ahura Mazda/Ohrmazd and the forces of Angra Mainyu/Ahriman is the natural conclusion of the treaty they enter into at the beginning of the 9 000 years of finite history (Hultgård 2003: 36). The *Greater*

Bundahishn describes this battle in fine detail, ordering each good entity in the war against its own evil adversary:

> Then Ohrmazd will seize the Evil Spirit, Vohuman will seize Akoman, Ardwahisht Indra, Shahrewar Sauru, Spandarmad Taromat that is Naonhaithya, Hordat and Amurdad will seize Taurvi and Zairi, truthful utterance will seize the untruthful utterance, and (the holy) Srosh will seize Aeshma {Eshm} (of the cruel spear).
> And then two drujs will remain, Ahriman and Az.
> Ohrmazd will come to the world, himself as Zot, and (the holy) Srosh as Raspi, and He will have the sacred girdle {kusti} in his hands.
> And the Evil Spirit and Az will hie back to the gloom and the darkness, across the passage of the terrestrial sky through which he had entered, with defeated stratagems and undone, by means of the gathic spell {nirang}.
> And the dragon Gochihr will be burnt by that melted metal, (and the metal will flow into the wicked existence, and) the stench and contamination within (the earth, where) the wicked existence was, will be consumed by that metal, and it will become pure. The hollow where through the Evil Spirit had entered is closed with that metal.
>
> (GBd XXXIV.27-31)

This battle heralds the end of the era of "mixture". Legend has it that Ahriman's pollution of creation started by piercing the hardened sphere of the sky and then proceeded to sully every aspect of the world – plants, water, animals, air, before being trapped within the existing world. (Hultgård 2003: 35). In this passage the tables are turned on Ahriman, as he is destroyed within the physical world in which he is forced to hide by the river of molten metal (see 8 below for more on the molten metal ordeal), and the hole through which he entered the world is re-sealed[23].

6. The coming of a saviour

All these eschatological events will be heralded by the arrival of a saviour, an earthly representative of the benevolent divine being, who will make preparations and lead the assault on the evil forces. There are several such messianic figures, who are all bound up

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[23] This "full circle" is slightly illogical – some accounts say Ahriman's first onslaught on the earth was to pierce the sky and enter through that. It is difficult to conceive a river of molten metal flowing up to the sky. One therefore has to accept that some of the myths had become mixed up over the centuries.

in early Zoroastrian legend, such as Zoroaster's first two mythical sons, Ušedar and Ušedarmāh, who will be born in the first and second millennium after Zoroaster. Then there are Kay Wahrām (the re-incarnation of an early mythic Iranian ruler), Pišyōtan (an immortal warrior with a retinue of 150 soldiers who had been waiting in the stronghold of the early mythic rulers of Iran) and Sōšāns/Saošyant (Hultgård 2003: 39).

Of these, Sōšāns/Saošyant is the most important, as he will introduce the 57 years of the restoration of the world (see 8 below). He begins the assault on evil forces that result in the cosmic battle described in 5 above, by mustering an army and making war on "the demon of perverted truth" and other lesser demons by performing traditional Zoroastrian religious rites (Hultgård 2003: 41). In some accounts, the saviour also helps to resurrect the dead so they can face the final judgment (see 8 below) (Hultgård 2003: 42).

The saviour-figure who shows up in the earliest extant Zoroastrian tradition is Astvat-ereta, mentioned in Yasht 19 as the one who takes up the sword of the legendary Vishtashpa, Zoroaster's patron (see 5.3 above) (Boyce 1984c: 90).

7. The cleansing of creation and a final judgment

A great judgment awaits all creation at the end of the current age (Boyce 1984c: 57). All humanity, after remaining in a kind of spiritual hiatus between dying and the "making wonderful" (Soshyant) of creation, is resurrected for the judgment, where those and the evil will be separated and assigned their separate fates (Schwartz 1985b: 670). This process is described in detail in the *Greater Bundahishn*:

> First the frame of Gayomard will rise, then (they will raise) those of Mashye and Mashyane, and then these of other persons.
> (And) in fifty-seven years Soshyant will raise all the dead. And whichever men are righteous and which ever are wicked, all men will wake up. All persons will re-awaken from there where their life had departed (or they had first fallen on earth.
> And) then, when they have restored the physical and astral bodies of all material lives, they will give them their protoplasm; and (they will give) one half of the light accompanying the sun unto Gayomard, and one half to other men.

> (Then men) will recognise (men), that is, a soul will recognise (a soul, a body) another body, that this is my father, this is my mother, this is my brother, this is my wife, and this is any whatsoever of my very near relatives.
>
> Then the assembly of Isadvastar will meet, that is, all men of this earth will stand.
>
> In that assembly, every person will see his own good deeds and evil deeds. The righteous will be as conspicuous amongst the wicked as a white sheep amongst the black.
>
> In that assembly, whatever righteous man was friend of a wicked one in the world, (that) wicked man will complain of that righteous one, "Why didst thou not inform me in material life of the virtuous deeds that thou thyself performedst?" If that righteous man had not informed him (in this manner) he shall have to undergo ignominy in that assembly.
>
> (GBd XXXIV.6-12)

The cleansing of creation at the "making wonderful" also includes a horrifying ordeal involving a river of molten metal through which all living beings must pass in order to test their righteousness or sinfulness.

> Then fire and Airyaman Yazad will melt the metal which is within the hills and mountains, and it will remain on this earth like a river.
>
> And then they will cause all men to pass into that melted metal, and will make them pure. And to him who is righteous it will so seem as if he is walking in warm milk; and to him who is wicked it will seem in such manner that he is walking in the world in melted metal.
>
> (GBd XXIV.18-20)

This ordeal at the end times echoes an ancient Iranian custom akin to the Mesopotamian water ordeal[24] (Kuhrt 1995: 106), only much more painful. In order to establish whether or not someone was guilty of a transgression, an accused person had liquified molten metal poured on his breast. Should the person be guilty, he would die, but should he be innocent, he would survive, as it was expected that the divine powers would intervene to save the righteous and not the wicked (Boyce 1976: 243).

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[24] In the water ordeal, someone accused of a crime is forced to swim across a river. Should the accused drown, he is deemed guilty, but when he makes it to the other side, he is deemed innocent. These ordeals could be done by proxy, so an aristocratic accused could get someone to undergo the ordeal in his place (Kuhrt 1995: 107).

In the final eschatological "making wonderful" of creation, this molten metal ordeal seems to ultimately cleanse humankind of evil. An interesting feature of Zoroastrianism is that both righteous and evil will ultimately end up in the perfect, timeless world of the hereafter. After death, the righteous go to heaven and the wicked to hell and remain there until the coming of the Sōšāns/Saošyant. At the "making wonderful" of creation, they are brought back from heaven and hell, given a new body and made to pass through the river of molten metal. Although this ordeal will sear the unrigheous as does real molten metal, the unrighteous will survive this ordeal cleansed of all evil and enter the eternal heaven (Hultgård 2003), which means that even the most evil humans' punishment, although horrible, will only be temporary[25].

8. Heavenly paradise in the world to come

According to the Zoroastrian tradition, an idealised and pleasurable eternity awaits after the "making wonderful" or *frašgird* – all humans will be made immortal and the earth will rise to the sky so both heavenly and earthly creatures will live in the same heaven, according to the Pahlavi *Rivāyat*. There will be much praise of Ohrmazd and other deities, life will be pleasureable and the landscape will be pleasant (Hultgård 2003: 45).

> "They will restore with the age of forty years those who had attained to manly proportions. And they will reproduce with the age of fifteen years those who were minors and had not attained to age. And they will give everyone his wife and children, and they will make demonstrations of regard towards their wives, just as now in material life, but there will be no begetting of children."
>
> (GBd XXXIV.24)

In addition, plants and animals associated with the good creation will be restored, and they will not wither or die; and the earth will be "extended without steep mountains and hills" (GBd XXXIV.33; Hultgård 2003: 45).

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[25] In the Zoroastrian tradition, a man's soul departs from the earth at dawn of the third day after death. He is met by a woman, either a young beautiful one who leads him up to heaven (if he had been righteous), or a hideous one who takes him to hell (if he hadn't been) (Boyce 1976: 237) and his actions are judged by means of a scale, in which all good words, thoughts and deeds are weighed up at the bridge between heaven and hell (Boyce 1976: 241).

With evil removed, linear time also ceases to exist, and with it, birth, ageing and death. The new world has no new humans – all children will be 15 for eternity and all adults will be 40. All the tension that exists in the current cosmos of finite time, permeated as it is by the opposition between good and evil, ceases to exist. This bears out the notion that emerges from Zoroastrianist belief that the opposition between good and evil in the physical world is also a creative force – the death of the first-created man, Gayomard, led to the creation of many diverse humans; the presence of evil in the physical world is the cause of decay and death, but also of the birth of new humans, animals and plants. In the future vision, the good plants and animals will exist in a state of stasis similar to humankind.

Lincoln argues that the flattening of the earth is the ultimate sign of the earth being made wonderful and part of the process by which mankind is unified in love and all class distinctions extinguished (Lincoln 1983: 142), which is essentially a modern Western take on utopia, in which no inequalities exist and in which everyone prospers.

9. Divine revelation and otherworldly journeys

Modern apocalyptic scholarship revolves mainly around Judaic texts, and it was only at the 1979 International Colloquium on Apocalypticism at Uppsala that apocalypticism in cultures adjacent to the Judaeans was first brought into this mainstream of scholarship (Hellholm 1979: 2). One of the mainstays of defining a text as apocalyptic is the divine revelation by means of an otherworldly journey (see Chapter 6) (Webb 1990: 125).

In the Iranian apocalyptic traditions, divine revelations come to humanity through three figures: Zoroaster, Vištašpa and Ĵāmāspa. They take on various forms, including historical narrative, theological *zand* (a theological discussion of a religious text), and question-and-answer conversations between the medium of the apocalypse and Ahura Mazda (Hultgård 1979: 393, 400).

Iranian apocalypticism also contains one apocalyptic text recounting an otherworldly journey, the *Ardā Wirāz Namag*, a Pahlavi account of a pious man, Wirāz, who is chosen

by his people to ask for divine guidance on prayers and religious ceremony. He enters a fire temple, drinks wine mixed with henbane, falls asleep for seven days and leaves his body, seeing paradise and hell, accompanied by the Zoroastrian guardian angel Srōš and the fire divinity Adur (Hultgård 2003: 45).

From the scant evidence that remains of the Zoroastrian religion, it seems as if such revelatory, trance-like prophecies had a long tradition in the religion and could most probably be even an older Iranian tradition than Zoroastrianism itself. Ceremonies such as the *haoma*-ceremony, which involves an organic stimulant being taken by a priest, is believed to date back to the Indo-Iranian cults (Boyce 1979: 5).

In addition, some scholars argue on linguistic basis that the *hampursagīh* texts, which seem to form a basis for many of the otherworldly journeys described in the Zoroastrian apocalyptic tradition (such as the journey of Ĵāmāsp, see 5.3 above), go back as far as Avestan times (Hultgård 2003: 33).

It is obvious that the prophetic accounts from which all the above attributes of Iranian apocalypticism were taken were originated by people who believed, or wanted to believe, that real divine revelation from Ahura Mazda had taken place. In this regard, the prophetic tradition of the Gathas seem to have emerged from the initial revelation Ahura Mazda made to Zoroaster around 1400 BCE, as they are direct addresses to the deity and narrative of heavenly revelations made to the prophet by the deity (Boyce 1984b:2).

The concept of divine revelation through a trance-like state is of course not unique, being a common feature of surviving primitive communities and widely in evidence among the archaeological and textual remains of ancient civilisations.

5.5 Using the Iranian apocalyptic tradition in comparative studies
Scholars studying religious influences of the Zoroastrian tradition on other Near-Eastern peoples, notably on the Jewish cults of the Second Temple Period, seem to have taken the Iranian impact on Jewish thought for granted, undoubtedly due to the uncontroversial

reality that the Israelites lived under the Persian Achaemenid empire for about 200 years (Barr 1985: 204), and the equally uncontroversial reality that the influences of dominant imperial cultures tend to rub off on their subject peoples. (One need look no further than the British legacy of administration, culture and language in former British colonies such as South Africa, India and Australia, which all spent considerably less time under British rule than Judah spent under Achaemenid rule.)

However, this unquestioning acceptance of Iranian influence on Jewish cults has recently come under closer scrutiny, notably with James Barr's considered and thoroughgoing analysis of some of these traditional assumptions in *The question of religious influence: The case of Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Christianity* (1985), which poses some hard questions on receptiveness on the side of the Judaeans, structural similarities or dissimilarities between the two religions and some of the linguistic evidence relied upon in the past to prove such cross-pollination.

An argument that the concepts of cosmic dualism and a linear concept of history with a predetermined outcome originated in Iran would rest on whether or not these apocalyptic beliefs originated early enough in Iranian religious history and were prevalent enough during the early Second Temple Period to have been of significant influence (Hultgård 2003: 30).

Scholars critical of the traditional acceptance of Iranian influence have found much to fault upon re-considering the available historical data. Although the comparative merits of the two scholarly camps will be discussed in Chapter 6, their reservations revolve chiefly around the following questions:

- Can an Iranian apocalyptic tradition documented as late as the Middle Ages be ascribed to a tradition dating back as far as the Achaemenid Empire?
- Were the Jews receptive to Persian religious influences?
- Are there alternative or more likely sources from which seemingly Persian apocalyptic notions within Judaean thought could have come?

5.5.1 Was the Persian apocalyptic tradition unchanged from the time of Zoroaster to Sasanian times?

Should significant elements of Iranian apocalypticism have originated in the time of the Avesta, this would prove conclusively that Zoroastrianism is the earliest religion to believe in a linear conception of history. However, the oldest body of Zoroastrian texts, the Avesta, contains only isolated elements that may be interpreted as apocalyptic, and no coherent apocalyptic tradition can be restored from the Avesta (Hultgård 2003: 30).

The traditional view among the older Iranian scholars such as Mary Boyce, Geo Widengren, Emile Benveniste and Arthur Christensen, is that the main body of ancient Zoroastrian concepts dating back to the early Hellenistic period and earlier had been conserved in texts like the 9th or10[th]-century *Bahman Yasht*, and that these concepts predate Greek and Jewish texts displaying similar concepts (Hultgård 1991: 119). This has been disputed by scholars from a Biblical or Greek background arguing in favour of either intra-Jewish development or Greek influence (see 2 below).

Phillippe Gignoux, however, seeks no further grounds for denying Iranian influence on Judaean beliefs than the Iranian history itself. He argues that the many centuries that elapsed and the linguistic changes and evident textual redaction that occurred in between the origins of the Avesta and the writing down of the apocalyptic texts (in this case the Bahman Yasht), would have diluted and/or blurred apocalyptic concepts originating during different historic periods. This would render the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* (and, by definition, other Sasanian and post-Sasanian apocalyptic texts) useless as a source of Zoroastrian apocalypticism from the Achaemenid and early Hellenistic eras in Judaean history (Hultgård 1991: 119).

Any studies on Persian apocalypticism before the Sasanian times stand and fall by this question, and with so few original sources, it is a very difficult point to argue conclusively. In order to prove Avestan or at least Achaemenid-contemporary religious concepts in Sasanian texts, one needs to search for grammatical or syntactical remnants

of Old Persian in the Pahlavi (Middle-Persian) texts. Söderblom, Nyberg and Widengren have relied mainly on this technique for evidence of Old Persian in the latter texts (Barr 1985: 202). Boyce has also argued that Avestan linguistic features have remained in the later texts (Hultgård 2003: 31).

Boyce argued further that the containment of the literature shows continuity of the literary tradition, including the apocalyptic tradition. Because very little of the remaining Zoroastrian apocalyptic literature comes from outside Pars/Persia, she says, it can therefore be assumed to have been written by Persian priests (Boyce 1984c: 70).

Hultgård argues that the conservative nature of Zoroastrianism could preclude the incorporation of new, foreign apocalyptic traditions into its teachings (Hultgård 2003: 31). Given that so much of the non-apocalyptic Zoroastrian traditions, which *can* be traced from Avestan times, remained until Pahlavi times, why would the apocalyptic traditions be new? As Otzen has pointed out, apocalypticism is a sign of crisis (Otzen 1990: 157), and the history of the Zoroastrian cult was characterised by crisis from its earliest times, as is evidenced by the preserved history of Zoroaster, whose religious reforms were said to have led to war and strife (Boyce 1979: 30-31).

Without more textual sources enabling accurate dating of the different apocalyptic traditions, all studies on dating Iranian apocalypticism will have to rely on the available Zoroastrian traditions and linguistic analysis. However, both these arguments are very persuasive when one bears in mind against which enormous odds the Zoroastrian tradition survived, given the centuries of persecution that followed the Arab conquest of Iran (Boyce 1979: 181).

5.5.2 Judaean interest in Persian religion
Some scholars believe that the Jewish Second Temple notions of cosmic dualism, the spiritual world and determinist eschatology came from the Greeks and not the Persians. Barr argues that post-exilic Old Testament texts believed to have originated during or shortly after Persian rule, such as Ezra, Nehemiah and Ezra, seem to be far less

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preoccupied with the Persian cultic practices than Persian court ceremony and power (Barr 1985: 210). Therefore, he argues, the Old Testament authors could not have had any interest in Persian religion, and therefore the dualism, determinism and eschatology had to have evolved either within the Judaic cult or came from somewhere else (Barr 1985: 209).

The Greeks, on the other hand, are on the record as being very interested in the Zoroastrian doctrines – some of our best sources on Zoroastrianism are in fact Greek, such as Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride*, information for which he seems to have had from Theopompos of Chios, Eudoxus and Hermodorus (Barr 1985: 218). Boyce herself argues that the Greeks came under the influence of magi who moved into the Western reaches of the Achaemenid Empire, and that this could have been the means by which other cultures absorbed Persian ideas (Boyce 1982: 48). In fact, Boyce is of the opinion that the vision of world history as given in the *Bahman Yasht* was in fact due to Iranian exposure to the Greek writings of Hesiod (Boyce 1984c: 70).

As for the argument that just because the Judaean authors of post-exilic Old Testament texts did not seem interested in Persian cult, they were not influenced by it (Barr 1985: 210) – this does not necessarily hold water. As has been argued above in 3.2, the Old Testament texts that offer the most overt evidence of the Jews under Persian rule seem to have come from a very specific faction within the Judaean community and were written to advance a particular political-religious agenda. They can therefore not be seen as representative of the entire Judaean "nation" as such, and therefore a silence on Persian religion in these texts do not preclude either a receptiveness to Persian religious ideas or actual Persian religious influence.

Furthermore, one has to pose the question whether, if Iranian elements seeped into Judaean apocalyptic thought via a third party such as the Greeks, such apocalyptic ideas became Greek instead of Iranian.

5.5.3 Possible alternative sources of apparently Iranian apocalyptic elements

There is also a school of thought believing that aspects appearing to be of Iranian origin within the Jewish religion in fact developed organically within the cult in Judah. Thus Colpe argued that the concepts underlying the dualism in the Dead Sea Scrolls (see next chapter) do not correspond with that of Zoroastrianism and could as easily have evolved from a "process of hypostatization[26] that had similarly affected a number of religions at the same time" (Barr 1985: 226) – certainly a valid argument, given the nature of complex Greek philosophy filtering into the Near East during this time. Furthermore, Barr argues that the ritual purity believed by Boyce to be of an Iranian origin may as well have originated in Jewish tradition (Barr 1985: 228).

Scholars like M. Gaster and J. Darmeseter reject the idea that there might have been any Iranian elements anywhere in Judaism (Shaked 1984: 324), but Shaked himself seems reluctant to agree with such a view. John J. Collins argues that "whatever was taken over from Persian apocalypticism was thoroughly reconceived and integrated with other strands of thought" (Collins 1998: 33).

This aspect of the debate will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 9.

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[26] The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines hypostatization as a process by which something is "(made) into or (regarded) as a self-existent substance or person".

CHAPTER 6: JUDAEAN APOCALYPTICISM

6.1 The development of apocalypticism in Judaean populations of the Near East

6.1.1 Political-historical circumstances

No reading of Judaean apocalypticism can be separated from the events that took place in Judah during the time that most of these texts were written. Apocalypticism in Judaean thought flowered mainly from the early Hellenistic period, although there are early indications of apocalyptic thought in Judaean religious writings from the Persian Empire (Grabbe 1992: 199). The two-and-a-half centuries after Alexander the Great's conquest of the Persian Empire in *c.* 323 BCE saw the Judaeans being subject to socio-political instability on a number of levels, which, because of the interwoven nature of Judaean politics and religion from the time of Persian rule in Judah and Israel, invariably led to much trauma.

It is instructive, in this regard, to compare the position of Syro-Palestine during the Hellenistic period with that of the Persian period. Under the Persian Empire, the entire Near East was unified under one political entity. Although the Persian Empire was of a very decentralised nature, all political power ultimately lay with the Great King of Persia (Dandamaev 1989: 101). As such, Judah and Israel were geopolitically relatively unimportant – Judah especially was not particularly wealthy and it was not in a particularly strategic position with regard to the protection of Persian territories[27] (Grabbe 2004: 275).

In the Hellenistic period, however, this scenario changed. What had been the Persian Empire was broken up into two power blocs subsequent to the 40 years of warring among Alexander the Great's generals (the *diadochi*) that followed his death – the Seleucid kingdom spanning the core of the Achaemenid Empire, from modern-day western Turkey

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[27] It has been argued that by creating a special Judaean province with loyalties to Persia "took place in a wider strategic context, with the ultimate goal, sooner or later, of conquering Egypt (Briant 2002: 48), but this is disputed by other scholars (e.g. Grabbe 2004: 275)

to Afghanistan (Boardman *et al* 2001: 311-312) and the Ptolemaic kingdom in Egypt. There was intense rivalry between these two kingdoms, manifesting in border wars (the so-called Syrian Wars, of which six took place between 274 BCE and 168 BCE), territorial disputes and political conspiracies (Grabbe 1992: 213).

Judah and Israel lay right on the fault line of these two political powers, and as such, it grew considerably in political importance in the power play between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids. Suddenly the actions of the Judaean political classes potentially had an influence on international affairs again. What especially played in their hands was the dynastic instability of especially the Seleucid empire – there was almost always a challenger to the Seleucid throne, making it possible for the Judaean leaders to play one off against the other and use the dynastic and inter-dynastic rivalries to their advantage. A telling event in this regard was the ambitious high priest Menelaus, who persuaded Antiochus IV to depose the serving high priest Jason by means of a large bribe, which would help finance Antiochus's Egyptian campaign, one of the precursors to the violent Maccabean revolt (Grabbe 1992: 277).

Along with the unstable political landscape, the Judaeans were also subject to intense cultural forces. Like other subjects of the *diadochi*'s successors, they gradually assimilated a varied degree of Greek language and culture – the Judaeans' Yehuda coins were made in the style of those of Ptolemy I's, the Pentateuch was translated into Greek possibly around the middle of the third century, and nobles like the Judaean Tobias could gain favour and standing in the eyes of their Greek rulers (Grabbe 1992: 166; 217). In the generations following the Maccabean revolt, however, it became even clearer that Hellenism was taking a firm root in the land of Judah. Gruen notes that "the Hasmoneans themselves, in the course of the century that followed the Maccabaean revolt, engaged regularly in diplomatic dealings with Greek kings, adopted Greek names, donned garb and paraded emblems redolent with Hellenic significance, erected monuments, displayed stelai and minted coinage inspired by Greek models, hired mercenaries, and even took on titulature" (Gruen 1998: 2).

These external influences had various effects on the population of Israel and Judah – it led to divisions among the priesthood that filtered down to the population in general, leading to diverse interpretations of the Torah. The most notable manifestation of this diversity is the development of the three priestly-political classes of the Sadducees, the Pharisees and the Essenes. In this regard, Otzen notes that early Judaism saw an "opposition between western and eastern culture, (… the) *polis* and *ethnos*", and that "all of the many religious groupings related to this tension in one way or another" (1990: 110).

These movements reflect the various attitudes of the Judaean populace towards the new developments in the region. The **Sadducees** belonged mainly to the upper classes, were religiously conservative but understood the value of co-operating with the Hellenistic forces in society in order to gain wealth and eminence, although they were nothing like the "opportunistic Hellenizers" who were willing to sacrifice their heritage in order to stay in the Greeks' good books (Otzen 1990: 113). The **Pharisees** were a middle-class movement and more fundamentalist in nature – preoccupied with observing the religious laws at all costs, insisting on non-priests to observe the same religious laws as the priests and wanting to create "renewed awareness of their religious inheritance and to attempt to adhere to what the membership regarded as the central line in Judaean religion: the Law as the norm for every detail of individual life" and "penance for the people's failure to uphold the ancient religious ideals" (Otzen 1990: 117). The **Essenes** were an isolationist group who separated themselves from Judaean society and the temple both physically and ideologically and expressed their religion through asceticism and "a degree of purity which ruled out any kind of normal life in a normal society" (Otzen 1990: 151)[28].

It is not surprising that such wide-ranging responses to foreign occupation and cultural-religious changes led to violence and unrest. **National-religious revolutionary movements** made an appearance – first under Simon Maccabee and his sons, rebelling

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[28] Whether or not the Qumran community was an extreme branch of Essenism is widely debated among scholars, but this question is not immediately relevant to this study.

against the Seleucid king Antigonus Epiphanes's unprecedented[29] assault on the Judaean religion. While the Maccabean revolt had a measure of success (the independent Hasmonean state lasted for about 80 years), the fundamentalist groupings that arose in the latter part of the Hellenistic period and the Roman period, were less successful. While groupings like the Zealots and the *sicarii* (which means "assasins) played a key role in the uprisings against Roman rule, they weakened Judaean national unity considerably by attacking Jews they saw as Roman collaborators, kidnapping and thuggery (Grabbe 1992: 500-501).

6.1.2 Development of apocalyptic

One would not find much overt evidence of the rich heritage of apocalyptic literature generated in especially the Hellenistic era by looking at the Old Testament – apart from Daniel, no apocalyptic text was included in the canon of the Old Testament, and formal Judaism from this period generally had a narrow understanding of revelation, confining all revelation to the Pentateuch. The Pharisaical-rabbinic line, which represented a kind of "mainstream" Judaean religion, was reluctant to accept these apocalyptic texts, most probably because they were produced outside of the religious mainstream. These apocalypses were however part of the canon in several Near Eastern Christian congregations, as they were translated into Greek, Latin, Ethiopic and Syriac (Otzen 1990: 158).

Some scholars believe that apocalypticism started evolving in Judaean literature earlier than the Greek conquest of Syro-Palestine, despite the fact that the earliest extant autonomous apocalyptic text, 1 Enoch, dates from the early part of Greek rule. Apocalypticism flourished in the Hellenistic times, but it is difficult to ascertain what part it played in overall Judaean thought – whether it was part of the religious mainstream or the product of a "visionary party or peripheral conventicles", as has been argued by

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[29] The outlawing of a religious cult was unprecedented in the Ancient Near East, where imperial powers generally followed a policy of religious tolerance, and where observance to the state deity was a formality that did not preclude the traditional ethnic deities. Grabbe surmises that "Whatever the exact reason for Antiochus's anti-Judaism decrees, some Jews seem to have been involved somehow with these decrees. Antiochus was concerned with politics, and religious matters were only incidental to his principal goals, which were those of most politicians: money and power" (Grabbe 1992: 256).

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Plöger and Hanson, because most of our primary sources of Judaean society at the time, like Josephus, Ben Sira and Hecateus of Abdera, are silent on apocalypticism (Grabbe 1992: 218).

Grabbe, however, argues that apocalyptic literature probably did play a role in a broad section of Judaean society, as it is possible for someone to have an interest in apocalyptic thought and speculation, and to believe in its principles, without necessarily giving overt expression to such beliefs. It would also have been unlikely for the believers of Judah to have "advertised" their beliefs that their god would overthrow their rulers (Grabbe 1992: 218).

Otzen argues that apocalypticism must have developed at least partially within a priestly context – there are many examples of priestly and cultic matters in the literature (it has a very prominent role in books like the Jubilees, the Testament of Levi and 2 Enoch). His most persuasive argument is, however, the many astronomical references in apocalyptic literature: the priests were the astronomers, as they had to draw up a calendar of the year's religious festivals (Otzen 1990: 220).

One of the key aspects of apocalypticism is the notion of eschatology – most authors of apocalyptic texts were in some or other way preoccupied with how the end times would play out. Apocalypticism clearly bears resemblance to prophecy, and Biblical scholars such as Collins argue that the notion of the end of the world has its origins in prophets predicting the doom of specific places. Thus the first assertion that "the end" was at hand appears in the Old Testament book of Amos (8.2), which, although in the context of Amos's prophecy meant the end of the Northern kingdom of Israel, it pointed the way to successive generations implying this "end" was a day of judgment (Collins 2003: 64).

Collins identifies three phases in this development of eschatology: the first phase being during the sixth and early fifth century BCE, when the Judaean returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile; the second being during the Hellenistic period, climaxing during Antiochus IV Epiphanes' suppression and the Maccabean revolt; and the third

happens during the rise of Christianity and the aftermath of Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE (Collins 2003: 65).

Paul D Hanson had argued that a sharp division in the Judaean community during the Persian period, between a "hierocratic" party, an "ideological" grouping, represented by Haggai, Zechariah 1-8 and Ezekiel 40-48, focusing on "the preservation of the sacred" and the retention of the existing religious hierarchies and structures; and a "visionary" party, a "utopian" grouping, represented by Isaiah 56-66, which focused on social and humanitarian concerns and undermining the existing religious hierarchies and structures. While this analysis may be an over-simplification, it points to divisions within the Judaean community as a starting point for hope in a positive resolution of trouble in an eschatological event (Collins 2003: 66-67).

Very little is known of the groups that transmitted eschatological expectations during the early post-exilic period under Persian rule. Characteristics of this period's prophecy that can be deemed to have apocalyptic characteristics include the following:

- the use of an increasing amount of cosmic imagery to express the hope of a change in human fortunes;
- the judgment of which expectation is expressed in a prophecy is given a general character that cannot be associated with any specific historical events, even though the prophecy probably originated in a particular historical context;
- ancient myths of the deity combating evil is projected into the future as a paradigm for a new creation;
- eschatological hopes arise to compensate for powerlessness of Israel among the nations and console groups that were alienated from power structures within the Judahite society;
- the restoration hoped for in these texts are oriented towards a restored earthly condition rather than a heavenly one (Collins 2003: 67-68).

In the second phase of eschatological development, the early apocalyptic texts 1 Enoch and Daniel constitute a new literary genre which represents a world-view new to the Judaean world: one in which supernatural beings are prominent and have a profound influence on human affairs; and one in which a final judgment of nations and individuals is expected (Collins 2003: 77).

The third bloom-period of apocalypticism in Judaean tradition was around the Roman destruction of Jerusalem following the revolt of the Judaeans around 70 CE, which, as a response to crisis, also exhibits a spread in apocalyptic ideas that took place since the time of the Maccabean revolts. Collins argues this spreading is evident in the evidence of apocalyptic eschatology in works like the Qumran War Scroll, the Similitudes of Enoch (1 Enoch 37-71) and the Sybilline Oracles (Collins 2003: 78-79).

6.2 The Judaean apocalyptic tradition

6.2.1 An overview of the Judaean apocalyptic tradition

The Judaean texts listed most commonly as forming part of the body of apocalyptic texts is listed as follows by John J. Collins, one of the most prolific and influential scholars on Judaean apocalyptic: 1 and 2 Enoch, Daniel, 4 Ezra, 2 and 3 Baruch, the Apocalypse of Abraham, the Testament of Levi 2-5, the Apocalypse of Zephaniah, and "with some qualifications", Jubilees and the Testament of Abraham (Collins 1998: 5). Most of these texts were penned in the Hellenistic period, or shortly before, and it is generally assumed that they were written in reaction to crisis brought about by Hellenistic philosophical influence as well as confrontation with Hellenistic authorities (Otzen 1990: 157). Some texts also date from the Roman period, and would be associated with what Collins terms the third bloom period of apocalyptic during the rise of Christianity and the aftermath of Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE (Collins 2003: 65).

It is not within the scope of this study to deal with the details of all of these texts, but in short, they deal with the following:

1 and 2 Enoch is a tradition of heavenly journeys and revelations undertaken by an immediate descendant of Noah (Collins 1998: 44), the great-great-great-great grandchild of Adam and Eve, who is scarcely mentioned in the Old Testament, save in Gen 5.24: "having walked with God, Enoch was seen no more, because God had taken him away" (Otzen 1990: 159). Enoch received a series of heavenly revelations and undertook journeys into heaven and hell with specific orders to repeat these revelations to his descendents (Otzen 1990: 159).

Daniel is the only apocalyptic text to be included in the canon of the Old Testament, and includes a heavenly revelation in which Daniel is shown how history will proceed up to the time of the coming of a Messiah, including an apocalyptic dream-vision in which four beasts arising from the sea are likened to four kingdoms and the coming of what could be a saviour figure (Collins 1998:101).

4 Ezra is a redaction of several different texts that contains seven visions. The first three visions are three dialogues with the angel Uriel; this is followed by a vision of Zion first as a woman and then a city, both of which visions are explained by Uriel. The fifth is a vision of an eagle, the sixth the vision of a man arising from the sea and the seventh a heavenly voice from a bush, in which the recipient of the vision addresses his people and has the revelations written down (Collins 1998: 197-198).

2 and 3 Baruch also draw on diverse traditional material. **2 Baruch** dates from after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70CE. It opens with a vision of the destruction of Zion and a heavenly paradise is forecast, followed by a dialogue between Baruch and God stressing the importance of the "world to come". Then follows three visions and an interpretation of the vision by the angel Ramiel. Finally, Baruch writes a letter to the tribes (Collins 1998: 219-220). **3 Baruch** is from the Diaspora, and deals with Baruch being taken on a tour of five heavens by an angel (Collins 1998: 248).

The **Apocalypse of Abraham** tells of Abraham's conversion from idolatory and then progresses into a heavenly revelation where an angel, Jaoel, guides Abraham through

heaven, shows him the creation, explained the fall from Eden and the history of sin in the world, followed by a vision of the Gentiles plundering the temple, after which the revelation is explained by God and a vision is given of the end times: a messiah will gather the Jews and their adversaries will be burned in Hades (Collins 1998: 227).

The **Testament of Levi** is reminiscent of Enoch and contains a dream-vision in which Levi is led through the seven heavens (Otzen 1990: 177).

The **Apocalypse of Zephaniah** is a fragmentary account of the prophet Zephaniah being shown the fifth heaven (Collins 1998: 242).

Jubilees is "an expansionistic paraphrase of Genesis and … Exodus down to the revelation of Sinai", focusing on religious festivals and the religious calendar, which purports to be a revelation to Moses (Collins 1998: 81).

The **Testament of Abraham** is an early-Jewish novel in which Abraham receives a vision that he is about to die, but then uses his position as God's friend to forestall his death and goes on a journey through creation and witnesses the judgment (Wills 1995: 250-251)

Some of the lists of attributes distilled from scholarly study of the Judaean apocalyptic texts are as follows:

Benedikt Otzen (1990: 162-163) isolates four characteristic traits of apocalyptic texts, using Daniel as a blueprint:

- 'revelations' concerning the course of history which are projected back into the past, although in reality they are seen from the point of view of the apocalyptic author (and his reader);

- speculations about the 'period' of history, based on the assumption that history is predetermined by the hand of the Creator, so that it is possible to know when the end is coming;

- numerological speculations which allow the apocalyptic author to calculate the time of the end with even greater accuracy;

- 'predictions' are placed in the mouth of one of the great figures of Israel's past;

- heavenly visions (which are, he argues, absent from Daniel, as Daniel is not escorted through heavens like Enoch and other apocalyptic figures).

H.P. Müller, in turn, lists the most important traits of apocalyptic literature as follows:

- eschatological orientation (the texts have to do with the conclusion of the known physical and spiritual world);

- determinism (the end of days have already been determined and history is inexorably on its way there);

- the seer's claims to a special enlightenment or authorization (apocalypses are delivered by the deity himself or a messenger of the deity);

- the tendency to encode reality in symbols (the Jewish apocalypses contain astrological, numerological and other codes by which they convey their messages, instead of saying things outright);

- pseudonymity (the apocalypses often claim to have been written by a figure well-known to their audience's recent past in order to give the prophecies contained within more credibility) (in Vanderkam 1984:7).

Klaus Koch's list of characteristics from *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic* (1972, quoted in: Collins 1998: 12) focuses on eschatology[30]:

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[30] Koch's definition, which is based on external attributes of some apocalypses and focuses mainly on eschatology, has since been superseded by the *Semeia 14* definition and Hanson's subsequent elaboration on it (see Chapter 2 above). Webb points out that Koch's approach defines the apocalyptic genre in terms of eschatology and "neglects other ideas and motifs which are prominent in certain apocalypses", such as lists of revealed things, mysticism, existential anthropology and historiography (Webb 1990: 119).

- urgent expectation of the end of earthly conditions in the immediate future

- the end as a cosmic catastrophe

- periodization and determinism

- activity of angels and demons

- new salvation, paradisal in character

- manifestation of the kingdom of God

- a mediator with royal functions

- the catchword "glory"

Collins points out that some scholars have denied the existence of an apocalyptic eschatology on the grounds that **not all Judaean apocalypses exhibit a consistent eschatology**, and that "the common equation of 'apocalyptic' with the scenario of the end of history is based only on the 'historical' type like Daniel, and scholars have rightly objected that this is not typical of all apocalypses". However, "all the apocalypses (…) involve a transcendent eschatology that looks for **retribution beyond the bounds of history**", which sometimes takes the form of individual judgment after death. Although both these attributes occur in other types of texts, the Judaean apocalyptic genre is distinguished by a "distinctive combination of elements, all of which are also found elsewhere" (Collins 1998: 11-12).

With regard to the literary conventions, Judaean apocalyptic texts "constantly **echo biblical phrases**". In some cases, apocalypses aim to interpret biblical passages directly, as does Daniel 9 of the prophecy in Jeremiah 25.11-12 that Jerusalem would remain barren for 70 years (Collins 1998: 52). In others, they simply allude to biblical passages that would have been familiar to their audiences, without claiming to interpret it in a definitive way (Collins 1998: 17-18).

There has also been a growing acceptance of **mythological motifs**[31] in some Judaean apocalypses. As early as 1895, Hermann Gunkel argued that Babylonian mythological material was present in Judaean apocalypses; subsequently, scholars have also posited Persian influence and Canaanite-Ugaritic myths. Like the biblical references, Collins argues, the aim of these allusions is not to allude to the entire myth, but rather to "transfer motifs from one context to another" and enrich the symbolic meaning of the text (Collins 1998: 19).

Within the socio-historical matrix in which the Judaean apocalypses originated, it is important to consider the presence of **postexilic prophecy** like Haggai, Zechariah and Isaiah, the **Babylonian mantic wisdom** related to the guild of Babylonian diviners and **Persian apocalypticism**, as well as the filter of **Hellenistic thought** that pervaded the Near East at that time (Collins 1998: 24-34). Otzen proposes that apocalypticism be "presented as a new interpretation of the prophetic message, seen in the light of Wisdom and incorporating non-Jewish materials" (1990: 70).

Collins points out that **pseudonymity** problematizes the authenticity of the visionary experiences recorded in the Judaean apocalypses – while there are resemblances between these accounts and those of shamanic visions elsewhere, there are no other pseudonymous shamans (Collins 1998: 39). It has been argued that pseudonymity had been used to protect the authors of the apocalypses from persecution, but a more likely explanation is that it added to the authority of the writing and augmented the sense of determinism conveyed in apocalypses dealing with the end-times (Collins 1998: 40). Otzen argues that pseudonymity, and the attendant pretence that the works were much older than they actually were, was an attempt to "ensure that their new revelations would be acceptable to their public" (Otzen 1990: 158).

The literary function of the Judaean apocalyptic could be seen as either an **exhortation** to action (e.g. the Animal Apocalypse calling for support of the Maccabean revolt), putting

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[31] Collins also points out that there has been widespread resistance to the notion that Judaean apocalypses used mythological motifs, largely due to a theological objection to the non-theological, "false" or "pagan" nature of these myths (Collins 1998: 19).

crisis in a **broader historical perspective** or be of a **consoling** nature (Collins 1998: 41-42).

6.2.2 A discussion of attributes of Judaean apocalypticism pertinent to this study

For the purposes of this study it is necessary to order the description of Judaean apocalypticism in a way that would be meaningful for a comparison with the Iranian apocalyptic tradition. It is obvious from scholarly compendia like the 1979 International Colloquium on Apocalypticism at Uppsala that the Judaean apocalyptic tradition has generated far more scholarship than Iranian, due to the fact that more Judaean texts have been preserved and that there are considerable difficulties with the Iranian apocalyptic texts[32]. Consequently, the Judaean apocalyptic tradition seen in its entirety is far more nuanced and complex than the Iranian tradition. This overview of specific attributes therefore does not aim to be an exhaustive survey of all the attributes of Judaean apocalypticism, as is reflected from the *Semeia 14* definition (see Chapter 2 above). In this regard, I will focus on the following factors, which were isolated by García Martínez as distinctive of Qumran texts but also typical of Judaean apocalypticism in general:

- The origin of evil and the dualistic thought of the sect (2003: 92)
- The periods of history and the expectation of the end (2003: 96)
- Communion with the heavenly world (2003: 101)
- The eschatological war (2003: 106)

1. The origin of evil and the dualistic thought of the sect

Like Genesis 1, parts of the Judaean apocalyptic tradition seek to explain the origin of evil. García Martínez points out that "the core of the oldest part (the book of the Watchers) of the oldest apocalypse (1 Enoch) is dedicated to giving an explanation of the origin of evil in the world". Sin had originated in heaven after an angelic rebellion and was consequently brought down to earth – the rebellious "fallen angels" defied a heavenly order and descended to earth, marrying earthly women and imparting heavenly

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[32] For a more complete discussion of these aspects see Chapter 5.1 above and Chapter 8.1.1 and 8.1.3 below.

secrets to them, thereby disrupting the harmonic order of nature (García Martínez 2003: 92). There are also other traditions of the origin of sin; the Epistle of Enoch claims sin was created by man himself; Jubilees claims Adam fell into sin long before the angels fall (García Martínez 2003: 92).

Judaean apocalyptic literature is very much concerned with the opposition between God and Satan[33]. Otzen points out that while such notions could have been enforced from both Persian religious influences and Hellenistic-gnostic dualism, there exists an Old Testament precedent for a dualistic view of reality: humanity is divided into the wise and righteous on one side and the foolish or godless on the other; human activities and traits are divided into virtues and vices (Otzen 1990: 182). In the Judaean apocalyptic tradition, this notion is most clearly borne out in the Qumran texts, such as the Qumran War Scroll[34] and the following passage from the Community Rule:

1 QS II.1-9

1 And the priests will bless all the men of God's lot who walk unblemished in all his paths and they shall say:

"May he bless you with everything good,

3 and may he protect you from everything bad. May he illuminate your heart with the discernment of life

and grace you with eternal knowledge.

4 May he lift upon you the countenance of his favour for eternal peace".

And the levites shall curse all the men of the lot of Belial. They shall begin to speak and shall say;

"Accursed are you for all your wicked, blameworthy deeds.

May he (God) hand you over to dread

6 into the hands of all those carrying out acts of vengeance.

7 Accursed, without mercy,

for the darkness of your deeds,

and sentenced

8 to the gloom of everlasting fire.

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[33] Collins points out that dualism is very well suited to sectarian ideology, as it provides a way of explaining why the truth, as the sect sees it, is utterly rejected by others, even those who profess to worship the same God, especially if the Spirit of Darkness holds dominion for a period (1997: 44).

[34] This text will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.2 below.

May God not be merciful when you entreat him,

nor pardon you when you do penance for your faults.

9 May he lift the countenance of his anger to avenge himself on you,

and may there be no peace for you

in the mouth of those who intercede.

The dualistic division between good and evil, according to the Community Rule, exists in both a physical and spiritual realm: mankind is divided into two camps, led respectively by the Prince of Light and the Angel of Darkness: "And in the hand of the Prince of Light is dominion over all the sons of justice; they walk in the paths of light. And in the hand of the Angel of Darkness is total dominion over the sons of deceit; they walk in the path of darkness" (3.20-21) (García Martínez 2003: 94). The dualism of creation extends into man himself, who is believed to be made up of different parts, some righteous and some evil, and that "the spirits of truth and falsity are at war in the individual" (Otzen 1990:189).

2. The periods of history and the expectation of the end

The book of **Daniel** contains a dream vision that came to the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, in which he saw a statue made out of four different metals – gold, silver, bronze and iron. He interprets the dream as the four world empires that will succeed after Nebuchadnezzar's rule and forecasts that the last one, the Seleucid empire will be crushed by a stone "though not by human hand". In Daniel 9, a prophecy mentioning 70 years by Jeremiah is reinterpreted by the angel Gabriel as ten "weeks" of 70 years each, arriving at 490, which are taken to represent the timespan from Jeremiah's time to the profaning of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes (Otzen 1990: 161-162).

1 Enoch contains different ways of dividing history. The **Book of Watchers** envisage a period of 70 generations before the "judgment which is for all eternity" – in other words, 70 generations will elapse until the heavenly judgment takes place (García Martínez 2003: 96-97). The **Animal Apocalypse** also divides the world history in to four periods of different length which correspond to the four kingdoms of Daniel; at the end of these periods, the Messiah comes and the sheep are turned into white bulls (García Martínez

2003: 97). The **Apocalypse of Weeks** places itself at the end of seven historical "weeks" between Enoch and the present, at which time an apostate generation has arisen; at the end of this week "the chosen righteous from the eternal plant of rightousness will be chosen"; in the eighth and ninth week they will execute judgment on the sinners and this judgment will be revealed to the world, in the tenth the Watchers will be judged and after this a "new heaven will appear", after which will follow an eternity without evil or sin (García Martínez 2003: 97).

The division of history and expectation of the end, of course, are all manifestations of **determinism**, the notion that all earthly events have been pre-ordained and that all of this will come to an end and be replaced with an idealised, heavenly existence free of evil.

3. Communion with the heavenly world

There are plenty of instances in the Judaean apocalyptic world view in which figures well-known in Judaean religious traditions have conversations with angels, get taken on heavenly journeys or receive some sort of communication from a supernatural world (see above, 6.2.1).

In the Judaean apocalyptic tradition, angels fulfil the function of mediators between heaven and earth – **Enoch** and **Baruch** are both led through the heavens by angels; angels explain to **Levi** the details of what he is seeing in his heavenly vision; angels are appointed to execute the sentence on the Day of Judgment; in 2 Enoch, various sectors of the human world are subordinated to particular angels (Otzen 1990: 179).

The angelology in the Judaean apocalyptic is far better developed than in the Old Testament tradition, in which angels occur only occasionally as messengers (Otzen 1990: 179); in the apocalyptic tradition, however, the angelic world is organised in a strongly hierarchical manner, with different roles assigned to each, and each having different degrees of proximity to the deity – thus Michael is shown as the opponent of Belial in the eschatological war (García Martínez 2003: 102).

In the **Testament of Levi** we find the notion that the forces of nature are under divine control, with various elements of nature being located in different heavens, and the angels are ordered to make sure they're run in accordance with divine will (Otzen 1990: 179).

In the Qumran scrolls the notion of communion with heavenly beings is taken one step further, with the notion that angels are present on earth and live among the members of the religious community (García Martínez 2003: 102):

> No man defiled by any of the impurities of a man shall enter the assembly of these; and everyone who is defiled by them should not be established in his office amongst the congregation. And everyone who is defiled in his flesh, paralyzed in his feet or in his hands, lame, blind, deaf, dumb or defiled in his flesh with a blemish visible to the eyes, or the tottering old man who cannot keep upright in the midst of the assembly, these shall not enter to take their place among the congregation of famous men, for the angels of holiness are among their congre(gation).
>
> (1QS 2.3-9)

The preoccupation with **purity** comes up in quite a few Qumran passages, such as the Temple Scroll (1 1Q Temple XLV-LI 10), Halakhic Letter (4QMMT) and the "Penal Code" of the Community Rule (1QS VI.24-VII.25); in the War Scroll there are purity prescriptions that have to be followed in the camps in which the Soldiers of the Light stay while preparing for battle (1QM 7.4-6).

It is interesting to note from both these passages that the notion of an angelic presence is cited as the reason why people blemished with impurities are not allowed to join the congregation. For the Qumran community, ritual purity was a way of life, as has been demonstrated from the archaeological record, which turned up an aqueduct that brought water from a nearby wadi to numerous cisterns and ritual baths (García Martínez 1995b: 31) and García Martínez lists many things that were considered unpalatable by the community: no wheat grown by gentiles was allowed in the temple; no vessels made with skin and bones were allowed to be made, used or brought into the temple; dogs were not allowed to roam in the streets; animals from different species were not allowed to be

yoked together; contact with corpses was considered impure; liquids were believed to transmit impurity (García Martínez 1995b: 33). He even goes so far to say that "In the Israel in search of its identity in the Second Temple Period, the problem of purity was decisive in providing the Qumran group with its own identity" (García Martínez 1995c: 156). He finds in this community "a tendency to extend the requirements of Temple purity to the whole city. Also, not to restrict it to the priests but to extend it to all the faithful", and views the purity rules *within* the community as having the function of "safeguarding the purity of the community".

4. The eschatological war

García Martínez traces the history of the final triumph of God and the people of Israel against foreign conquerors, both specifically and generally, from Old Testament writings, such as Psalm 2's victory "against all the nations" or Ezekiel 38-39's prediction of a victory against a mythical king Gog of Magog, or Joel 3.9-16's prediction of the "day of the Lord, when the nations will be judged" (García Martínez 2003: 106).

Collins distinguishes between the conflict between Israel and the Gentiles, which was grounded in the history of the Ancient Near East and the invasion of hostile or occupying powers like Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Egypt, Syria and Rome; and the conflict between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness, which could be seen as the sectarians at Qumran versus those considered evil-doers – hence why "the texts vacillate between the traditional distinction between Israel and the Gentiles and attempts to define the opposition in non-nationalistic terms" (Collins 1997: 91).

In the apocalyptic tradition, a victory against evil nations is elevated further into an eschatological victory of good against evil. In Daniel, the angel Michael protects Israel during the last battle (Daniel 12.1). The Animal Apocalypse ends with the destruction of all the hostile nations (1 Enoch 90) (Collins 1997: 92-93).

Aspects of the eschatological war make up the entire Qumran War Scroll, which will be discussed in more detail in 8.2 below.

The eschatological war is another manifestation of **dualism** and **determinism** – the eschatological war is eagerly anticipated and often is the climax of the apocalyptic texts, but a favourable outcome is always guaranteed, mostly by a divine decision taken at or close to the creation of the world.

CHAPTER 7: COMMON FEATURES OF MEDITERRANEAN AND NEAR EASTERN APOCALYPTICISM

Apocalypticism in the Hellenistic period and thereafter is by no means limited to the Judaean populations in the Ancient Near East from the Hellenistic period onwards. Some characteristics of apocalyptic traditions can be found in this period from the eastern to the western reaches of the erstwhile Achaemenid empire. Aside from the Iranian apocalypticism already discussed, Clifford finds "apocalyptic" attributes in pre-Hellenistic texts, including combat myths (an antecedent for the eschatological war), a divine assembly, cosmic enemies portrayed as monsters, heavenly beings, divine decrees and mediators of heavenly knowledge (Clifford 2003: 4).

7.1 Contemporary commonalities

John J. Collins provides a useful survey of these traditions, ascribing similarities in Near Eastern "political" oracles from the Hellenistic era to "the fact that traditions which had much in common to begin with (e.g. the idea of the kingship of the national deity) were subjected to the same new circumstances", particularly the change in political conditions due to the advent of the Greeks (1975: 27).

Collins notes that the Hellenistic era saw rebellion against Greek rule from many quarters – there was a series of native uprisings in Egypt, the most notable occurring during the reign of Ptolemy V Epiphanes (204-180 BCE); the Parthians rose in revolt against the Seleucids shortly after 250 BCE; the reign of Antiochus III (223-187 BCE) saw revolts in Media and Asia Minor; Antiochus III died in battle against the Elamites; Babylonians stole Hellenized statues from their temple during his reign. All of these acts of rebellion had a "nationalistic" undertone, and propaganda from the rebels show a wish to be freed from their Hellenistic masters (Collins 1975: 28). In this regard, Barr speculates that Judaean adoption of ideas that are believed to be of Iranian, or at the very least "Oriental" origin might very well have been adopted as part of a broader revolt against the Hellenistic world (Barr 1985: 229).

In this regard, the **revival of ancient myths** and figures, like the Enoch tradition and the writings of the Twelve Patriarchs, are not unique to the Judaeans. In Egypt, the Potter's Oracle was penned during the Hellenistic era, yet it bears strong resemblance to a much older prophetic work dating back to 1991 BCE, namely the Prophecy of Neferty.

Closely aligned with this revival is the phenomenon of **pseudepigraphy**, where the authors or narrators claim to have lived hundreds of years before the actual time that their prophecies were written down, in order to give these texts legitimacy. Thus the Demotic Chronicle, dated to after the advent of the Greeks, claims to have been written during the reign of the Pharaoh Tachos (362-360 BCE), the Potter's Oracle is ascribed to the time of Amenhotep who reigned during the Egyptian New Kingdom (*c*. 1552-1069 BCE) (Collins 1975: 31).

While there is no evidence in Mesopotamia for using ancient myths in eschatological oracles, all our existing copies of the ritual for the Babylonian Akitu festival (a fertility rite) come from the period of Seleucid rule. Significantly, the famous Sumerian Lament for Uruk, composed in the third millennium BCE, was re-copied early in the Hellenistic period, and the invasion of the Guti, the cause of Uruk's woes, became a metaphor for foreign invasions in Babylonia in general (Collins 1975: 30).

Determinism is another feature common to Hellenistic Near Eastern apocalyptic – in other words, these prophecies indicate that the course of the future has already been determined and no human action can change it. In other words, they become a cause of solace, because nevermind how difficult circumstances might be now, the deity or his hosts will set things right when the end times arrive. Collins ascribes this phenomenon of determinism to "a sense of alienation from the present", a consequence of nations losing their political self-determination and consequentally feeling unable to control the course of events. Related to this is **messianic expectation**, which become important as a deliverance from alien rule: The Demotic Chronicle anticipates the replacement of the Greek king with a native Egyptian; the Persian Oracle of Hystaspes expects a "king from

heaven" to deliver the Persians, and the Bahman Yasht looks to the coming of the Saoshyant for deliverance (Collins 1975: 28-29).

7.2 Text-historic commonalities

Recent scholarship seeks to show that the kernel of apocalyptic thought can be found in the literature of Mesopotamia, from as early as the Empire of Akkad (c. 2300 BCE) and the Babylonian empire, by arguing for commonalities between the apocalyptic texts of the Hellenistic period and the earlier literature. Clifford draws on scholarship that sees Mesopotamian and Biblical combat myths as having possibly influenced apocalyptic literature, citing a number of attributes as having shown the way to later apocalypticism.

One phenomenon he cites as a model for later development into apocalyptic writing is **post-eventum prophecies**. He cites five Mesopotamian texts as examples as being of relevance as they forecast events that had already happened in order to justify a final prophecy that had not yet happened:

- **Text A**, a seventh-century BCE text from Ashur, detailing events that happened in the 12th century BCE and with a refrain that "a prince shall arise".
- The **Uruk Prophecy**, which probably dates from 561-560, details Babylonian kings up to Nebuchadnezzar, followed by another king from Uruk whose dynasty will last forever.
- The **Dynastic Prophecy** is a late-Babylonian text, tells of the fall of Assyria, Babylonia, Persia and Alexander's victory over Darius III at Issus, followed by a prophecy that Darius will defeat Alexander (Clifford 2003: 10).
- The **Shulgi Prophecy** has the deified king Shulgi (2112-2004 BCE) speak of the kings that will arise after him, including the submission to Assyria, the rise of a Babylonian king and the restoration of Nippur (Clifford 2003: 10-11).
- The **Marduk Prophecy** has Marduk describing his journeys to Hatti, Assyria and Elam and his final return to Babylon (Clifford 2003: 11).

Clifford argues that these prophecies, by using past events to give credence to the authors' future visions, are precursors to the apocalypses of Daniel and 1 Enoch, even if

they fail to place these events in a "new scenario (of) cosmic threat, combat and rule of the victorious god, (…) the end of the present world and divine judgment upon it", as the apocalyptic texts do (Clifford 2003: 11).

Another type of literature common in ancient Mesopotamian myth that is seen as a precursor for apocalyptic writing is the **combat myth**, detailing a fight between good and evil, in which a hero-god defeats an evil being that threatens the existence of earthly beings. One example of the combat myth is Lugal-e, in which the flow of the Tigris River to the farmlands is blocked by a monster living in a mountain, and is restored again by the hero-god Ninurta (Clifford 2003: 9). Combat myth also occurs in the Ugaritic Baal Cycle, which depicts a war between the god Baal and his adversaries Mot (death) and Yamm (the sea) (Clifford 2003: 17, 21).

Literary works detailing **dream visions** are also found in this region's literature. In these works, seer-heroes are brought into the world of the gods to receive wisdom and information about the future, which they must communicate to the human race. An example of such a work is the Akkadian *The Vision of the Nether World*, in which a seer by the name of Kummāya has a vision in which various gods with combined human and animal bodies appear to him, one of whom is said to be the "exalted shepherd". Helge Kvanvig has argued that this particular part of the work is a source for the dream vision in the Old Testament apocalypse of Daniel (Clifford 2003: 11-12).

Various scholars have proposed Mesopotamian origins for passages from the Old Testament. One explains Enoch as the first recipient of "apocalyptic" revelation is because he came to be associated with the legendary Babylonian figure Enmeduranki, who was the founder of a guild of diviners called the *bārû* (Vanderkam 1984: 8).

Some scholarship also holds that the Sumerian King List, dating back to 1500 BCE, with its succession of extremely long-lived kings, could be a source for Genesis 5's genealogy of Israelite patriarchs (including Enoch) who all became unusually old (Enoch lived to 365 years) (Clifford 2003: 14).

Otzen argues that the multiplicity of heavens found in 1 and 2 Enoch, the Testament of Levi and Baruch, among others, may have been influenced by Babylonian religion, which was informed heavily by astronomy – they had divided the heavens in seven spheres on the basis of the courses of the five planets they had known of, the sun and the moon (Otzen 1990: 178) – this was probably the source of Judaean prophecy's seven heavens.

As far as an origin of **eschatology and a belief in the soul** is concerned, there are strong arguments in favour of both Persian and Greek influences and origins, as both the Zoroastrian belief in the *mēnōg* and *getīg* states and the Pythagorean belief that the soul is immortal and can be re-incarnated could realistically have influenced the Judaean belief in a life of a soul separate from the body. But it is clear that at about the time Greek rule is established in the Judaean homeland, the Platonic concept of the soul begins to appear in Judaean literature, from as early as 1 Enoch (Grabbe 1992: 219). The resurrection of the body "is not clearly attested until the second century (BCE) (Grabbe 1992: 219).

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CHAPTER 8: TEXT ANALYSIS

8.1 The *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* – An Iranian apocalypse

8.1.1 Background to the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn*

It has been shown in the previous chapter, there are a number of Iranian texts that could be used as a representative of the apocalyptic genre as a whole. The *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* stands out among these because it is "the most complete representative of the apocalyptic genre among Zoroastrian works belonging to late antiquity" (Cereti 1995: 1). Furthermore, it presents "most of the themes generally connected with apocalyptic and universal eschatology", such as periodization of history, transmission of heavenly visions to human recipients and signs "announcing the end of the world" (Hultgård 1991: 115).

The *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* also occupies an interesting position within the comparative scholarship between Iranian and Judaean, as it contains an apocalyptic dream vision familiar to Old Testament scholars, namely that of four kingdoms, each represented by a precious metal, representing different ages of near-contemporary history (Collins 1998: 99). The periodization of history aside, it also shares with Hellenistic apocalypses "the overview of history in the form of a revelation that is interpreted by a divine being, and in the form of an *ex eventu* prophecy" (Collins 1998: 32).

The *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* contains "a considerable wealth of historical or pseudo-historical material" which shows "knowledge of the late Sasanian and early Islamic geographical and historical environment" – which would indicate that "the compiler of the final version of this work must have lived in Islamic times" (Cereti 1995: 2). The text was heavily redacted (Hultgård 1991: 122), and it contains "various layers of tradition" (Cereti 1995: 2). Some scholars, like Boyce, Widengren and Hultgård, believe that considerable base material in the text dates to Hellenistic times or earlier (Cereti 19, 21; Hultgård 2003: 60). Gignoux, on the other hand, believes it is mainly a response to Islamic invasion of Iran (Cereti 1995: 24). The current version was compiled in the 9th or 10th century CE among Zoroastrians of Iran living in a predominantly Muslim

environment and was written in Pahlavi, the middle-Iranian language used for writing religious literature during the Sasanian and early Islamic periods (Hultgård 1991: 115). The difficulty with the dating of Iranian apocalyptic matter has been dealt with, and I will return to this matter later in this chapter. Firstly, I will deal with the internal aspects of the text.

The narrative of the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* proceeds as follows:

The **first chapter** contains a short version of Zoroaster's vision of the historical kingdoms as four metal branches of a tree and may, in Cereti's opinion, have belonged to an earlier version of the text (Cereti 1995: 2). A golden branch represents the kingdom of Wištāsp, during which Ahura Mazda reveals the Good Religion to Zoroaster and the religion spreads. A silver branch represents the reign of the king Ardashir, (a Middle-Persian name of the Achaemenid king Artaxerxes II (Boyce 1984b:92)). A branch of steel represents the last flowering of the Zoroastrian religion under the Sasanian king Xōsrōv Anōshurvān (531-579CE), during which the religious texts were canonized. A branch of mixed iron represents the deterioration of the sect, hostility from foreigners and persecution (Hultgård 1991: 122).

The **second chapter** briefly describes the appearance of Mazdak the heretic[35].

The **third chapter** contains a detailed version of Zoroaster's vision – it describes not only the vision, but also the events that precede it. The first and last two kingdoms shown to Zoroaster correspond with those in the first chapter – the kingdom of *Wištāsp* and the Kayanid *Ardaxšīr*, and the era of *Husraw* and the demons. In between are inserted the rule of the Sasanian kings *Ardaxšīr* and *Šābūhr*, the Arsacid kingdom (the chronology here is inverted; the Arsacid kingdom *preceded* the Sasanian) and of *Wahrāhm Gōhr*.

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[35] Mazdak i Bamdad was a cleric who gained prominence in the fifth century CE in reaction to the growing gap between the wealthy and the poor; at that time both the Zoroastrian church and wealthy nobility exploited the poor; Mazdak agitated for social reform; his pessimism and asceticism were adapted from an earlier teacher and owed much to Manichaeism. He was killed in 528 CE by Khosrow at an event arranged as a banquet held in his honour, but which was in actual fact a trap (Boyce 1979:130-131).

The **fourth chapter** is the longest and describes the natural and social evils that will occur at the end of Zoroaster's millennium and the overlordship of Ērān being usurped by foreign invaders.

The **fifth chapter** compares the merits of the religious rites performed at the end of the millennium with those performed during the reign of *Wištāsp*, the king who took Zoroaster in and helped to spread and establish his religious reforms.

The **sixth chapter** describes the eschatological battles at the end of time.

The **seventh chapter** describes the victory of the righteous forces over the evil foreigners, with the hero *Pišōtan* and the *yazad Mihr* taking the lead. It is believed that the nucleus of the narration ends here.

The **eighth chapter** describes the deeds of *Wahrām* and *Pišōtan*.

The **ninth chapter** describes the birth of Zoroaster's son *Ušēdar* and the millennium of his second son *Ušēdarmāh*. In the very final paragraphs, the *Šōšāns* is mentioned (Cereti 1995: 9-11; Hultgård 1991: 122-123).

At the time when the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* was written, adherents of the Zoroastrian faith were beleaguered; they were subjected to a humiliating poll tax and in time a number of discriminatory laws and restrictions were devised to underscore their inferiority in the eyes of their new Muslim rulers (Boyce 1979: 147). It is evident that the text was written at a time of great distress; there are several vivid descriptions of cruelty and injustice towards the Zoroastrian Iranians, and disdain for the purity rituals so important in the observation of their religion. Cereti says this apocalypse "must have been conceived in a period when the identity of the community was menaced and when poor material conditions gave rise to the hope for a better future for the faithful" (1995: 2). It contains ample descriptions of abnormal natural phenomena (a weakening sun, shortening days, diminishing plant life, earthquakes etc.), a breakdown in social values (a loss of respect

for senior figures in society, a weakening of family ties), misfortune and hardship, which are interpreted in this text as indications that the end of history and a final eschatological confrontation between good and evil are approaching (Hultgård 2003: 37).

8.1.2 Text analysis

EXTRACTS FROM CHAPTER 3

Extract 1: ZWYt 3.15-18

This passage from the third chapter of the Zand contains a telling indicator of the author's world-view; it shows a profound disillusionment with, and detachment from, the value-systems he experiences around him.

> /15/ *Zarduxšt* said, "*Ohrmazd*, bountiful spirit, Creator of the world of material beings, I have seen a rich man of much property who was honoured in the body and thin {weak} in the soul and was in hell, and it did not seem praiseworthy to me. /16/ And I saw a poor man lacking everything and needy, his soul was fat <and was> in paradise, and it seemed praiseworthy to me. /17/ And I saw a powerful man without offspring, and it did not seem praiseworthy to me. /18/ And I saw a poor man endowed with much offspring, and it seemed praiseworthy to me."[36]

The fact that spiritual poverty is equated with physical wealth and vice versa is a powerful scene-setter for the harrowing fourth chapter of the text, in which all manner of privations and injustices are described as being visited upon the Zoroastrians of Iran. It obviously envisages some sort of eschatological salvation, as it eschews the values of this world and aspires to a different plane of existence, which brings us back to the *Semeia 14* definition of apocalypticism, which says apocalyptic "*envisages eschatological salvation*" and "*involves another, supernatural world*" (Collins 1998: 5).

Collins has noted a similar air of detachment and disillusionment in Near Eastern political oracles around the time of the advent of the Hellenistic kingdom, borne out by

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[36] All these citations are from Cereti's 1995 translation of the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn*. For ease of reference I have retained his punctuations, insertions, italicisation and, most importantly, his chapter divisions, which differ from those used by Hultgård (1992).

determinism. He ascribes it to "a sense of alienation from the present", and the fact that people "had little confidence in their ability to control the course of events"; something he argues can be traced "directly to the loss of national independence and the consequent disorientation of politics" (Collins 1975: 33).

Another trait present in this passage is a distinct dualism between the poor who are rich of spirit and the rich who are poor of spirit. We have already dealt with the importance of dualism in Zoroastrianism, and here it is extended to the material conditions of the followers of Zoroaster, faced with a hostile environment.

Extract 2: ZWYt 3.19-29

This passage from the third chapter of the text contains the expanded version of the dream vision that *Ohrmazd* revealed to *Zarduxšt* in Chapter 1. While the version in Chapter 1, with its *ex eventu* division of history into four epochs, bears more of an obvious kinship to other Hellenistic apocalypses that divide history into particularly *four* epochs (such as the Egyptian Potter's Oracle, Daniel and the fourth Sibylline Oracle) (Collins 1975: 29), this vision is much more emotive and nationalistic, as it inserts a number of successful Iranian monarchs and therefore seems to hark back to better times for the Iranians, when their kings were still able to fight the heretics (paragraphs[37] 25 and 28) and the earth was still able to defend itself against the evil onslaught (paragraphs 23)[38]. Cereti also cites the importance of the number seven in Mesopotamian culture – the notion of seven continents, seven days, seven planets; the number seven also figures in the Oracles of Hystaspes and the description of the fortress of *Kangdiz*, the stronghold of

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[37] I here use "paragraph" in the same way Cereti does in his classification of subsections of chapters in his edition of the text.

[38] This reference to the "defence of water, fire, plants and the earth" could refer to a part of the Zoroastrian creation myth that runs concurrently to the history of the pollution of the earth by Ahreman: According to the Zoroastrian creation tradition, the moment that evil entered the world, the primordial elements tried to counteract him – the Sky hardened itself and closed the hole Ahreman and his demons pierced in it to enter in the world. The star Tištar and the wind made clouds and raindrops, drowning some of Ahreman's noxious creatures and formed seas, lakes and rivers; the Earth shook and created mountains and valleys; the primordial Plant withered and died, but its seeds were saved by Amurdād (divine guardian of the plants) and spread all over the earth as cure to Ahreman's diseases; the divinely created Animal and Man both died, but their seed were saved and new species were created (Hultgård 2003: 35).

the Kayanians, who will arise to aid in the final battle against the forces of *Ahreman*[39] (Cereti 1995: 180).

/19/ "And I saw a tree on which were seven branches, one of gold, one of silver, one of copper, one of brass, one of lead, one of steel and one on <which> iron had been mixed."

/20/*Ohrmazd* said, "O *Spitāmān Zarduxšt*, this is what I foretell. /21/ The trunk of the tree that you saw, that is the material world that I, *Ohrmazd*, have created. /22/ And those seven branches that you saw, those are the seven epochs that will come.

/23/ The one of gold is the reign of king *Wištāsp* when you and I converse about the religion <and> king *Wištāsp* accepts the religion and breaks the bodies of the *dēws*; and the *dēws*, from the condition of being visible, will take to <flight and> hiding, and *Ahreman*, the *dēws* <and> the abortions will crawl back to the darkness <and> obscurity <of> hell. And the defence of water, fire, plants and the earth, *Spandarmad*, will be revealed.

/24/ The one of silver is the reign of *Ardaxšīr*, the *Kay*[40], who will be called *Wahman ī Spandyādān*, who will separate the *dēws* from the men; he will purify the whole world, <and> will make the religion current.

/25/ The one of copper is the reign of *Ardaxšīr* the arranger and restorer of the world[41], and that of king *Šābuhr*[42] who will arrange the world created by me, *Ohrmazd,* <and> will make salvation current among the creatures of the world. And goodness will be visible. And *Ādurbād*[43] of victorious fate, true restorer of the religion <will dispute about> this religion with the heretics <and> by the procedure of <molten> copper, will bring it back to truth.

/26/ The one of brass is the reign of the Arsacid[44] kings, who will rid the world of the heresy of the Buddha and <by whom> the evil Alexander the Ecclesiastic will be cancelled from the religion <and> he will be lost to the world and become invisible.

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[39] Boyce deals with this narrative in 1984c: 61-64. The Kayanians are the early mythic rulers of the Iranian lands (Hultgård 2003: 39).

[40] This is a reference to the Achaemenid king Artaxerxes II (Boyce 1984a: 92).

[41] Under Ardashir, rendered here as *Ardaxšīr,* an organised body for the observation of the Zoroastrian cult and a single canon of Zoroastrian religious texts were authorized and compiled, thus codifying and standardising the religion after the decentralisation that followed the advent of Hellenism and Parthian rule (Boyce 1979: 102).

[42] *Šābuhr II* reigned for 70 years, launched active persecution of Christians in Sasanid Iran (Boyce 1979: 119).

[43] *Ādurbād I Mahraspand* was a Persian high priest who vindicated his interpretation of the religion by undergoing and surviving the horrific metal ordeal in which molten metal is poured on the breast (Boyce 1979: 118).

[44] The chronology of history is inverted here – the Arsacid dynasty preceded the Sasanian. It may be that the more zealous approach the Sasanids had had to the upholding of Zoroastrianism may have appealed to the author and led him to consider this a more "valuable" period in Iranian history than the Arsacid reign.

/27/ The one of lead is the reign of king *Wāhram Gōr*, who will render visible the spirit of peace, and *Ahreman* together with the sorcerers will crawl back to the darkness and obscurity of hell.

/28/ The one of steel is the reign of king *Husraw* son of *Kawād*, who will keep away from this religion the accursed *Mazdak*, son of *Bāmdād*, adversary of the religion, <who> stands together with the heretics.

/29/ The one on which iron had been mixed <is the evil dominion of the parted hair *dēws* of the seed of *Xēšm*,> when it will be the end of the tenth century of your <millennium>, o *Spitāmān Zarduxšt*.

This passage reveals a world-view that deems the progress of history as a deterioration; the Zoroastrian millennium starts off with a golden era, and all the subsequent eras are represented by ever less precious metals. Much is made of the health of the religion; most kings' worth is described in terms of what they did for the religion: *Wištāsp* is the legendary king who championed Zoroaster's reforms (Boyce 1979: 31); the Achaemenid king Artaxerxes II ("*Ardaxšīr*, the *Kay*") was one of the most successful kings in the Achaemenid Empire, which was to all indications a bloom period for Zoroastrianism; some of the other kings made important religious reforms (see footnotes). Not much is said to describe the final era of mixed iron, except, tellingly, that it is the end of *Zarduxšt*'s millennium. As is known from the Zoroastrian scheme of world history, once the period of "Mixture" has run its course, the "Separation" starts, in which Ahura Mazda's forces systematically rid the world of evil.

EXTRACTS FROM CHAPTER 4

Extract 3: ZWYt 4.1-8

The fourth chapter of the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* is the longest in the entire text and returns to the same point in time and topic where Zoroaster's sevenfold dream vision left off – the tenth century of Zoroaster, the final century of "Mixture", directly preceding the coming of the resurrected heroes that will put an end to the evil rule of *Ahreman*'s *dēws* (Hultgård 2003: 37). The era it "predicts" is most probably the situation that was current at the time this version of the text was written.

Although this chapter paints an exceedingly bleak picture of "these *Ērān*ian lands", their solace lies in the first two paragraphs – all the misery that follows is a "sign of the tenth century"; it has been foreseen and planned by *Ohrmazd*: "The signs do not happen by chance, but they are part of world history, which is determined by divine will" (Hultgård 2003: 37).

/1/ *Zarduxšt* said, "Creator of the world of material beings, bountiful spirit, what will be the sign of the tenth century?

/2/ *Ohrmazd* said, "O *Spitāmān Zarduxšt*, I will make it clear. The sign of the end of your millennium will be <that> /3/ the least of periods will arrive. One hundred kinds, one thousand kinds, a myriad kinds of parted hair *dēws* of the seed of *Xēšm*, /4/ those of very mean stock, will creep into *Ērānšahr* from the side of *Xwarāsān*. They will have raised banners, will wear black armour and have the hair parted to the back, and will be small and of lowest stock and of mighty blows and will piss venom.

/5/ O *Spitāmān Zarduxšt*, the origin of those born of the seed of *Xēšm* is not revealed. /6/ Through sorcery they will creep forth to these *Ērān*ian lands which I, *Ohrmazd*, have created. /7/ Then they will burn and destroy many things, and <will take> the house from the members of the household and the village from the villagers. The status of Freeman, the status of Grandee, the status of *Dehqān*, the truth of the religion, treaties, sanctuary, peace, all the creations that I, *Ohrmazd*, have created, this pure religion of the Mazdeans, and the *Wahrām* Fire <that> has been established in the Fire Temple, <all> will come to nought, and smiting and theft will reveal themselves. /8/ And the great province will become a city, and the great city a village, and the great village a sept, and the <great> sept a single family.

This passage aligns "those of very mean stock" who invade Iran with the demon Wrath, *Xēšm*, (Cereti 1995: 260). These invaders with "black armour and … hair parted to the back" (verse 2) could either be Abu Moslem and the Abbasids (according to Gignoux) or "some Turkish people" (according to West) (Cereti 1995: 186). As this text has been subject to several redactions, the precise identity of the invaders is less important than the *position* they occupy within the greater apocalyptic narrative: the *foreign* invaders are associated with evil and are held responsible for the dismal state of affairs.

The association of the foreigner with evil once again sets up a dualistic view of the situation – the social order established by the religion (paragraph 7) is equated as good by

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the construction of the second sentence, which starts with various social statuses and builds up to the holiest symbol of purity in Zoroastrianism, fire, before revealing the evil forces of "smiting and theft" as a climax. The motif of deterioration through the course of history already set out in the fourfold and sevenfold visions revealed to Zoroaster in the first and third chapters is also repeated in paragraph 8.

Extract 4: **ZWYt 4.14-21**

This passage deals with the disruption of social and natural structures. The first two paragraphs are quite self-explanatory; family-ties were an important aspect of the tribalist society of the Iranians (Dandamaev & Lukonin 1989: 303), and consequently, disarray and disrespect within this most fundamental human relationship, is a powerful indication of the blackness of the times.

> /14/And honour, love and piety will disappear from the world. /15/ The bond of the father towards the son, of the brother towards the brother will disappear, and <the bond> of the son-in-law towards the father-in-law will be altered, and the mother and the daughter will be separate and of contrasting will.

The second part of this extract deals with the disruption of nature, another feature common to apocalyptic writings (Webb 1990: 125). The progress of the seasons and the agricultural year forms the central backdrop to the Zoroastrian religious year (see Chapter 4.2 above). The disruption of the seasons is a threat to human survival – the most important reason that some of the oldest deities in ancient societies the world over were hypostatizations of natural forces because humans felt the need to do something to ensure favourable natural conditions for the cultivation of food, be it agriculture or grazing for cattle. Famine is of course also a natural consequence of war, and the reduced growth of food-giving plants could represent the destruction that followed the Arab invasions in Iran at this time.

> /16/ When it will be the end of your tenth century, o *Spitāmān Zarduxšt*, the sun will be more direct and smaller, and the year, the month and the day shorter. /17/ And the earth, *Spandarmad*, more confined, and the path narrower. /18/ And the fruit will not give seed, and the fruit of the grains will decrease by eight every ten, and <only> two will grow, and those which will grow

will not be white. /19/ And vegetables, plants and trees will decrease. Out of one hundred they will decrease by ninety, and ten will grow, and those which will grow will have neither flavour nor taste. /20/ And men will be born smaller, will have little skill and strength, will be more deceiving <and> of worse law, will have neithter gratitude nor respect for hospitality, and will feel no love for the household. /21/ And in those worse times a bird will have more respect than the Iranian and pious man.

In this passage the theme of deterioration is again repeated, this time in the context of the human condition; the men born in this time will be naturally deficient, with defective morals and "no love for the household"; from the fact that the narrative jumps directly from the "vegetables, plants and trees" to the reduced qualities of men, one can deduce that the author ascribes the constant deterioration of the human condition as akin to the deterioration of the weakening of the earth, as if to illustrate the wholesale deterioration and corruption of the *gētīg* creation on account of the evil that has assailed it.

Extract 5: ZWYt 4.23-31

Leading up to the middle of the fourth chapter is a passage that would have filled any pious Zoroastrian with revulsion – the wilful and systematic rejection of the purity rituals, which "derive their strength from their firm doctrinal basis, that is, Zoroaster's dualistic concept of the world as a place of unremitting conflict between goodness, of which purity is a part, and evil, by which that goodness and purity are constantly threatened" (Boyce 1976: 296).

/23/ And the whole world will be burying dead matter and spreading <around> dead matter. /24/ And they will accept it as lawful to bury dead matter, to wash dead matter, to burn dead matter, to bring it to water and fire, and <even> to eat dead matter and will not refrain <from it>. /25/ They will reckon <these> as great good deeds and will cultivate unrighteousness and the path to hell. And on account of the sin, the meanness, and the deception of *Xēšm* and *Āz* they will go to hell. /26/ In those hard times, o *Spitāmān Zarduxšt*, the authority of *Xēšm* of the bloody club and of the parted hair *dēws* of the seed of *Xēšm*, those of lowest stock, will proceed unto the men of the *Ērān*ian lands.

"Dead matter" is here presumably used as a catch-all for impure substances, as death is the ultimate source of pollution (Boyce 1979: 44). According to the Zoroastrian

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traditions, all impure substances need to be disposed of in a particular matter. The earth, water and fire are among the seven holy creations of Zoroaster, and these creations should not be brought into contact with impure objects (Boyce 1979: 43). Thus it is not allowable to bury anything impure in the earth; traditionally such waste was disposed of in a designated "small building with only a chimney-like roof, and to destroy it periodically with acid". Water for washing had to be drawn off a natural source so as to not pollute the source; and it was considered sinful to pollute fire by bringing it into contact with impure matter (Boyce 1979: 44).

Furthermore, the dualistic positioning of the foreigners as the source of evil continues in this passage, as these atrocities are committed under "the authority of *Xēšm* of the bloody club and of the parted hair *dēws*".

In the second part of this extract, the theme of deterioration is brought to bear on the religion and its adherents: even if they intend to perform all the ceremonies properly and live life according to the purity rules, it will be impossible on account of the general filth all around. Even the most extensive of Zoroastrian purity rituals, the *baršnūm*[45] will be futile. The religious rites will be performed incorrectly and the number of adherents to the religion will shrink. The 31st paragraph could be a reference to the large numbers of Zoroastrians who converted to the Islam faith after the Arab conquest due to the humiliating way in which native Iranians were forced to pay poll tax to Arab governors, leading to many children of Zoroastrian parents growing up knowing only Islam (Boyce 1979: 147; 149).

> /27/ And the religious ones who wear the sacred girdle on the sides will, then, not be able to maintain ritual purity. /28/ Because in those lowest times there will be so much dead matter and so much excrement that a man with every step will go onto dead matter. /29/ Or when he will cleanse through *baršnūm*, <as soon as> he will step out of the pit, he will go on dead matter. /30/ Or when he will spread for the *barsom* on their houses of dead matter and celebrate the

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[45] This rite's name means "the ablution of the nine nights", because it takes place over nine days and involves successive cleansings with cattle-urine, sand and water by a priest. The recipient of the cleansing moves through nine successive pits, is completely isolated from people and has to pray constantly so the cleansing can penetrate his body and soul (Boyce 1979: 45-46).

drōn, it will be authorized. /31/ Or, in those lowest times, it will be permitted to perform religious rites by means of two men, so that this religion may not come to nought and become feeble. In one hundred, in one thousand, in a myriad there will be only one that will believe in this religion, and even he who will believe will not perform the actions consequent.

The Iranian Zoroastrians were not the only "apocalyptic" society that viewed ritual purity as a fundamental aspect of life; a similar preoccupation with purity is found at Qumran, where numerous water cisterns were excavated (García Martínez 1995b: 33). This aspect will also be dealt with in the discussion of the Qumran War Scroll in 7.2 below.

Extract 6: ZWYt 4.60-64

This extract brings together the dualistic view of the non-*Ērān*ians as the bringers and perpetrators of evil and impurity *and* a symptom of the end-times. The notion of the foreigners as evil is underlined by yet another flouting of a Zoroastrian purity rule: menstruation was considered impure, as was human excrement (Boyce 1979: 45), which would have made sodomy particularly repulsive.

/60/ They will be such evil rulers that to their eyes killing a righteous and good man or a fly will be the same. /61/ The palaces, the fortunes, the prosperity, the villages, the households, the properties, the estates, the channels, the rivers and the springs of the *Ērān*ian Behdins will go to those non-*Ērān*ians. And the army, the marches, and the banners will go to them, and the will of *Xēšm* <and> misrule will be current in the world. /62/ Their greedy eyes will never be satisfied by wealth. They will gather the properties of the world and hide them under the earth. /63/ On account of unrighteousness they will perform many acts of sodomy and sexual acts with menstruated women, and will much practice sinful desires. /64/ In those times the night will be brighter. And the year, the month, and the day will diminish by one third. And the earth, *Spandarmad*, will quake. And danger, death, and poverty will be harsher in the world.

By bringing the agents of the "will of *Xēšm*" in conjunction with the natural disruptions of the end-times, the author re-inforces the notion that all these evil occurrences are manifestation of the same event, namely the end of *Zarduxšt's* tenth century, and therefore the imminent arrival of the "Separation".

Extract 7: ZWYt 4.67-68

This extract drives home another feature characteristic of many Hellenistic apocalypses – exhortation by the divine revealer to the recipient to repeat the divine vision to the population at large (Webb 1990: 125). This is followed by a command to bear the misfortunes of the current times, as the "Final Body <and> (…) the salvation of one's own soul" is to follow. Given the extensive list of ills and evils, this passage serves as a consolation to the evidently oppressed Zoroastrians that the ultimate fate of the world has already been determined by *Ohrmazd*. It also echoes Extract 1, repeating the notion that physical wealth is equal to spiritual poverty.

> /67/ Thus spoke *Ohrmazd* to *Spitāmān Zarduxšt*, "Study and memorize the *zand* and the *pazand*, teach the redemption, tell <this> to the priests and the disciples and they will tell it forth in the world. Then they must tell those who will not be aware of the century <that> for the hope of the Final Body <and> for the salvation of one's own soul, they must take upon <themselves and> bear the tribute, the harm, <and> the evil caused by those of different religion and *dēw*-worshippers. /68/ And this also I tell you, *Spitāmān Zarduxšt*, he who, in that period, will covet the body, will not be able to save the soul, because the body will be fat and the soul thin {weak} in hell. He who will yearn for the soul, <his> body will be thin {weak}, in the material world he will be poor and needy, and his soul will be fat in paradise".

It is worth noting that most of the fifth chapter, which will not be dealt with here due to space constraints, is an exhortation in its entirety, stating that the most righteous will be those who persist with worship and observance of the holy Zoroastrian rituals: "He who performs more worship on account of *Ohrmazd* is the best of beings by worship. (ZWYt 5.11).

EXTRACTS FROM CHAPTER 6

The sixth chapter has an interesting call-and-response structure, in which *Zarduxšt* twice expresses a wish that he and his offspring be spared the misery of the end times. The first time *Ohrmazd* gives him a negative response, namely three great battles, and the second time he responds with reassurance that none of the oppressors will survive beyond the end of the tenth century of "*Zarduxšt*'s millennium".

1	*Zarduxšt* asks how the *dēws* will be defeated.
2	*Zarduxšt* requests death for himself and his progeny.
3-11	*Ohrmazd* forecasts the coming of the *dēws* and three battles causing loss and hardship in *Ērān*.
12	*Zarduxšt* again requests death for himself and his progeny.
13	*Ohrmazd* reassures him that "not even one of the sinful" will survive this millennium.

Extract 8: ZWYt 6.1-4 and 12-13

Zarduxšt's first question to *Ohrmazd* again echoes the hopelessness of the author and his audience's predicament; even the founder of the Good Religion loses hope and would rather not have any progeny than live through the evil end times.

> /1/ *Zarduxšt* asked *Ohrmazd*, "*Ohrmazd*, bountiful spirit, Creator of the world of material beings, holy, whence shall they rearrange this good religion of the Mazdeans? And by what means shall they smite these parted hair *dēws* of the seed of *Xēšm*? /2/ Creator give me death and give my progeny death that they may not live in those hard times. Give <them> a short life that they may not cultivate unrighteousness and the path of hell".

Once again the coming of foreign invaders and the disruption of the natural order are demonstrated as signs of the end of the millennium of *Zarduxšt*. Although it serves the same semantic function as it did in Chapter 4, it is here also a literary device that helps along the build-up to the final paragraph of this chapter, when *Ohrmazd* himself promises that none of the evil people and beings will survive into the next world-era.

/3/ *Ohrmazd* said, "O *Spitāmān Zarduxšt*, after the black sign sovereignty will go to those of the seed of *Xēšm* <coming> from the Sarmān countries, the demons of *Šēdāsp <ī> Kilisāyīg* {that is M*āhwindād* said that they will be *Hrōmāyīg* and *Rōšan* said that they will have red caps, red armour and red banners. That is, when it will be their sign}. /4/ When they will come, o *Spitāmān Zarduxšt*, the sun will be veiled and will change colour, on earth there will be haze, darkness and obscurity, in the sky signs of different kinds will be manifest, there will be many earthquakes, the wind will blow stronger, in the world need, distress and misfortune will be more <and more> manifest and *Tīr* and *Ohrmazd* will organize the rule for the worst ones.

/12/ And then *Zarduxšt* said, "Creator, give me death and give my progeny death <so> that we shall not live in those hard times".
/13/ *Ohrmazd* said: "Do not have fear, *Spitāmān> Zarduxšt*, because the day when the <tenth> century <of> your millennium will be over, not even one of the sinful will pass from this millennium to that millennium".

EXTRACTS FROM CHAPTER 7

The seventh chapter of the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* was probably the final, climactic chapter of an earlier rendition of the work, given the eschatological battle it describes and the lengthy build-up to this battle in the third and fourth chapter. Cereti notes that "the original nucleus of the narration ends" probably ends with the conclusion of Chapter 7 (Cereti 1995: 10). Given that so much of the previous aspects of the narrations concerned the prosperity of, and atrocities committed against, the Zoroastrian religion (e.g. the wilful breaking of the purity rites in 4.23-24 and the weakening of family ties in 4.14) the vanquishing and restoration of the Good Religion by *Kay Wahrām* and *Pišōtan* seems to be a natural conclusion.

Extract 9: ZWYt 7.1; 7-9

The first section of the seventh chapter describes the birth of *Zarduxšt*'s first son *Ušēdār*, which sets into motion the eschatological events described further on in the chapter. This passage contains another attribute common to apocalyptic texts, namely the reliance on cosmic signals from traditional divination, in this instance from astronomy (paragraph 8), to herald the arrival of pre-ordained events (Otzen 1990: 201).

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/1/ *Zarduxšt* asked *Ohrmazd*, "*Ohrmazd*, bountiful spirit, Creator of the world <of> material beings, holy, by what means will it be possible to destroy them if they are in such a great number?"

(Paragraphs 2-7 recount the birth of *Zarduxšt*'s son *Ušēdār*, who in turn fathers *Kay Wahrām*, one of the heroes who help to defeat the foreign oppressors.)

/7/ When that *kay* will be thirty years old {that is, there was one who said the time}, an army of *Hindūg*[46] and *Čīnīg*[47] with numberless flags, will have upheld banners, will have raised banners and raised arms. In a <ceaseless> flow they will rush forth up the river *Weh*, (…) as far as *Balx* and *Balxān*[48], o *Spitāmān Zarduxšt*. /8/ When the star Jupiter will reach its exaltation and it will throw Venus down, the lordship will reach the *kay*, there will be many numerous troops well armed <and> with adorned banners. /9/{That is, there is someone who <said>, "From *Sēstān*, *Pārs* and *Xwarāsān*". That is, there is one who said, "From the lake of *Padišxwārgar*". That is, there is one who said, "From the mountain district of *Harēw*". That is, there is one who said, "From *Tabarestān*"}.

This passage also has strong patriotic or nationalistic overtones; the place names *Pārs* (Pars) and *Xwarāsān* (Chorasmia) have been known in Persian history from as early as the Achaemenian period (Briant 2002: 172; 428). These place names alongside the "mountaineers" and Chinese raising their arms positions this apocalypse very strongly as a native Iranian protest against foreign invasion.

Extract 10: ZWYt 7.11-38

This section is the culmination of all the descriptions of evil and oppression recounted in particularly Chapter 4 – the place where the tables are turned on "those of the seed of *Xēšm*" and "*Xēšm* of the bloody club".

The first five paragraphs forecast how the two armies will line up in preparation for battle, and forecasts that *Ērān*'s native allies (*Xwarāsān*, Chorasmia, had been part of Persia from Achaemenian times) will rally to its support and attack the *dēws*.

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[46] Possibly mountain-dwellers (Cereti 1995: 193).
[47] Chinese (Cereti 1995: 233).
[48] A settlement on the old bed of the Oxus River, a border stronghold of old Iran (Cereti 1995: 205).

/11/ <In the religion it is revealed> that through cooperation <and> under a common banner those of the seed of *Xēšm* of **Šēdāsp*, the army with the broad front, the two-legged wolf creatures and the *dēws* with the leather girdle <will arrive> in these *Ērān*ian lands and will kill in great numbers. /12/ On the banks of the *Arang* they will fight three battles, <one in…>, one in *Spēd Razūr*[49], and one on the plain of *Nišānag*[50]. (…) /14/ The innumerable *Xwarāsān*ian[51] army will raise the flags in support of the *Ērān*ian countries. (…) /15/ And innumerable armies will hasten up to the dwelling of the *dēws*. They will kill so much that, thereafter, one thousand women will see a man and desire <him>.

The next section again invokes apocalyptic determinism, giving the downfall of evil the inevitability of the passing of the seasons and trees shedding their leaves. This will be followed by the re-ordering of *Ērān* according to *Ohrmazd*'s will. The patriotic, nationalistic intention continues further in the chapter with the epithet "these *Ērān*ian lands which I, *Ohrmazd*, have created", which is repeated five times within this very short space and implies *Ohrmazd*'s entitlement to the land, by virtue of having created it. This makes the metaphor of *Pišōtan*'s restoration of the Zoroastrian cults all the more powerful – he is restoring the proper worship of the deity who created the land to the land.

/16/ At the end of time, o *Spitāmān Zarduxšt*, those enemies will be destroyed just as <befalls> the trunk of a tree when, one night, the cold winter arrives and in this night it sheds the leaves. /17/ They will rearrange these *Ērān*ian lands which I, *Ohrmazd*, have created.

The next stage of the narrative shows the two ruling entities of the cosmos rallying their forces – *Ahreman*'s evil spirit (*Gannāg Mēnōg*) is sent to aid his floundering *dēws*. *Ohrmazd* summons *Pišōtan*, who is one of the legendary immortal messiah figures in Zoroastrianism (Hultgård 2003: 37), to enter the battle. Here the author very obviously harks back to Zoroastrianism's legendary past – *Kangdiz* is the stronghold of the mythical Zoroastrian rulers,

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[49] The *Spēd Razūr* is the mythical "White Forest" mentioned in Yasht 15.31.
[50] Most scholars consider this to be the battle site *Nehāvand* (Cereti 1995: 201).
[51] Earlier in the text, some of the foreign invaders are said to come from the side of *Xwarāsān*; this place name probably refers to Chorasmia in ancient Iran (see Map 1, Dandamaev 1989).

/18/ In haste will *Gannāg Mēnōg* move, together with the *dēws*, those of least stock and *Xēšm* of the bloody club. He will arrive in support and help of those *dēw*-worshippers and of those in the seed of *Xēšm*, o *Spitāmān Zarduxšt*. /19/ And I, the Creator *Ohrmazd*, will send the *yazad Nēryōsang* and the righteous *Srōš*[52] to *Kangdiz* built by the glorious *Syāwaxš*, <to say> to *Čihrōmēhan* son of *Wištāsp*, <of> Kayanid *xwarrah*[53], true restorer of the religion, this, "Go forth, glorious *Pišōtan*, these *Ērān*ian lands which I, *Ohrmazd*, have created, and celebrate the *Hādōxt* and the *Dwāzdah-hōmāst* <for> fire <and> waters" {that is, celebrate for fire <and> waters, that which is prescribed for fire <and> waters}.

But *Pišōtan*'s contribution to the battle is not the wielding of swords; instead, he enacts a traditional, ritual battle against evil, namely a series of holy Zoroastrian fire and water rites, and destroys the temple of the evil idols, driving evil out of the land of *Ērān* (Hultgård 2003: 37). In doing so, *Pišōtan* is also systematically undoing the heresies committed by the *dēws*.

/20/ And the *yazad Nēryōsang* and the righteous *Srōš* will go from the good *Čagād ī Dāytī* to *Kangdiz* built by the glorious *Syāwaxš* <and> from there they will cry, "Go forth, glorious *Pišōtan*, *Čihrōmēhan* son of *Wištāsp*, <of> Kayanid *xwarrah*, true restorer of the religion, go forth to these *Ērān*ian lands which I, *Ohrmazd*, have created. Restore the status of religion and of sovereignty". /21/ Those spirits will go forth and celebrate a *Dwāzdah-hōmāst* with offerings. /22/ And the glorious *Pišōtan* will go forth with one hundred and fifty righeous men who are disciples of *Pišōtan* with black sables and garments, they will have good in the spirit. They will go forth on good thoughts, good words and good deeds and will celebrate the *Hādōxt* and *Bayān Yasnas* <for> fire and waters. They will praise me, *Ohrmazd*, together with the *Amahraspand*s. /23/ Thereafter he will break one third of the adversaries.
/24/ Forth will go the glorious *Pišōtan* with one hundred and fifty men who wear black sables to the glorious fire, seated in the Fire Temple, which they call *Rōšn Kirb* which is the seed of the victorious *Ādur Farrbay*[54]. They will perform for it, in co-celebration, the worship, they will spread forth the *Barsom* and celebrate the *Hordād* and *Amurdād Yasnas* complete of religious ritual directions and *Nērāngestān*[55]. /25/ And he will break one third of the adversaries.

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[52] *Nēryōsang* and *Srōš* are both described as companions of Mithra in Yasht 10.52 (Cereti 1995: 208). The fact that they are named here could be a literary forecast to the appearance of Mithra (*Mihr*) later on in the text.
[53] *Xwarrah* can be translated as glory or splendour (Cereti 1995: 261).
[54] This is a type of sacred fire (Cereti 1995: 210).
[55] This is the Avestan code of ritual prescriptions; in *ZWYt* 4.32 one of the signs of deterioration of the religion is demonstrated by men who perform Zoroastrian rites "without knowing the *Nērangestān*.

The images of ritual and war are combined – after celebrating the *Hādōxt* and *Bayān Yasnas*, *Pišōtan* defeats a third of his enemies, and after performing more rituals at the *Rōšn Kirb* he and his 150 cohorts will defeat another third of his enemies.

It would seem as if *Pišōtan* "activates" these holy forces as warriors against evil by performing his rites; after the rite at the *Rōšn Kirb*, he now has the sacred fires *Ādur Farrbay* and *Ādur Gušnap* and *Ādur Burzēnmihr* as fellow-warriors in his assault on, and destruction of, the *Gannāg Mēnōg*'s idol-temple.

> /26/ Forth will go *Pišōtan* son of *Wištāsp*, in cooperation with *Ādur Farrbay* and *Ādur Gušnap* and *Ādur Burzēnmihr*[56], to the great idol-temple, abode of the evil *Gannāg Mēnōg*. *Xēšm* with the bloody club, all the *dēws* and demons, those of evil stock and the sorcerers will reach the deepest hell. They will destroy that idol-temple struggling together with the glorious *Pišōtan*.

A further development in the battle is that *Ohrmazd and* his Bounteous Immortals will come out on Mount *Hukairya*, whose name bears an echo of the Zoroastrian creation myth, and directs his forces. It indicates that *Ohrmazd* is reclaiming control over his creation.

> /27/ And I, the Creator *Ohrmazd*, together with the *Amahraspand*s[57], will come to mount *Hukairya*[58] and will order to the *Amahraspand*s to tell all the *yazad*s and the spirits, "Go and help the glorious *Pišōtan*. /28/ And *Mihr* of the wide pastures, the swift *Srōš*, the true *Rašn*, the forceful *Wahrām*, the victorious *Aštād*, <and> the *xwarrah* of the Mazdean religion, organizing power which is the arranger of the world, at my, the Creator's, command /29/ will arrive in support to help the glorious *Pišōtan*. /30/ They will smite the *dēws* and those of obscure stock.

In the dialogue between *Gannāg Mēnōg* and *Mihr* the treaty that determined the course of finite history is brought up (see Chapter 4.4 (3) above). It is appropriate that *Mihr* is employed for this action, as he is the deity in charge of covenants and justice (Boyce 1979: 246).

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[56] These are three types of sacred fires (Cereti 1995: 210).
[57] The Bounteous Immortals.
[58] Mount *Hukairya* occurs in Yasna 65.3 and Yt 5.25; it is the highest point of the Harā mountains, which is the same name as the mythical mountain that occurs in the Zoroastrian creation myth (Cereti 1995: 211; Boyce 1979: 7).

/31/ The evil *Gannāg Mēnōg* will cry to *Mihr*[59] of the wide pastures, "Stand up for your truth, you, *Mihr* of the wide pastures".

/32/ And then *Mihr* of the wide pastures will cry out, "<as regards> this nine thousand year agreement that he has made <it is clear that> up to now *Dahāg* of the evil religion, the *Tūr Frāysāb*, Alexander the *Hrōmāyīg* and those parted hair *dēws* with the leather girdle, have held sovereignty for a period of one thousand years more than <those established in> the treaty".

/33/ And the evil *Gannāg Mēnōg* will be stunned upon hearing so.

/34/ *Mihr* of the wide pastures will strike <and> *Xēšm* of the blody club will be defeated. /35/ That evil *Gannāg Mēnōg* together with the abortions and those of evil stock will crawl back to the darkness and obscurity of hell.

As if to underscore the evil and injustice outlined in Chapter 4, it now transpires that *Gannāg Mēnōg* and his allies didn't stick to their side of the bargain – their evil reign of terror carried on for 1000 years longer than agreed between *Ohrmazd* and *Ahreman*. This could either be a silent reproach to *Ohrmazd* for not looking out for his people sooner, or it could reflect a common dilemma of the apocalyptic author, namely what to do when a predicted date of the end of the world comes and goes. Judaean authors got around this by keeping the date deliberately vague (Otzen 1990: 201).

/36/ And *Mihr* of the wide pastures will cry to the glorious *Pišōtan*, "Raze, smite that idol-temple, abode of the *dēws*. Go to these *Ērān*ian lands which I, *Ohrmazd*, have created <and> restore the status <of> religion and sovereignty. About evil ones <I tell you>, "When you see <one> break <him>".

/37/ And the glorious *Pišōtan*, the victorious *Ādur Farrbay*, *Ādur Gušnap* and *Ādur Burzēnmihr* will arrive and smite those powerful demons, they will raze that idol-temple which is the abode of *dēws*. And they will perform the <proper> worship and spread forth the *Barsom*. They will celebrate the *Dwāzdah-hōmāst*, <and> praise me, *Ohrmazd*, together with the *Amahraspands*.

/38/ This is what I foretell. /39/ The glorious *Pišōtan* will arrive to these *Ērān*ian lands which I, *Ohrmazd*, have created, to the rivers *Arang* and *Weh*. When he will see the evil ones he will break those unworthy ones of obscure stock.

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[59] *Mihr*, or Mithra, was one of the three Ahuras in the pagan Indo-Iranian cult; he was also a war god, the lord of the fire ordeal and the one who presided over the soul after death and one of the chief triads of Achaemenian divinities (Boyce 1979: 246).

The events that follow the birth of Zoroaster's first son *Ušēdār*, the event that sets in motion the events described above, is, as far as the Zoroastrian tradition goes, only the first step in the "Separation"; after that, two more sons of Zoroaster must still be born (Hultgård 2003: 39). The final events in the Zoroastrian eschatology are only mentioned in passing in the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn*. The final stages of Zoroastrian eschatology as it is known from other texts (the birth of *Ušēdar* and his brother *Ušēdarmāh*, the resurrection of the legendary immortal warrior-hero *Keresāsp*, the coming of the *Sōšāns* and the Making Wonderful of creation, the Resurrection of the Body and the Final Body) are all rattled off in Chapter 9 with none of the heroic imagery in Chapter 7.

The most prominent eschatological act in this work are *Pišōtan*'s achievements. Chapter 7 becomes a metaphor for the aspirations of the intended audience of the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn*. They are overrun by a mighty foreign power who is systematically carving away at their ancient religion, taking possession of their property, eroding their self-worth and self-respect. The Zoroastrian cult represents the Zoroastrian Iranians' identity and national pride; at that stage it had already been the national religion for possibly 1500 years and represented better, more powerful times for Iran. This is reflected in all the historic imagery contained in the work, along with the mention of native kings who defended the religion against both local and foreign heretics.

8.1.3 Applicability of the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* in apocalyptic studies concerning the Hellenistic period

Whether or not it is possible to use the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* to search for evidence of apocalypticism in the post-Achaemenid period is one of the most disputed aspects of Iranian *and* biblical scholarship. The time of origin of the apocalyptic material in this text is postulated at either the Alexandrian conquests or the post-Sasanid period (Cereti 1995: 2). The long time lapse between Alexander's conquests around 332 BCE and the time at which this text (and, for that matter, most other Iranian apocalyptic material[60]) was written down, in the 9th or 10th century CE, makes this a deeply problematic source for information on Iranian apocalyptic in Hellenistic times or earlier.

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[60] See Chapter 5.1 above.

Not surprisingly, then, the scholarship around this text has been fraught with disagreement. In 1883, Darmeseter argued it was written during the time of the Crusades; in 1878 Haug argued it was written "a considerable time after the Mohammedan conquest"; West, in 1880, said the original version of the manuscript used in Cereti's translation, K20, was written in the 7th century CE (Cereti 1995: 16-17).

More recently, Widengren argued from close study of this text in relation to the *Oracle of Hystaspes* that although the redaction of the text was late, the *ideas* it contained were in some cases Avestan and in others from about 100 CE, the time at which he places the composition of the *Oracle of Hystaspes* (Cereti 1995: 18-19). Boyce argued that Iranian apocalyptic is as old as Zoroaster himself, on the basis of the similarities between the question *Zarduxšt* asks *Ohrmazd* about the future and a question Zoroaster asked Ahura Mazda in *Yasna 31*: "I ask Thee, Lord, about those things which indeed are coming and shall come" (Cereti 1995: 21). She argued further that the presence of the legends of the fortress of *Kangdiz* and the hero *Pišōtan* pointed to an earlier origin for the core of the material, as she had inferred from studying the legend of *Pišōtan* that it had originated in about 1000 BCE (Boyce 1984c: 75).

Gignoux, however, argues that the Iranian apocalyptic tradition as reflected in Pahlavi texts were a late development, and that although they were constructed on the same model as the Judeo-Christian apocalypses, they only became manifest after the Arab conquest of Iran; he pointed out that the notion of foreign conquests bringing about the progressive loss of the Iranian identity did not exist before the decline and fall of the Sasanid kingdom (Cereti 1995: 25).

Hultgård is of the opinion that, "with the presupposition that genuine religious traditions ceased to be composed in the Avestan language long before the rise of the Sassanian empire in the third century, most of the material in *Bahman Yasht* can thus be assigned to a period considerably earlier than the actual time of the compilation of the work. The underlying Avestan text is usually dated to the period of crisis following the fall of the

Achaemenian empire in the late fourth century BCE, and is moreover seen in relation with the growing Oriental resistance to the Hellenistic rulers who became heirs of Alexander the Great" (Hultgård 1991: 119).

Hultgård compares the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* with the *pesher* writings of Qumran, in which biblical prophecies are interpreted in the light of contemprary events. "In a very similar way Zoroastrian sages of the Sassanian period found in the sacred Avestan traditions clear allusions to the contemporary history of their own community and recorded them in their *zand* texts, which in form and function clearly correspond to the Qumran *pesher* texts." He cites examples of such re-interpretations in two chapters of the *Denkard*, in which an original Avestan text was altered to reflect a Middle-Persian reality and this Middle-Persian was restated in the final redaction (Hultgård 1991: 126). From a close study of the source reference present in the text, he argues that the source texts of the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* were Sasanian *zands* that predated the Arab conquest, and that these in turn were based on Avestan texts that are now lost. For him, the interpretative glosses inserted in the text are an indication that the source text is very old, as "it is hard to imagine that Zoroastrian priests composed explanatory remarks to their own Avestan imitations" (Hultgård 1991: 127-128).

Cereti leans towards Gignoux's interpretation – that the Iranian apocalyptic presented in the Pahlavi texts date at least from the late Sasanian period, although he allows that "single themes may predate this period as part of an eschatological system" (Cereti 1995: 26). He reckons the text is made up of different strata:

- a mythical layer, namely the parts on the hero *Pišōtan*'s actions;
- a layer with substantial references to the late Sasanian period (the list of seven epochs; some characteristics of the hero *Kay Wahrām*; the reference to a queen and the enemies listed as Turks and Byzantine;
- the post-Sasanian period is reflected by the great interest in Central Asia; the enemies coming from the east and not from the north as in traditional Zoroastrian cosmology (Cereti 1995: 26-27).

His conclusion is as follows: "We could say that old mythical themes, remembrances of the past glory of Sasanian times and different traditions relative to events which struck the imagination of the different surviving Zoroastrian communities, be they from Central Asia, *Sēstān*, *Pārs*, *Xwarāsān* or from the Caspian regions, have contributed to the development of a unitary apocalyptic conception which has its most complex redaction in *ZWY*" (Cereti 1995: 27).

It is unlikely that the scholarly impasse outlined above will be resolved without the discovery of more texts that could clarify the process of textual redaction. Both sides make valid arguments, but without more textual material that could clarify the process of textual redaction, the position on when the base material originated will have to remain one of "either Hellenistic or post-Sasanian".

Bearing in mind Hultgård's cautionary note "scholars who want to use the *Bahman Yasht* for comparative purposes must be aware of the different tradition layers and their background", I suggest that the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* is indeed a valid text to use in studying apocalyptic in a Hellenistic context, for the following reasons:

1. The similarity between the vision of history as four metal branches found in the first chapter of the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* and that found in the Old Testament text of Daniel is a very persuasive argument in favour of an earlier origin. The Persians and Judaeans of the Hellenistic period were subject to the same socio-political realities; the impact of the Hellenistic movement in the Near East has been found to have had an impact on many subject cultures, from Egypt to Syro-Palestine (see above, Chapter 7). It seems doubtful that a group of beleaguered priests in 9th century Iran would suddenly produce a thousand-year-old myth of presumably foreign origin and use it to build their view of national salvation.

2. I must take issue with Gignoux's assertion that Iranian identity was not threatened any earlier in its history than the Arab invasion of Iran. One cannot underestimate the impact

that the Alexandrian campaigns must have had on the collective Iranian psyche. The Achaemenian empire was at that stage more than two centuries old; it was the only socio-political order that any Iranian alive at that time would have known. Moreover, the Iranians lived with the knowledge that they were the rulers of the entire Near East. To have this generations-old supremacy taken away from them in one fell swoop, and to have that followed by the traumatic and disruptive wars of the *diadochi* must have been traumatic to say the least. One of the actions perpetrated by the Macedonians was the destruction of the royal capital at Persepolis (Dandamaev 1989: 328), which wiped out the most tangible body of evidence that the generations-old empire ever existed – an action that must surely have had some sort of resonance with the general populace. The tradition also tells us that numerous Zoroastrian priests were killed and temples destroyed plundered and destroyed during Alexander's campaign (Boyce 1979: 78-79) – a disastrous blow to a religion that kept itself alive through the oral transmission of ancient holy texts. It took the Iranians almost a century for the Iranian state to recover, when Arsaces of the Parni tribe stepped in during dynastic unrest within the Seleucid kingdom, killing the incumbent and establishing the Parthian state (Sarkosh Curtis & Stewart 2007: 7). Indeed, both Alexander (ZWYt 3.26; 7.32) and attackers from the west (ZWYt 4.58) are mentioned – these could both arguably be a reference to the Alexandrian campaigns.

3. Lastly, it is important to bear in mind the inherent conservatism of the Zoroastrians. Despite not having had a scribal tradition for much of the history of the religion, many generations of priests passed down the Yasnas, Yashts and other religious texts virtually unchanged (Boyce 1984c: 280). The innovations made in the Pahlavi literature, such as the *zand*, were a way of preserving the oldest possible knowledge within the religion without losing any of it. Given the doctrinal tone of the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn*, it was most probably written by champions of the religion who were intent on its survival. It is unlikely that such authors would have employed a wholly new literary technique that hadn't been a part of the religious tradition for a number of centuries, especially if, as one theory goes, the text was indeed dedicated to *Vohu Manah*[61], one of the Bounteous Immortals. It seems rather more likely that they would have used an ancient tradition

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[61] See Hultgård 1991: 127

(which any Hellenistic material would have been by then) as the basis of an attempt to make sense of their current circumstances.

In using the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* as an example of Iranian apocalypticism in the context of the Hellenistic time period, therefore, I will focus less on the historical references than the *intention* of the text, which is quite apparent from the extracts discussed in 8.1, and which would have been similar to the intentions of any apocalyptic tradition on which it was based. The narrative sets out a dualistic opposition between the Iranians, an oppressed native grouping, and the *dēws*, a foreign oppressor of different religious persuasion. It places the nature of the apocalyptic in the mouth of a supernatural being, in this case the deity himself, and shows the apocalyptic vision to the most venerable and ancient character of the religion, namely its founder. It uses figures from ancient legends in the religious tradition both to lend credibility to the vision and to give hope to the audience. It exhorts the recipient of the vision, and thus by definition also the audience of the text, to remain faithful to the religion, and it promises an escape from the current circumstances by the summoning of a messianic figure who will initiate the eradication of evil.

8.2 A Judaean apocalypse – The Qumran War Scroll (1QM)

8.2.1 General overview of the Qumran community

The discovery of the Qumran scrolls was arguably one of the most politicised archaeological-historical events of the 20th century. The abundant publicity and public interest that arose after the Bedouin shepherd Adh-Dhib stumbled on Cave 1 in 1946, combined with the vast number of texts and the consequent high cost of excavating all the caves, considerably raised the stakes in, and profile of, Qumran research, and in time led to much unhappiness among scholars who couldn't get access to the manuscripts. In the words of Florentino García Martínez:

> Little by little, all these texts were appearing and could be acquired by the Palestine Archaeological Museum. However, before the avalanche of material, the funds of the Museum were quickly exhausted, as were the contributions of the Jordanian government. Accordingly, the museum was forced to appeal to international assistance to be able to buy the manuscripts which continued to be offered in increasing numbers. As compensation for their economic contributions, various international institutions (such as the Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences) acquired the exclusive right to study and publish part of the finds in proportion to the aid provided to acquire the manuscripts. At the same time, Father de Vaux, director of the École Biblique and of the excavations of Qumran, organised an international and interdenominational team to complete the enormous task of classifying the thousands of fragments, repair the manuscripts from which they came and prepare them for publication. The team included representatives of the various institutions which had contributed to the acquisition of the manuscripts, whether from the various caves in the Qumran region or those found in other places in the desert of Judah.
>
> (García Martínez 1995a: 5)

It is not a straightforward exercise to characterise the Qumran community. From the hundreds of manuscripts discovered here, none presents a systematic description of the community and its beliefs; the texts are not always consistent with one another. It was a sectarian community that considered the Jerusalem temple temporarily defiled on account of the "substitution of the sacrificial cult". They followed their own calendar, had a strongly hierarchical social organisation and a prescriptive, detailed penal code (García Martínez 1995a: 10).

There have been various theories on the origins of the Qumran community, the most recent and satisfactory "working hypothesis" being the "**Groningen Hypothesis**" postulated by García Martínez and Van der Woude, which holds that "the ideological roots of the Qumran community are located within the Palestinian apocalyptic tradition" and that it originated from a split within the Essene movement during the reign of John Hyrcanus (134-104 BCE), when a group of priests led by the "Teacher of Righteousness" separated from the main movement and moved into the desert. The reason for the split is believed to be due to differences over how to organise the religious calendar; different interpretations of biblical prescriptions on the Temple, the cult and purity; and the belief that the end of the world was imminent. In the scrolls it is said that the Teacher of Righteousness had had a heavenly revelation from which all his beliefs stemmed (García Martínez 1995a: 11).

The War Scroll has been labelled the "most obviously 'apocalyptic'" text to emerge from Qumran (Collins 1997: 10) and is believed to have been redacted from various sources (Davies 1975: 31). It is a lengthy and complex text; the contents of the version found in Cave 1 (1QM) can be summarised as follows:

1	outline of a war in seven lots between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness.		
2.1-14	overview of a forty-year war, with regard to the conduct of the temple service and the division of the fighting into campaigns against various enemies;		
2.15-9.18	mobilisation for battle	2.15-3.11 3.12-4.17 5.1-2 5.3-9.18	disposition of the trumpets disposition of the banners description of the Prince of the Congregation's shield the battle formations
10-14	prayers related to the battle		
15-19	a more detailed description of the war described in Column 1		

(Table after Collins 1997: 94)

The conception of the war in Columns 1 and 14-19 is different to that from 2-9; the outer chapters are concerned with the metaphysical aspects of the war and the middle chapters with the human organisation of the battle. Scholars have pointed out significant variances

within the text: the prayers in 10-12 draw heavily on older biblical material while 13-14 have a dualistic character akin to 1 and 15-19 that may reflect different redactional stages (Collins 1997: 94-95). This chapter will not deal with scholarly dispute in this regard; it is concerned rather with the apocalyptic phenomena contained in the text.

The War Scroll was also not a static document. From all the various fragments excavated at Qumran, it is clear that the War Scroll went through considerable development during the time that the community lived at Qumran – the work of Baillet and Duhaime has shown that the fragments from Cave 4 often contain readings that have no parallel in 1QM. 1QM itself has been dated paleographically to the first century BCE, while its editor had dated it to before the middle of the first century BCE. Scholars believe that the core structure had probably taken shape by the middle of the first century BCE, but that the text continued to change and evolve after that (Collins 1997: 95).

8.2.2 Text analysis

Extract 1: 1QM 1.1-15

This passage is often quoted in scholarship when the phenomenon eschatological war needs to be illustrated. It is a summary prediction of events that will take place in the rest of the scroll and serves to convey the broader narrative background to the details of the war that is dealt with later on. Although one would hardly expect any other kind of war but an eschatological one in texts emanating from Qumran, the mention of Belial[62] in the very first line, in conjunction with the epithet "the sons of darkness" is a clear signal that this is no ordinary battle, but one of cosmic import. It also states very clearly the dualistic terms in which the battle is outlined.

> *1* For the Instructor: The Rule) of the War. The first attack by the sons of light will be launched against the lot of the sons of darkness, against the army of Belial, against the company of Edom and of Moab and of the sons of Ammon

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[62] Belial is the name given to the evil entity in much of the Qumran corpus. Collins holds that passages in the Dead Sea Scrolls that speak of Belial are inherently dualistic; in the War Rule Belial is considered the evil adversary of the archangel Michael (Collins 1997: 44-45).

2 and the comp(any of…and of) Philistia, and against the companies of the Kittim[63] of Ashur and (those who assist them from among the wicked)of the covenant. The sons of Levi, the sons of Judah and the sons of Benjamin, the exiled of the desert, will wage war against them.

3 (…) against all their companies, when the exiled sons of light return from the desert of the peoples to camp in the desert of Jerusalem. And after the war, they shall go up from there

4 (…) of the Kittim in Egypt. And in his time, he will go out with great rage to wage war against the kings of the North, and his anger will exterminate and cut off the horn of (…)

5 (… There) will follow a time of salvation for the people of God and a period of rule for all the men of his lot, and of everlasting destruction for all the lot of Belial. There will be

6 g(reat) panic (among) the sons of Japhet, Ashur shall fall and there will be no help for him; the rule of the Kittim will come to an end, wickedness having been defeated, with no remnant remaining, and there will be no escape

7 (for the so)ns of darkness. (…)

In the above preamble the author places the apocalyptic war in the context of Israelite history by grouping "the sons of darkness" and "the army of Belial" with traditional neighbouring enemies like Edom, Moab, Ammon and Philistia (Collins 1997: 95). The author also manages a sectarian stab at those from whom the Qumran community had split – "those who assist them from among the wicked of the covenant" and therefore violated the covenant in the eyes of the religious leaders at Qumran. This sectarian sentiment is also evident in phrases like "exiled of the desert" and "exiled sons of light", which also contains a throwback to the Babylonian exile, with all the attendant connotations of the righteous Judaeans being harmed and injured[64]. This part of the Scroll also contains the first of many deterministic statements, as it already promises victory in all the wars that the "sons of light" enter into.

The warlike tone is temporarily interrupted for a look forward to the period beyond the victory of the "sons of light", which provides yet another cue that this is not merely a military battle, but one that will decide the fate of humanity and herald the triumph of the just for all eternity. The reference to light is an obvious reference to the Treatise of the

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[63] A code name for Greeks and especially Romans in Judaean texts. The name is derived from Citium in Cyprus (Collins 1997: xv).
[64] The notion of exile and return was a strong ideological motif during the Persian rule, and is particularly evident in post-exilic Old Testament writings like Ezra and Nehemiah (Grabbe 2004: 285).

Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness contained in the Community Rule (1QS 3.13-4.26), and also contains the promise of a vague, idealised heavenly existence.

> *8* And (the sons of jus)tice shall shine in all the edges of the earth, they shall go on illuminating, up to the end of all the periods of darkness; and in the time of God, his exalted greatness will shine for all the (eternal) times,
>
> *9* for peace and blessing, glory and joy, and long days for all the sons of light.

The deterministic tone is driven home in the next section, which states that the God of Israel had planned this battle against evil "since ancient times". But it also contains a note of warning that this paradisical existence will be preceded by the utmost suffering, the worst trials ever. This remark can be seen in the context of *Semeia 14*'s definition of apocalyptic texts (Webb 1990: 125) as exhortation or instruction by the deity to persevere, as the expected calamity will only be temporary. Another idea brought up in the passage below is the notion that this battle will take place on both a physical and a spiritual level: "the assembly of the gods and the congregation of men shall confront each other".

> And on the day on which the Kittim fall, there will be a battle, and savage destruction before the God of
>
> *10* Israel, for this will be the day determined by him since ancient times for the war of extermination against the sons of darkness. On this (day), the assembly of the gods and the congregation of men shall confront each other for great destruction.
>
> *11* The sons of light and the lot of darkness shall battle together for God's might, between the roar of a huge multitude and the shout of gods and of men, on the day of calamity. It will be a time of
>
> *12* suffering fo(r a)ll the people redeemed by God. Of all their sufferings, none will be like this, from its haste (?) until eternal redemption is fulfilled.

The next section counts out the precise number of battles in the war; once again, this section conveys determinism. It is worth noting that this particular author uses the number seven, which often comes up in historic apocalypses, such as the passage quoted from the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* in 8.1 above, in which Cereti notes the importance of the number seven in Mesopotamian culture around the notion of seven continents, seven days, seven planets; the number seven also figures in the Oracles of Hystaspes and the

description of the fortress of the Iranian Kayanians, who will arise to aid in the final battle against the forces of *Ahreman* (Cereti 1995: 180).

> And on the day of their war against the Kittim,
>
> *13* they (shall go out to destr)uction. In the war, the sons of light will be the strongest during three lots, in order to strike down wickedness, and in three (others), the army of Belial will gird themselves in order to force the lot of
>
> *14* (…) to retreat. There will be infantry battalions to melt the heart, but God's might will strengthen the hea(rt of the sons of light.) And in the seventh lot, God's great hand will subdue
>
> *15* (Belial, and a)ll the angels of his dominion and all the men of his lot.

It is interesting to note that the battle, although predetermined, is by no means an easy one – the two opposing forces will each win and lose three battles before the decisive battle takes place. This, along with the notion that things will get worse before they get better, and the notion that the war will be waged on both a physical and metaphysical level, is reminiscent of the sentiments of the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* analysed above in 8.1.

Extract 2: 1QM 7.4-7

This extract touches on the ritualistic, holy nature of the war by forbidding anyone with imperfections or impurities to join the battle. The fact that ritual purity is required for the armies of the "sons of light" indicate that this war may be a metaphor for a war in the broader sense than just the eschatological battle; ritual purity, as we have already seen, was a way of everyday life for the Qumran sect (García Martínez 1995b: 31), and ritual purity could thus be seen as a way of combating evil in an everyday context; García Martínez does remark that ritual purity at Qumran was a way of protecting the community against evil (García Martínez 1995c: 157), and given that holy figures like priests and levites plan and lead the battle (this aspect will be discussed in the next extract), the jump from defense to offense is not too far-fetched.

> *4* And no lame, blind, paralysed person nor any man who has an indelible blemish on his flesh, nor any man suffering from uncleanness
>
> *5* in his flesh, none of these will go out to war with them. All these shall be volunteers for war, perfect in spirit and in body, and ready for the day of vengeance. And every

6 man who has not cleansed himself of his 'spring' on the day of battle will not go down with them, for the holy angels are together with their armies. And there will be a space

7 between all their camps and "the place of the hand" of about two thousand cubits. And no immodest nakedness will be seen in the surroundings of all their camps.

Extract 3: 1QM 7.9-18

A considerable portion of the War Scroll deals with battle formations and organisations; long passages are devoted to the mobilization for battle, the trumpets, banners, battle formations and the types of armour that should be used (Collins 1997: 94). Duhaime has pointed out that the military material in 1QM 2-9 bear a "general similarity to Hellenistic military manuals and shows some acquaintance with Hellenistic and Roman military strategy" (Collins 1998: 167), and it is believed that the military knowledge was possibly derived from the experience of Hasmonean and Herodean armies as well as observing foreign armies such as the Romans at war. Yadin has noted that banners were a prominent feature of Roman armies (Collins 1997: 96), but is also attested in Numbers 2:2. The organisation of the assembled multitude in 1QM 3.12-5.2 is based on the battle instructions Jethro gives Moses in Exodus 18, where the army had to be divided into units of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens (Collins 1997: 96).

9 When they draw up the battle lines against the enemy, one line opposite another line, out from the central gate towards (the space) between the lines, shall go seven

10 priests of the sons of Aaron, robed with garments of white byssus, a linen tunic and linen trousers, and they shall gird on a belt of intertwined byssus, violet

11 purple and crimson, with many-hued patterns, work of a craftsman, and upon their heads (they shall wear) turbans. (These are) the garments of war; they shall not bring them into the sanctuary.

12 The first priest will walk in front of all the men of the line, to strengthen their hands for battle. And the (other) six shall hold in their hand

13 the rallying trumpets, the memorial trumpets, the alarm trumpets, the pursuit trumpets and the trumpets of re-assembly. When the priests go out

14 towards (the space) between the lines, seven levites shall go out with them, with seven ram's horns in their hands. Three supervisors from among the levites shall go in front of

15 the priests and the levites. The priests will blow the two rallying trumpets (… of bat)tle upon fifty shields,

16 and fifty infantrymen shall go out of a gate (…) the officers of the levites. And with each

17 line they shall go out in accordance with this ru(le… the infan)trymen (shall go out) of the gates

18 (and take up po)sition between the li(nes…) the ba(ttle…).

The battle in this final battle against Israel's historic and cosmic enemies is appropriately led by priests and levites, further underscoring the fact that this is a holy, ritualistic war. The author does, however, draw a distinction between the priest's role on the battlefield and his role in the temple; he has to wear special clothes when he is in battle, and he is not allowed to wear that same garb in the temple or holy sanctuary (1QM 7.11). The kitting-out of the priest for the battle also brings to mind Greek epic literature like Homer's *Iliad*, in which many words were devoted to the precious nature of the gear the heroes used.

Extract 4: 1QM 9.1-9

This section is a further strategy plan for the army of the "Sons of Light". It is noteworthy how mercilessly God's army will fall on the enemy – the priests will "continue blowing the trumpets" after the enemy has started falling back, and the army will make sure they stay on the battlefield until they have all been defeated. Again there is the emphasis on the eschatological nature of the battle – this is a battle for "eternal destruction" (1QM 9.5-6).

1 will begin to strike the fallen with their hands. And all the throng shall stop the alarm signal, but the priests shall continue blowing the trumpets

2 of destruction to direct the battle until the enemy has been routed and turns its back, and the priests shall follow, blowing, to direct the battle.

3 And when they have been routed in front of them, the priests shall blow the rallying trumpets, and all infantry-men shall go out towards them from the midpoint

4 of their front lines. Six battalions shall take up position together with the battalion which is fighting, seven lines in all, twenty eight thousand

5 warriors and six thousand on horse. All these shall pursue the enemy to exterminate them in God's battle for

6 eternal destruction. The priests shall blow the trumpets of pursuit for them, and they shall divide for the pursuit to destruction of all the enemy. And the cavalry

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7 will make them return to the battle zone, until their annihilation. When the dead fall, the priests shall follow, blowing at a distance, and they shall not enter

8 in the midst of the fallen so as not to be defiled with their impure blood, for they are holy. They shall not desecrate the oil of their priestly anointing with the blood

9 of futile nations.

It is also noteworthy that even in victory the priests must retain their ritual separation from the results of war; despite being the leaders of the battle, they cannot be defiled with "impure blood" of the enemy. This denotes a dilemma for the authors of this text: a war is necessary, but by nature it takes away life and causes pollution even to the soldiers fighting on the side of the righteous. Although the text of 1QM breaks off immediately after this remark, the authors do not seem to have a solution to this problem; presumably their soldiers will be members of their community, who are governed by strict purity rules as set out in the Community Rule.

Collins notes that this text's militancy is often thought to contrast with "the quietism of Qumran", quoting the hymn in 1QS which says: "I will pay to no man the reward of evil; I will pursue him with goodness. For judgment of all the living is with God, and it is He who will render to man his reward…. I will not grapple with the men of perdition until the Day of Revenge…" (1QS 10.17-19), but goes on to point out that this is not a position of absolute pacifism; the author is simply holding out his revenge until the appointed day (Collins 1998: 170).

Extract 5: 1QM 9.14(b)-16

This section concerns battle towers, and is cited here because it names the four archangels, who are thus shown as part of the army of the "Sons of Light" and thereby re-inforces the metaphysical aspect of the eschatological battle.

And on all the shields of the towers

15 there will be written: on the first: 'Michael', (on the second: 'Gabriel', on the third:) 'Sariel', on the fourth: 'Raphael';

16 'Michael' and 'Gabriel' on (the right, and 'Sariel' and 'Raphael' on the left..)

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Extract 6: 1QM 10.1(b)-8

This extract is an excellent example of the way in which Judaean apocalyptic texts re-cast the Old Testament tradition in a new role (see Chapter 6.2 above), thereby creating the appearance that the apocalyptic philosophy displayed here has always been embedded in the Judaean religious tradition, only to be elucidated now that the end of the known world was approaching. In this case, the authors quote a passage from Deuteronomy that seems to echo the Qumranic belief that divine beings live among the earthly community – "for your God goes with you to do battle for you", thereby creating a biblical precedent for the message that is being conveyed.

> And also he told us that you, great and terrible God, will be in our midst to plunder
>
> *2* all our enemies before us. And he taught us about our generations from ancient times, saying:
>
> *Dt 20:2-5* «When you approach for battle, the priest is to stand up and speak to the people
>
> *3* saying: 'Listen Israel, those of you approaching for battle against your enemies. Do not be afraid, and may your hearts not fail;
>
> *4* do not fear and do not tremble in front of them, for your God goes with you to do battle for you against your enemies to save you'».
>
> *5* Our officers shall speak to all those in readiness for battle: to those with resolute hearts, to strengthen them with God's power,
>
> *6* and to (those) whose heart melts, to send them away and to strengthen together with all the intrepid heroes. For (this is) what you (said) by Moses' hand, saying: *Num 10:9* «When there is a war
>
> *7* in your land against the enemy who oppresses you, you shall blow the trumpets and you shall be remembered before your God,
>
> *8* and you shall be saved from your enemies.»

The passage from Numbers is of particular relevance to the Judaean populace in general, as they had been subjected to several generations of foreign rule – the Assyrians, the Babylonians, Persians, Hellenistic kings and, after the Hasmonean interlude, the Romans. This passage promises a favourable outcome specifically against foreign invaders, which is relevant in the context of the opening lines recounting various foreign armies that attacked Israel and Judah on home turf.

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Extract 7: 1QM 10.8(b)-15

This hymn of praise deals with some of the founding philosophies of the Judaean cult and the Qumranic cosmogony. The first part quoted here harks back at the core of Judaism as described by Otzen in 4.2.2 above, in which God's election of Israel is "uniquely bonded to the covenant and means that Yahweh leads his people through history, while his people in return acknowledge him as God and undertake to honour his demands: that is, 'keep the covenant'" (Otzen 1990: 69). These first few lines reflect a sense of wonderment at the uniqueness of God and a sense of privilege that they, the Israelites, were chosen from all the peoples of the earth with whom to establish a covenant.

Of particular relevance is 1QM 10.11, which characterises Israel (and therefore by definition the Qumran community, which is according to its own interpretation the only one who still follows the correct prescriptions of God) as being able to see and hear the manifestations of God on a metaphysical level.

> Who (is) like you, God of Israel,
> in the heavens or on earth,
> to do great deeds like your deeds,
> _9_ marvels like your feats:
> And who is like your people, Israel,
> whom you chose
> from among all the peoples of the earth,
> _10_ a people of holy ones of the covenant,
> learned in the law, wise in knowledge,
> (…)
> _11_ alert to the voice of Glory,
> seers of the holy angels,
> with open ears,
> hearing profound things?

In this regard it is of course important to remember that the Qumran community's founder, the Teacher of Righteousness, probably received his vision on how the cult should be observed in a heavenly revelation (García Martínez 1995a: 11); on that basis, all the members of the Qumran community are characterised as being open and receptive

to the direct communications of God and his heavenly hosts; it is also a part of the Qumranic notion that angels and other spiritual beings live among them.

The next passage deals with a Qumranic cosmogony. As the authors have classified soldiers and priests into different positions on the battlefield, they here classify the creation into the "dome of the sky" and a host of holy beings who seem to be appointed to act out the divinely-made "laws" of earth's divisions, which reminds of 2 Enoch, in which various sectors of the human world are subordinated to particular angels (Otzen 1990: 179).

> (… You created) the dome of the sky,
> the army of luminaries,
> *12* the support of the spirits,
> the control of the holy ones,
> the treasures of glory,
> (in the darkness) of the clouds;
> (you are) the creator of the earth
> and of the laws of its divisions
> *13* in desert and steppe,
> of all its products,
> its frui(ts and seeds,)
> of the circle of the sea,
> of the reservoirs of the rivers,
> of the chasm of the abyss,
> *14* of beasts and birds,
> of man's image,
> of the gener(ations of…),
> of the division of tongues,
> of the separation of peoples,
> of the dwelling of the clans,
> *15* of the legacy of the nations,
> (…)
> of the sacred seasons,
> of the cycle of the years
> and of appointed times
> for ever.

It also has to be said that here are a few very Persian-sounding concepts – the sky being a dome, the sea being circular, the "army of luminaries" who sound very much like the Bounteous Immortals whose task it is to lead the assault against the evil forces of Ahriman (see 5.2 above).

Extract 8: 1QM 11.6-13

This passage combines apocalyptic dualism with a Messianic prophecy from the Old Testament; the passage from Numbers 24 picks up half-way through Balaam's oracle which either predicts a messiah figure or announces an astronomical manifestation of a messiah's birth, and again fuses this notion, which would have been familiar to the scripturally-minded members of the Qumran community, to the eschatological war against Belial. It is very much concerned with the intervention of divine beings in human affairs, and quotes three instances from the Old Testament in which God was said to have intervened in an invisible state, firstly as "a star … from Jacob", then opening up the Red Sea and the disembodied force that will fell Assyria.

This passage also contains the familiar apocalyptic motif of the triumph of the poor (see also ZWYt 3.15-18 ("Extract 3" in 8.1 above) and the notion that those who are materially poor are in fact those who are being regarded favourably upon by the deity. In the context of the Qumran community, exiles in the desert and rejected by the main fold of the Jerusalem cult on account of their religious beliefs, this would probably have found strong resonance with the audience. The passage closes off by re-iterating the notion that heavenly reward awaits those who are poor on this earth, and hence the hope of salvation and determinism.

> _6_ Thus you taught us from ancient times: _Num 24:17-19_
>
> «A star will depart from Jacob,
>
> a sceptre will be raised in Israel.
>
> It will smash the temples of Moab,
>
> it will destroy all the sons of Seth.
>
> _7_ It will come down from Jacob,

it will exterminate the remnant of the city,

the enemy will be its possession,

and Israel will perform feats».

By the hand of your anointed ones,

8 seers of decrees,

you taught us the times of the wars of your hands,

to {fight} /to cover you with glory/ with our enemies,

to fell the hordes of Belial,

9 the seven nations of futility,

by the hand of the poor, those you saved,

with the strength and the peace of your wonderful power.

The melting heart you open to hope.

You shall treat them like pharaoh.

10 like the officers and their chariots in the Red Sea.

Like a torch of fire in straw

you shall burn the fallen spirits,

devouring wickedness,

without ceasing,

11 until the sin has been consumed.

From of old you foretold the moment

of the power of your hand against the Kittim: *Isa 31:8*

«Ashur will fall by the sword of no-one,

12 the sword of a nobody will devour it.» *Blank*

13 For you will deliver into the hands of the poor

the enemies of all the countries,

and by the hand of those prone in the dust

you shall fell the powerful ones of the peoples,

you shall give the wicked their reward.

Extract 9: 1QM 12.1-5[65]

This extract expands considerably on the apocalyptic notion of heaven. It has several points of similarity with Daniel – the holy ones figure prominently in Daniel 7; in Daniel 12 is also mention of a book in which the names of the elect has been written (Collins 1997: 119). This is a further example of determinism, and goes into extensive detail of what the deity had planned out – the precise way in which they would organise their armies, what blessings they will receive and, of course, the outcome of the eschatological battle.

1 For there is a multitude of holy ones in heaven

and a host of angels in your holy dwelling

to praise your name.

And the chosen ones of the holy people

2 you have established for yourself in (…)

The (bo)ok of the names of all their armies

is with you in your holy dwelling,

(…) in the dwelling of your glory.

3 And the rewards of your blessings

(…) the covenant of your peace

you engraved for them

with the chisel of life

in order to rule (…) during all times eternal,

4 to organize the arm(ies) of your chosen ones

in its thousands and in its myriads,

together with your holy ones and your angels,

5 to direct the hand in battle

(and destroy) the rebels of the earth

by your great judgments.

And the people of the chosen ones of the heavens

will triu(mph).

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[65] Puech's translation of this particular passage has slightly different nuances:
"For the multitude of holy ones (is) impatient (?) in the heavens and the hosts of angels are in your holy abode to ce(lebrate) your fidelity. The elect of the holy people you have placed for yourself in the l(ight? And the bo)ok of the names of all their host is with you in your holy abode and the n(umber of the holy o)nes is in your glorious residence." (Puech 1993: 451, quoted in Collins 1997: 118).

Collins asserts that there is no resurrection language in the War Scroll, (the mention made of the dead being risen up in 1QM 14.12 refers to dead soldiers being revived on the battlefield), because the "elect" already experience the presence of angels in this life, even though they are still subject to the attacks of Belial (Collins 1997: 119). Therefore, the Qumran community is looking forward to the end days so evil can be eradicated and they can continue living with the heavenly beings.

Extract 10: 1QM 13.2(b)-5

This is a strongly dualistic passage that reminds of the diametric opposition between the God of Israel and Belial found in the Community Rule. This passage lines up an evil adversary for every good being or phenomenon on God's side – an evil plan vs. a malicious plan, deeds of truth vs. wicked rule, blessings vs. damnation, light vs. darkness.

> «Blessed be the God of Israel
>
> in all his holy plan
>
> and in the deeds of his truth,
>
> *3* and blessed be all who serve him in justice,
>
> who know him in faith. *Blank*
>
> *4* Accursed be Belial in his malicious plan,
>
> may he be damned for his wicked rule.
>
> Accursed be all the spirits of his lot
>
> in his wicked *Blank* plan
>
> *5* may they be damned for their deeds of filthy uncleanness.
>
> For they are the lot of darkness
>
> and the lot of God is for everlasting light.»

8.3 Comparing the apocalyptic attributes of the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* and the Qumran War Scroll (1QM)

8.3.1 Dualism

The opposition between good and evil forms the backbone of both these texts. In the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* the two primary adversaries in this **cosmic dualism** are the benevolent deity *Ohrmazd* and his evil adversary *Ahreman*; in 1QM the underlying opposition is between the God of Israel and the evil hordes of Belial. In both texts all

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heavenly and earthly beings are grouped either with one or the other; the dualism defines every being's place in both the current life and, more importantly, in the afterlife.

An important **difference between the Zoroastrian and Judaean dualism** reflected in these particular texts is that the War Scroll mentions no heavenly adversary for the God of Israel. Belial is characterised as the supreme evil being; to him is ascribed the current age of evil (1QS 1.18), but his adversary is not the God of Israel, but the archangel Michael (García Martínez 2003: 102), which means that his powers is not on an equal footing with that of the deity. This is consistent with the cosmogony of the Community Rule, in which Israel's God is said to have placed both "the spirit of truth and of deceit within man (1QS 3.18) and in which God is said to be elevated *above* the opposing factions", and to have created both good and evil (Collins 1997: 43-44). Shaked, however, argues that the Iranian and Judaean dualisms are closer to one another than may seem apparent: "(…) the doctrinal supremacy of Ahuramazda over Angra Mainyu is always maintained, and (…) Angra Mainyu is conceived of throughout as a negative force, and as such is doctrinally secondary to the divine power of Ahuramazda, against whose existence and creation he sets out to fight" (1984: 316).

The notion of dualism also serves as a device to characterise other aspects of the apocalyptic author's conceptual world. A prominent feature in both the Iranian and Judaean text discussed above is the **nationalistic or sectarian** undertone of the text; both the Iranian protagonists and the Qumran community position themselves in an "us vs. them" scenario, seeing themselves as an oppressed, wronged group of people facing the opposition and oppression of an extraneous community. In the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* the "them" are the foreign Muslim rulers who oppress and humiliate the Zoroastrian Iranians on account of their religion. In the War Scroll, the "them" are both foreigners and countrymen; not only are they threatened by the expansionistic Kittim, they also view the religious mainstream of Judah as "the wicked of the covenant" (1QM 1.2). Both texts see the protagonists as wholly good and the antagonists as wholly evil; their adversaries are in both cases equated with the demonic forces of the evil protagonist.

Otzen, in his extensive exploration of dualism that forms part of his overview of Judaean apocalypticism, labels the "infinite distance between God and humanity and between heaven and earth" as **cosmic dualism** (1990:179). These multiple layers of existence are very important in both texts; the Zoroastrians view the spirit world as an almost tangible reality of everyday life, as is reflected in the way the cult is designed to fight off evil spirits and noxious creatures (Boyce 1979: 43-44). The Qumran text also follows the trend in other Judaean apocalypses of incorporating supernatural beings in the narrative, but instead of showing angels as interlocutor or guide, regards angelic beings as living among them: "for the holy angels are together with their armies" (1QM 7.6).

Closely aligned to cosmic dualism is the notion of **ethical dualism**, in which the inclination towards good or evil is brought to bear on personal choice or inclination[66]. Otzen speaks of "anthropological-ethical dualism", in which "the spirits of truth and falsity are at war in the individual" (1990: 189). In the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* human behaviour is very clearly aligned to the cosmic dualism of alignment to the one deity or the other; the followers of the *dēws* do unethical things; they "will be more deceiving <and> of worse law, will have neithter gratitude nor respect for hospitality, and will feel no love for the household" (ZWYt 4.20, Extract 4 in 8.1.2 above). In Qumran, ethical dualism crops up often with regard to sectarian sentiments; it is especially evident in the Damascus Document, which gives a greater role to human free will than the Community Rule or War Scroll. The Damascus Document "seems to rely on a theology of the human inclination (*yēser*)" (Collins 1997: 48, see also Cook 2007); there is an indication of that kind of thought in the sectarian passage in 1QM 1.2 – "those who assist (Belial and his armies) from among the wicked of the covenant" (Extract 1 in 8.2.2 above). It is interesting to note that the soldiers in the War Scroll are termed "volunteers" (1QM 7.5 – Extract 2 in 8.2.2 above), which could be an echo of the Damascus Document's sentiments.

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[66] Lacey defines ethics as "an enquiry into how men ought to act in general, not as means to a given end" (1960: 60).

This dualistic view is also extended to the sphere of **ritual purity** – in the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* the foreign invaders are considered unclean, "cultivating a path of unrighteousness and the path to hell" (ZWYt 4.25 – Extract 5 in 8.1.2 above). The Qumran sect also considers its evil adversary as unclean and distinguishes itself from "them" (both foreigners and opposing Judaean sects) by adhering to strict purity laws (García Martínez 1995c: 157).

8.3.2 Determinism

This is the other golden thread that runs through both texts analysed; the outcome of history has already been determined in ancient times (ZWYt 3.22 and 7.16; 1QM 1.1-15 and 11.8-13); both texts go into considerable detail of what will happen and how carefully the benevolent deity had planned the favourable outcome to the righteous.

An important aspect of determinism is the **periodisation of history**, which occurs frequently in both Iranian and Judaean apocalypticism, as has been discussed in Chapters 5.4 and 6.2 above. It is also present in both these texts – explicitly in the case of the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* and implicitly in the War Scroll. The *Zand* contains two narratives (Chapter 1 and Extract 2 in 8.1.2 above) in which history is divided into a number of periods represented by different metals; it has been noted that a similar device is found in Daniel 7 and 8. The Qumran theology is clearly aligned around the expectation of the end of the current age in which evil plays a part; the Qumran Community Rule (1QS) speaks of the "dominion of Belial" (1QS 1.18), implying the expectation of a new age not defined by evil. Closely aligned to the periodisation of history is *ex eventu* **prophecy**, in which known past events of history are placed within the context of a vision forecasting a positive outcome; the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn*'s historical anthologies described above is a clear example of this. *Ex eventu* prophecy is not prominent in the War Scroll, and where it does occur, it does not refer to any particular historical events, but rather invokes the Old Testament to promise a positive outcome (1QM 10.1-8 – Extract 6 in 8.2.2 above).

Another important aspect of determinism is the descriptions of the **signs of the times**, which, though gloomy, help to serve as consolation of the oppressed parties. In the *Zand ī*

Wahman Yasn the suffering of the Iranians is directly equated with the end of the final century of *Zarduxšt* (ZWYt 6.12-13 – Extract 8 in 8.1.2 above) and the beginning of *Ohrmazd*'s reclamation of his creation. Often, the signs of the times are hidden in **natural or supernatural** events; in the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* there are references to astronomy (ZWYt 7.7) and natural cataclysms like earthquakes and changes in the sun and seasons (ZWYt 6.3). The War Scroll employs astronomical predictions from the Old Testament tradition in 1QM 11.6 (Extract 8 in 8.2.2 above) with the quotation from Numbers 24.17-19 referring to the star that will depart from Jacob.

Both the periodisation of history and signs of the end times often go hand in hand with a **negative perception of the present**. Both the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* and the War Scroll idealise the ancient roots of their religion. The Iranian text does this by ascribing qualities of ascending value to the preceding historic eras in ZWYt 3.19-29 (Extract 2 in 8.1.2 above). The War Scroll appeals to the Old Testament tradition of prophecy (Deuteronomy 20:2-5 in 1QM 10.2-4 and Numbers 10:9 in 1QM 10.6-8 – both from Extract 6 in 8.2.2 above) and warfare (Collins, in 1997: 96, makes reference to the fact that the military organisation in 1QM reflect the descriptions in Exodus 18).

Another aspect of determinism is the **judgment at the end of time** in which the righteous are afforded eternal life and the unrighteous are sent to hell. This is not dealt with in any of the passages quoted in the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn*, but it receives an oblique reference in the very last verse of the text (9.24): "And then *Sōšāns* will render the creation pure again, and the Resurrection of the Dead and the Final Body will take place"; as we have seen in Chapter 5, once all the dead has received a new body, the judgment will take place. In the War Scroll this judgment is alluded to in the mention of the heavenly book in which the names of all the righteous are written down (1 QM 12.2 – Extract 9 in 8.2.2).

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8.3.3 Eschatological war

Both these texts anticipate a **war between the good and evil forces** that will signal the end of the current era in cosmic history. The confrontation between *Ohrmazd*'s subjects and the *dēws* forms the climax of what is regarded as the core of a previous redaction of the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn*. The gathering of the allies of *Ērān* and the messianic hero-figure *Pišōtan* are described in great detail, and considerable time is spent on how they will vanquish the *dēws* (ZWYt 7.1 and 7.11-38 – Extracts 9 and 10 in 8.1.2). The War Scroll is partly a description of an eschatological war and partly a manual to the Qumran community of how this war will be fought (Collins 1997: 94).

In both these texts this eschatological war takes on a **ritualistic** nature; *Pišōtan* and his allies fight the battle not with swords and spears, but by exercising the holy Zoroastrian fire and water rituals (ZWYt 7.20-26 – Extract 10 in 8.1.2). In the Qumran War Scroll, the priests march among the ranks of the army of the Sons of Light and lead the battle (1QM 7.9-18 – Extract 3 in 8.2.2).

An aspect already touched upon in the section on dualism (8.3.1 above) is the **participation of heavenly beings** in the eschatological events. *Pišōtan* is assisted by the *Amahraspands* and even the spirits of some of the fire rituals (ZWYt 7.24-26 – Extract 10 in 8.1.2); 1QM 10.4 also implies divine participation by way of a quotation from Numbers 23 (Extract 6 in 8.2.2). These heavenly beings are often described within the context of their **heavenly hierarchies or surroundings**, such as *Ohrmazd* and his *Amahrspands* in (ZWYt 7.22 – Extract 10 in 8.1.2 above) and the visualisation of heaven in the War Scroll (1QM 12.1-5 – Extract 9 in 8.2.2 above).

The outcome of the eschatological war is the **vindication of the protagonists**. In the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* the *Gannāg Mēnōg* is driven into hell and his fire temple is destroyed (ZWYt 7.26 – Extract 10 in 8.1.2); in the War Scroll the priests pursue the enemy after defeating them with a view to "exterminating" them (1QM 9.5-7 – Extract 4 in 8.2.2 above).

8.3.4 Messianism

The belief that the eschatologcial events will be heralded by a messiah or messiahs is well attested in both Iranian and Judaean traditions; in the case of the two texts under discussion, messianism is on the surface more prominent in the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* than the War Scroll; the apocalyptic events described in Extracts 9 and 10 are mostly due to the efforts of *Pišōtan;* the War Scroll (1QM specifically) contains one quotation from an Old Testament text that could have messianic implications, that of Numbers 24:17-19, which predicts that "a star will depart from Jacob" (1QM 11.6-7 – Extract 8 from 8.2.2 above). However, Collins argues that the War Scroll is more messianic than it seems.

There are several different conceptions of the Messiah in the Qumran scrolls[67]. The Hebrew word *māšīah* means "anointed", and occurs about 30 times in the Old Testament with reference to kings, but the Dead Sea Scrolls do not always refer to their messiahs by that name (Collins 1997: 72).

The respected scholar E.P. Sanders concluded, on the basis of a broad survey of Second Temple Judaism between 63 BCE and 66 CE, that the War Scroll contained no Davidic messiah (Collins 1995: 59). However, on a close analysis and comparison of various fragments related to the War Scroll, including the War Scroll from Cave 4 (4QM), a *pesher* on Isaiah (4QpIsa), and a separate fragment of the war Scroll, 4Q285, all of which mention the Branch of David, Collins concludes that the Prince of the Congregation was indeed a messianic figure – one and the same as the Branch of David who occurs in 4Q285 (see also the discussion on Extract 8 in 8.2.2 above). This means that Qumran "did indeed have its own distinctive attitude to messianism and indeed did look for supernatural deliverance in the final war, but the Davidic king had a well-established place in their expectations" (Collins 1995: 60).

Messianism in the Qumran corpus of texts is at best a complex subject of study. Due to uncertainties about the dating of many texts and fragments, and uncertainties as to how

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[67] There is on the whole a multiplicity of often contradictory theological beliefs in the Qumran scrolls. For more detail, see Cook 1998: 1115-1121.

far the scrolls constitute a coherent corpus, it is difficult to establish theories regarding the development of messianism within the community. Added to that, the terminology within the scrolls is often ambiguous (Collins 1995:56).

In the Dead Sea Scrolls the term "messiah" is sometimes used with reference to Israelite prophets. The Damascus Document envisages two messiahs, of Aaron and Israel (Collins 1997: 77); the Florilegium mentions the "Interpreter of the Law" along with the Prince of the Congregation, who could be one and the same person or separate ones (Collins 1997: 78). Brooke considered a passage in the Testimonia quoting Exodus 20:21, Numbers 24:15-17 and Deuteronomy 33 to mean that the community expected a prophet and the messiahs of Aaron and Israel to arise (Collins 1997: 79).

Messianism in Second Temple Judaism was at best diverse – J.D.G. Dunn did not consider messianism as a fundamental part of Second Temple Judaism, while E.P. Sanders stated "the expectation of a messiah was not the rule" (Collins 1995: 4). Collins argues that "'messiah,' even as an eschatological term, can refer to different kinds of figures, and that to speak of 'the messiah' without further qualification is to speak ambiguously" (1995: 12). "If we may accept Ed Sanders's notion of a common Judaism, in the sense of what was typical, though not necessarily normative, in the period 100 BCE-100 CE, the expectation of a Davidic messiah was surely part of it."

8.3.5 Exhortation

We have already seen that Hellholm's *coda* to *Semeia 14*'s definition of apocalypticism had to do with the *intention* of the apocalypse: "with the purpose of exhortation and/or consolation by means of divine authority intended for a group in crisis" (Webb 1990: 124). This function of apocalyptic occurs in both these texts.

There are several passages in the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* that can be read as encouragement to stay steadfast in the observation of the religion and awaiting the next millennium. It is implicit in ZWYt 3.15-18 (Extract 1 in 8.1.2 above) and ZWYt 4.68 (Extract 7 in 8.1.2 above), both of which reflect the same sentiment, namely that earthly suffering is equal to

riches in paradise, which means that the faithful should not lose heart. In ZWYt 6.12-13 (Extract 8 in 8.1.2 above) *Ohrmazd* promises the eradication of evil as reassurance to *Zarduxšt*'s expression of dismay at the predictions of deprivation and oppression. The most important exhortation, however, which is very much reminiscent of the Judaean apocalypses discussed in the overview of 6.2, is the first part of Extract 7, ZWYt 4.67, which encourages the Zoroastrians to study the religion and bear the privations of the current times, "as the 'Final Body <and> (…) the salvation of one's own soul' is to follow".

Exhortation is implicit in the War Scroll; the text is an instruction of how to fight the eschatological war that will end all evil. From sectarian writings like the Community Rule and the Damascus Document it is evident that the Community lived life according to the exhortation their Teacher of Righteousness had received during his heavenly revelation, and all the prescriptions for how to live one's life are, in some way or another, based on that. The Dead Sea sect did not need consolation; they *knew* that they would be vindicated when the eschatological war described in this text started – they would defeat their kinsmen who shunned their religious beliefs, their foreign oppressors *and* the forces of darkness.

CHAPTER 9: SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

9.1 Considering the nature of possible Persian influence on Judaism in general

In Chapter 4.2.3 (3) above, I have argued that although Yehud was probably of fairly little consequence to the Achaemenid kings, Judaeans had had a largely positive experience of Persian rule during the Achaemenid empire. This is demonstrated by Cyrus II's reversal of the Judaeans' Babylonian exile, the Persian authorities' sympathetic treatment of the Elephantine garrison, the alleged imperial approval of Judaean law and the ostensibly helpful stance of the imperial authority towards the Judaean cult. They were indeed so grateful to Cyrus that they labelled him as a "messiah" (Briant 2002: 46).

Shaked (1984: 308) notes that the Persian authority over Judah had a noticeable impact on the style of Hebrew writings early in the Second Temple Period:

> These outward changes reflect some of the adjustments made necessary by the new situation of the world: the creation of the world empire of the Persians, their adoption of Aramaic as an official language for purposes of international communication, and the fact that both Hebrew and Aramaic absorbed a great number of Persian words and coined certain expressions under the influence of Persian, as they also did subsequently under that of Greek. (…) We have some words belonging to general civilian life, as well as some which became part of the Jewish religious terminology, although they were not exclusively of religious significance in their original linguistic background (…).

While it is obvious that a culture would be influenced by the long-term proximity of, and interaction with, another one, it is no straightforward matter to find exactly which aspects of Zoroastrianism may have influenced Judaism in some or other way. Grabbe, in a characteristically sober assessment, points out the difficulty of demonstrating such influence: "Influence is most likely to have taken place in areas of Judaism that already showed some affinity with Persian thought. However, this makes demonstration more difficult, whether to prove or to refute" (Grabbe 1992: 101).

Winston pointed out that the inability to date the Persian sources accurately makes it particularly difficult to "evaluate the interactions between the rabbinic and Pahlavi literatures" (1966: 186), but he finds reason to believe that the "four-monarchy theory" in Daniel has a Persian source (1966: 189). He reckoned it was easier to prove influence in the case of Qumran, as the early Zoroastrian writings such as the Yasna, Yashts and Khurda Avesta, "certainly preceded the Qumran Scrolls" (1966: 187).

Both Boyce and Zaehner took Iranian influence on Judaism in general as a given. Boyce found evidence of Iranian thought in the creation myth of Genesis and stated that "out of a Judaism enriched by five centuries of contact with Zoroastrianism (…) Christianity arose in the Parthian period, a new religion with roots thus in two ancient faiths, one Semitic, the other Iranian" (1979: 99, in Barr 1985: 204). Zaehner said "the similarities are so great and the historical context so neatly apposite that it would be carrying scepticism altogether too far to refuse to draw the obvious conclusion", that Judaism and Christianity were dependent upon Zoroastrianism (1961: 57, in Barr 1985: 204).

Morton Smith, who was also partial to the notion of Iranian influence on Judaism, argued that stylistic similarities demonstrating "literary dependence" existed between Second Isaiah 40-48 and Cyrus's proclamation of victory over Babylon. He ascribed this to the activity of Persian propagandists before Cyrus's conquest of Babylon (Smith 1963: 417-418). In the same study he also pointed out similarities between Second Isaiah and the Iranian Yasna 44, and that these "suggest relationship to the same tradition" (1963: 419), a notion with which Boyce agreed (1982: 47).

Barr uses the analogy of the seven-stage creation myth in Genesis 1 to find analogies with Zoroastrianism's sevenfold division of creation under the Bounteous Immortals[68] and the notion of some animals being good and others not, evoking the notion of ahuric animals like dogs and noxious creatures called *xrafstra* (Barr 1985: 207-208). He suggests that, if Judaean religion were influenced by Iranian, "it would not necessarily

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[68] The Bounteous Immortals are associated with particular aspects of creation; these associations are discussed in 5.2 above.

mean that Jewish religion 'took over' large elements from Iranian; rather, it would suggest that Iranian religion acted as a catalyst and caused the Jewish religion to define itself by contrast as much as by imitation".

In a similar vein, Shaked argues that although some of the later developments in the Old Testament, Apocrypha and Qumran writings could be shown to be developments of trends inherent in earlier Judaism, this does not *exclude* the possibility of Iranian influence.

> If contact with Iran is postulated as a contributing factor in the development of these ideas in Judaism, this does not imply that a set of concepts entirely alien to Jewish thought was introduced suddenly. What is suggested is that new developments, probably stimulated by internal factors and prepared for by a set of indigenous ideas, no less than by the effect of pressure from without, took the direction and character which they did, not by mere accident, but as a result of the fact that the Iranian pattern was at hand and quite well known.
>
> (Shaked 1984: 309)

Shaked argues that Persian administrators in Palestine and elsewhere were unlikely transmitters of Iranian religious thought. Instead, he postulates that "the best locale for the creation of a Jewish response for Persian culture may have been Persia and Mesopotamia, where Jews lived among a predominantly Persian population; and the most likely carriers of this new set of ideas may have been Jews from that Diaspora who had constant communication with their brethren in Palestine through pilgrimage and immigration", with "Asia Minor (being) a possible alternative" (1984: 325).

Barr makes a compelling point that the Old Testament shows little evidence of Judaean interest in Persian religious life (see Chapter 5.5 above), but that in contrast, the Greeks showed considerable interest in Persian culture and religion, with Herodotus passing on a great deal of information about them[69] (Barr 1985: 218). In this regard, Ruhi Afnan

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[69] Grabbe remarks: "Modern study has found that Herodotus is one of our most important sources for the reigns of Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius, and Xerxes. The reason is that he had close access to certain Persian traditions of that time. (…) Where he can be checked, Herodotus often shows an accurate knowledge of Persian tradition, suggesting that his account can generally be used with some confidence alongside contemporary Persian inscriptions" (2004: 120).

published an extensive study which, although based on dated assumptions on the lifetime of Zoroaster, argued for extensive influence of Zoroastrian thought in Greek philosophy (Afnan 1965).

Hultgård makes an extensive comparison between Greek works on Iranian religion and the Iranian apocalyptic texts that survived in Pahlavi and Greek works like Plutarch's moral treatises and the *Oracles of Hystaspes*. He found considerable points of agreement in Plutarch's treatise *De Iside et Osiride*, chapters 46-47, which describes Zoroastrian cosmogony and eschatology in detail. In 2003: 53 he states: "Several points show a surprising correspondence in details, which emphasizes the reliability of the oral transmission of that myth through centuries." What is important about the Greek tradition of Iranian apocalypticism is that it helps us to narrow down somewhat the dating of the Iranian apocalyptic tradition. Plutarch quoted a fragment of Theopompos which stated that "each deity (*Ohrmazd* and *Ahreman*) will rule for three thousand years and (…) during another period of three thousand years they will fight and make war and undo the work of the other. World history consists of nine thousand years and is subdivided into three periods of three thousand years each with its own characteristics" (Hultgård 2003: 54).

Theopompos's work has been dated to the fourth century BCE (Hultgård 2003: 54), which proves that these Iranian beliefs on eschatology did exist at an early enough time to be of possible influence in Hellenistic apocalypticism.

Hultgård further points out that Judaeans and Persians were "in close geographical contact from the Achaemenian period down to the fall of the Sassanian empire" – Achaemenid Empire aside, the considerable Judaean population in Mesopotamia was ruled by Iranian sovereigns during the Parthian and Sasanian periods, and Iran itself had communities of Judaeans. This, coupled with the fact that Iranian beliefs had circulated widely in the Near East (as is evidenced by the writings of Plutarch and Theopompos) and were well-known in antiquity, along with "religious and social affinities between the

priestly classes of Jews and Persians in the Hellenistic period" (2003: 60) is enough for Hultgård to reason that Iranian apocalyptic had indeed influenced the Judaean.

9.2 Considering the commonalities between Iranian and Judaean apocalypticism, with particular reference to Qumran

The surveys of Iranian and Judaean apocalypticism in Chapters 5 and 6, as well as the comparative text analysis in Chapter 8, have demonstrated several similarities between the Iranian and Judaean apocalyptic traditions, in the areas of cosmic and ethical dualism; divine determinism with regard to periodisation of history, *ex eventu* prophecy and "signs of the times"; an eschatological war between good and evil, in which both earthly and heavenly beings take part; messianism and exhortation.

To this, one can add John J. Collins's assessment (1998: 33):

> The Persian parallels to the apocalyptic genre are more comprehensive in nature than what we find in either postexilic prophecy or the Babylonian prophecies. Yet even if the Persian apocalypses could be dated securely to the Hellenistic age, the Jewish genre cannot be regarded as a simple borrowing, since it is adapted to the needs of Jewish monotheism. Some features of the apocalypses, such as the periodization of history, do indeed seem to be Persian in origin, but the actual motifs in which the Jewish revelations are expressed are drawn predominantly from Jewish tradition. In short, whatever was taken over from Persian apocalypticism was thoroughly reconceived and integrated with other strands of thought.

It is precisely with these "re-conceptions" that scholarly objections to the notion of Iranian influence on Judaean apocalyptic arise.

Thus Hanson holds that "the basic schema of apocalyptic eschatology" evolved in Israel itself and is "perfectly comprehensible within the history of Israel's own community and cult". Therefore he finds "hasty recourse to late Persian influence (…) unnecessary and unjustifiable" (1975: 60).

Whereas comparativist scholars like Kuhn, Dupont-Sommer and Gaster and Iranian specialists Widengren and Zaehner believed the discovery of the Qumran texts confirmed the idea of Iranian influence on Judaism, Frye, in a 1962[70] study, said that the beliefs found in Qumran could as easily have originated in Palestine as a response to the *Zeitgeist*. Frye pointed out that "precise textual analogies, like dualistic elements hav(e) no identical pairs, e.g. 'children of light and children of darkness', that the occurrence of Iranian loanwords proves nothing about the religious influences", and he asks whether the "unorthodox" beliefs reflected in it did not in fact originate in Palestine, the Judaism as reflected in the apocryphal books and the *Zeitgeist* (in Barr 1985: 205).

Barr also finds inconsistencies in Qumran's dualism with Zoroastrianism's. He argues that "the placing of 'truth' and 'lie' in central thematic positions of opposition, e.g., in antithetical parallelism, is actually rather rare" in Qumran texts, which leads him to conclude that "the traces of genuine Iranian dualism in these terms are fainter than has generally been recognized". He argues that the dualism in Qumran is rather based on a contrast between 'truth' and 'iniquity' (1985: 226). He also notes the absence of the Iranian veneration of fire as "the purest element", but instead the biblical use as "a symbol for divine judgment and destruction" (1985: 227).

Angelology and demonology are not entirely absent from the Old Testament texts, but are not particularly well-developed in either (Grabbe 2004: 243-244), while eschatology was largely absent (Grabbe 2004: 247-248). These elements become more prominent in the Judaean apocalyptic literature, and the discussion of these aspects in Chapters 6, 8.2 and 8.3 above have demonstrated several similarities with the Iranian apocalyptic tradition, notably the notion that the eschatological battle will take place on a physical as well as a spiritual plane, that the "Satan" side of the cosmic dualism is considerably more menacing than the role of prosecutor, which he had in Job (Duchesne-Guillemin 1969: 370). Barr says the most likely scenario where Iranian angelology could have influenced Judaean is in the case of the fallen angels in the Watchers (Barr 1985: 228).

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[70] Frye, R.N. 1962. Reitzenstein and Qumran revisited by an Iranian, *Harvard Theological review* 55: 261-268.

However, Shaked uses inconsistencies that crop up in comparisons between Judaean and Iranian traditions and the difficulty with finding precise analogies in the two to argue in favour of an Iranian source for Judaean beliefs at Qumran.

1. He finds that both the Iranian concept *mēnōg* and the Judaean concept *ruah* can be applied on three levels, designating "a psychological faculty, a metaphysical entity, and a divine being (angel or demon)"; but while *mēnōg* has the complementary opposite of the notion of physical being, *gētīg*, these two poles "never comes to form anything like a consistent system" in Judaism. (1972: 436-437)

2. In both Iranian apocalyptic and Qumran we find each god having "a host of assistant spirits who take active part in the cosmic war", who either designate human qualities or are independent spiritual entities. While he finds in the Zoroastrian *Denkard* an "organized scheme of Good Mind as opposed to Evil Mind, Humility opposed to Anger, Obedience opposed to Disobedience, and all six spirits thus named are ancient Zoroastrian deities", he finds in the Judaean texts from Qumran and the *Testaments* that "there is no organic relationship between the separate spirits mentioned and the general conception". "(…) what we have in Qumran and in the *Testaments* (of the Twelve Patriarchs) seems to represent a similar idea, but in a scrappy and incomplete fashion and without clear antecedents in earlier Jewish literature" (Shaked 1972: 438).

Shaked also finds a correspondence in style between Iran and Qumran with the parallel arrangement of qualities of the good and evil spirits in lists, and the fact that both traditions attribute wisdom to the deity (1972: 440-441).

He concludes as follows:

> By making this abstraction of the main points of Zoroastrian theology it may become apparent that they hold together and form a coherent system. It can further be shown that many of the major conceptions, if not always the details, have antecedents in the ancient Iranian literature, in the Avesta. Judaism, in its turn, also had certain antecedent themes in the pre-exilic period that

could have led to the development of the conception of angels, dualism, eschatology etc., but the chance of a whole system so strongly modelled, as it were, on the Iranian type of dualism developing on its own, without contacts in history, seems meagre. That Judaism was in contact with Iran during the Achaemenid and Parthian periods is of course a well-known fact. It may be imagined that contacts between Jews and Iranians helped in formulating a Jewish theology which, though continuing traditional Jewish motifs, came to resemble fairly closely the Iranian view of the world.

(Shaked 1972: 44)

9.3 Apocalyptic in a Near Eastern context

In Chapter 7 it was shown that apocalypticism occurred far more widely than the Judaean populations of the Ancient Near East, which Collins ascribed to similar cultural conceptions and similar socio-political circumstances after the Macedonian conquest (1975: 27). There were several uprisings against Hellenistic rule, accompanied by "nationalistic" propaganda showing a wish to be freed from their new rulers. Thus Barr speculates that Judaean adoption of ideas that are believed to be of "Oriental" origin might very well have been adopted as part of a broader revolt against the new Hellenistic order (Barr 1985: 229). The period saw the revival of ancient myths (e.g. the Enoch tradition, the Egyptian Potter's Oracle), pseudepigraphy (e.g. the Demotic Chronicle and the Potter's Oracle), determinism and messianic expectation (Collins 1975: 28-29). In addition, Clifford (2003) demonstrated that a kernel of apocalypticism existed in a number of pre-Hellenistic texts.

Therefore, it can be argued that the *propensity* for apocalyptic thought was present in the Ancient Near East at the time of the Alexandrian conquests in the region, and that the conquered peoples re-applied their cultural heritage to a new literary tradition that reacted to the new *status quo*. In the same way individuals faced with insurmountable problems daydream that their predicament does not exist, the former subjects of the Achaemenid Empire thus constructed narratives that would make their current predicament seem less severe.

9.4 Conclusion

An overview of the literature has shown that scholars approach the problem of possible Iranian influence on Judaean religion and apocalyptic in two ways. They generally either accept Iranian influence on the basis of a broad view of the two cultures, combined with points of similarity, or they question such influences by positing the influence of *other* cultures, or by questioning the proof scholars in favour of Iranian influence use to argue such influence, which could be linguistic arguments, literary context or historic context.

An objection often raised against possible Iranian influence on Judaean thought is the fact that supposedly Iranian influence only really becomes apparent in Judaean *after* the Achaemenid period, which could suggest that such Iranian notions might not have been Iranian after all.

Shaked, however, says it is far more likely that a development to a Judaean response to Persian influence could have taken place in the Hellenistc period, "since it was in this period that the general cultural mood was open to the absorption of ideas from the East and to oriental exotica" (1984: 325).

It must also be remembered that Persian influence in the Near East in general did not stop abruptly after the Macedonian conquest. It does not fall within the scope of this study to explore the nature of Iranian-Judaean contact during Seleucid rule and rise of the Parthians, but given the widespread presence of Judaeans and Iranians in the Near East[71], interaction between the two groups is highly probable, and the Parthian triumph against the Greek invaders must have made an impression on other Hellenistic subjects.

Due to the broken tradition of Iranian apocalypticism (and religion in general), there will always be plenty of grounds for poking holes in theories favouring Iranian influence on Judaean thought. Given the scope of this study, it has not been possible to investigate all

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[71] Some of Herodotus's sources were exiled Persian nobles living in Asia Minor (Myres 1953:159), and given the wide reach of the Achaemenid empire, it is very likely that enclaves of Iranian officials remained in former colonial territories like Babylonia, Judah and Egypt, where they could have come into contact with Judaeans.

the minutiae on which scholars base a questioning or denial of the presence of Iranian elements in Judaean apocalyptic, although the value of exploring individual points has been clearly demonstrated by Barr's excellent 1985 study.

We must, however, stop to consider another important consideration not often raised in this debate, namely the nature of the Judaean theological tradition. From very early on in their history, the Judaeans have displayed a propensity for *interpreting* scripture, generating theological literature and developing laws according to these interpretations (Otzen 1990: 69). The first great rabbinical compendium, the *Mishnah*, was compiled around 200 CE, and this in itself was a collection of orally-transmitted laws generated much earlier (Otzen 1990: 66). This rabbinic tradition has its origin in processing *native Judaean* theological ideas. Although the canonization of the Old Testament, in itself a manifestation of this urge to codify the religion, may have shielded "mainstream" Judaism from wholesale foreign influence (we have to remember, after all, that apocalypticism was largely a marginal phenomenon), differences of *interpretation* of this canon remained (Otzen 1990: 61).

The differences among the three prominent priestly "parties" that arose during the Second Temple Period, the Sadducees, Pharisees and Essenes, arose not only out of the opposition within early Judaism between western and eastern culture (Otzen 1990: 110), but also from different *interpretations* of the Torah. According to the Groningen Hypothesis (discussed in 8.2.1 above), differences in interpretation of scripture also lay behind the establishment of the Qumran community. Even the sectarian priests who informed and shaped the singular beliefs at Qumran generated a library of literature that aimed to explain Old Testament texts (the *pesharim*[72]) (Collins 1998: 152). It is therefore unlikely that the Judaean scribes responsible for the apocalyptic literature would have

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[72] Collins defines *pesharim* as not having "properly eschatological" contents, but rather referring to the historical experiences of the community. "They also pursue the biblical texts in a manner far more systematic than anything we find in the apocalypses. (…) These texts are more directly interested in the Torah and the scripture than is usual in the apocalypses" (Collins 1998: 152).

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adopted *any* foreign ideas without thoroughly processing them and finding precedents for such ideas within the scriptural traditions they found important[73].

This would explain why seemingly Iranian affinities within Judaean apocalyptic do not always accurately reflect the Iranian original; even the marginalised sectarian priests and scribes were still primarily occupied with reflecting what they believed to be the true message of the scriptures. It would also sit well with Grabbe's point that influence is "most likely to have taken place in areas of Judaism that already showed some affinity with Persian thought" (Grabbe 1992: 101).

In conclusion then, we can say that despite the problematic nature of Iranian apocalyptic sources, Plutarch's use of Theopompos's description of Iranian eschatology dates it early enough for it to have been a probable influence on Judaean apocalypticism. Furthermore, the Hellenistic milieu allowed the Iranian ideas to circulate widely[74], along with Babylonian material (Collins 1998: 33). Among the ideas that became widespread in this way are notions like pseudepigraphy, periodization, *ex eventu* prophecy, heavenly journeys, interest in the heavenly world and judgment of the dead, all of which found their way into Judaean apocalypticism (Collins 1998: 37). The reason why there are "more parallels with Persia than either postexilic prophecy or the Babylonian prophecies" (Collins 1998: 33) would then be explainable in the context of their initial positive experience of Persian rule under the Achaemenid kings, and the affinity Judaeans probably felt with the Persians following the deterioration of their situation after the Macedonian conquest. The reason similarities between Persian and Judaean aspects of apocalypticism are not exact, is that it was not the inclination of the Judaean priestly tradition to simply take foreign ideas and incorporate it into their own religious world; it would have had to be adapted in such a way that it looked like it came from the canonical tradition.

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[73] Otzen argues that apocalyptic ultimately arose from priestly circles, as priestly and cultic interests are well-represented both at Qumran and in apocalyptic literature like the *Testament of Levi*, *2 Enoch*, and the fact that "it is a thorough-going feature in apocalyptic literature that speculations about and calculation of the time of the end are combined with astronomical considerations. And who were the astronomers in Jewish society? The priests, of course; (…)" (Otzen 1990: 220).

[74] In this particular citation, Collins is speaking about both Babylonian and Persian material found in Judaean apocalypticism. Babylonian material is not of concern in this discussion.

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