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Embodying God's Final Word: Understanding the Dynamics of Prophecy in the the Ancient Near East and Early Monotheistic Tradition

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EMBODYING GOD'S FINAL WORD:

Understanding the Dynamics of Prophecy in the Ancient Near East and Early Monotheistic Tradition

University Scholar + Honors Thesis
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis will study the dynamics of prophecy in the Ancient Near East and Second Temple period in Palestine. Broadly speaking, I am interested in understanding the patterns of continuity and change of revelation and prophecy from eighteenth century BCE Mesopotamia to first century CE Palestine. The spatial and thematic restraints of this thesis do not allow for an in-depth study of every aspect of prophecy and prophetic literature in this period, and I will instead focus on several important primary sources from the late second temple period.

One of the most intriguing issues about prophecy in this period is the changing nature of prophecy after the closing of the Tanakh canon with Malachi. Michael Floyd writes: "Not too long ago many scholars would have regarded the phrase 'Second Temple prophecy' as nearly a contradiction."[1] It is true that prophecy and prophetic texts were thought by scholars to be dissolved by the post-exilic Second Temple period until relatively recently. The closing of the "Old Testament" canon was seen also as the end of the steady stream of prophecy. As I will argue throughout this thesis, prophecy never ceased but rather the nature of prophecy and the methods of prophesizing changed.

As I will discuss in chapter 4, nineteenth century scholarship overwhelmingly argued for the cessation of prophecy and prophetic texts beyond the biblical canon were cast aside. The surprising discoveries of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran and the Nag Hammadi library in southern Egypt in the mid-twentieth century, however, initiated an explosion of scholarly works on scriptural canonization, exegesis, prophecy and transmission of theological ideas in the Ancient Near East. The study of these fields is still in its infancy and lots of new and exciting

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[1] Floyd, Michael, "Introduction," in *Prophets, Prophecy and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism*, T&T Clark International, 2006 (1).

scholarship has been undertaken as scholars delve deeper into various aspects of Second Temple Judaism and its interactions with its surrounding cultures.

The theological situation in Palestine at this time might be best understood through the paradigm of "complex common Judaism," a concept attributed to Professor Stuart Miller. Miller argues that there were many different expressions of Judaism in the late Second Temple period, each group or trend sharing elements with another. Compartmentalizing and attempting to neatly categorize every sect and trend in Ancient Palestine often misses the larger thematic changes that were occurring in this period. The socio-religious transitions before and after the Babylonian exile as well as the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple and the emergence of the early (Jewish) Jesus movement had great repercussions and initiated what we could call a theological crisis. One of the important issues at the center of this theological crisis was prophecy and the continuation of inspired revelation.

In a hope to better understand the many complexities of prophecy in this transitional phase, I will analyze several primary texts and figures from the late Second Temple and first century CE. Before delving into issues of the changing nature of prophecy, I will discuss monotheistic Israelite prophecy in its Ancient Near Eastern milieu in chapters 2 and 3. How were different prophetic roles similar or different from those found in Ancient Near Eastern sources from Mesopotamia? What are the 'prophetic types' in ancient Israel and how did these prophetic roles change with surrounding socio-political changes?

As mentioned previously chapter 4 will briefly discuss the various scholarly trends in the study of prophecy and prophetic literature in the post-exilic period.

This introductory section will be followed by three case studies of primary texts and figures from the late Second Temple period. The first case study will include the *pesharim* and

the Dead Sea Scrolls. In chapter 5, I will analyze the *pesharim*, the interpretive commentaries on classical prophetic books from the Tanakh. Questions I will be discussing in this chapter include: how do the *pesharim* contribute to the diverse writings of post-exilic Palestine? Is there evidence of prophetic inspiration in the *pesharim*? How do the *pesharim* embody the changing nature of prophecy?

Chapter 6 will continue the analysis of the *pesharim* with a special focus on its exegetical techniques. Are the interpretive techniques and the inspired exegete found at Qumran based on or similar to any other inspired exegetical texts from the Ancient Near East? I will discuss the possible correlations between Mesopotamian commentaries of canonical religious and literary works and the techniques of the *pesharim* and also the important differences between the two.

Following this discussion of the *pesharim*, I will discuss whether or not the Teacher of Righteousness, the apparent inspired exegete of the *pesharim* should be considered a prophet in chapter 7. It is extremely difficult to figure out whether or not he was considered to be a prophet by the community members. What is the relation (if any) between the interpretive role of the Teacher of Righteousness and the earlier classical biblical prophets? Can the inspired exegete be considered a prophetic type?

The second case study in this thesis will be of the renowned first century historian Josephus. Josephus is an intriguing figure with many different aspects and I will only be touching upon his interactions and experiences with prophecy. Josephus belonged to the priestly class and had extensive knowledge of the classical biblical prophets. As we will see in chapter 8, Josephus' relationship with prophecy is extremely complex. Josephus imagines the classical prophets to be the only true historians in one sense and he sees himself continuing the history of the Jewish people where the prophets had left off with Daniel in the Persian exilic period. While

this may indicate that Josephus saw himself as part of this prophetic line, he simultaneously distances himself from the classical prophets. The question of whether Josephus can be considered a prophet or not is one with many correct answers. Even more than this question, though, I am interested in analyzing the simultaneous continuity and change in Josephus' conceptions of prophecy and prophets throughout his works.

Finally, for the last case study of this thesis, I will be analyzing the book of *Revelation* and its author John of Patmos. Chapter 9 will analyze *Revelation* and its relation to other Jewish literary genres, most notably the apocalyptic literature. With this analysis of *Revelation*, I hope to argue against the simplistic scholarly view that prophetic literature fizzled out with the emergence of apocalyptic literature written by anonymous authors. *Revelation* does not fully belong to the Jewish apocalyptic genre not is the author of *Revelation* unknown. There are several other factors that distinguish it from other literature of first century CE Palestine and these will be discussed in chapter 9.

There are certainly many other primary texts from the late Second Temple and early Christian periods that I could have chosen to analyze. Due to the practical constraints of this thesis, however, I have chosen several texts that I thought were representative of a "complex common Judaism." Each of the texts or figures I have chosen for this thesis embody a mesh of many genres and traditions from the Ancient Near East and each make a unique contribution to the ongoing scholarly debate on the changing nature of prophecy from the second century BCE through the first century CE.

The longest portion of this thesis is dedicated to the Dead Sea Scrolls and the *pesharim* as this is my main academic interest and I hope to pursue it my future graduate studies. The *pesharim* have been studied through a number of different perspectives, but very little has

actually been written about how they contribute to our understanding of prophecy and how prophecy was perceived in ancient Palestine.

I chose to also discuss Josephus because his writings are a testament to the important socio-political and religious changes taking place in the first century CE Palestine. It is interesting to note that most of the writings of Josephus were maintained and kept alive through the Church fathers. In this way, then, Josephus serves as our metaphorical transition from "Jewish" prophetic texts to early "Christian" prophetic texts (if the categories "Jewish" and "Christian" can even be applied to this period).

Finally, I chose to discuss *Revelation* as the final chapter of this thesis because it captures the various ways early Christians conceived classical biblical prophets and the emergence of a new type of prophecy. John of Patmos perfectly embodies what Homi Bhaba has called "in-between" or hybrid identity. While Bhaba's hybrid identity was aimed at conceptualizing the post-colonial subject who neither belongs to the colonial culture or his own, I have applied this to first century Palestine. John was a visionary "prophet" of sorts who neither belonged to the Jewish literary culture nor did he fit into the New Testament Jewish-Christian literary culture.

These three case studies are, then, representatives of the changing nature of prophecy in the late Second Temple period.

CHAPTER 2: WHAT IS PROPHECY? ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN AND BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES

Before delving into a discussion on the dynamics of prophecy in the Second Temple

period, it is essential to first arrive at a working definition of prophecy more generally. The

understanding and conceptualization of Israelite prophecy undoubtedly changed over time and

varied amongst different Jewish communities, especially in the post-exilic period. In this chapter,

I will discuss ancient Israelite prophecy in its Ancient Near Eastern milieu to better understand

how Israelite prophecy was distinct from and similar to its Near Eastern counterpart[2]. Following

this initial comparison I will focus on the post-exilic period and the different manifestations of

prophecy and perceptions of its potential cessation amongst the various Second Temple Jewish

communities.

Preliminary Definition:

According to Martti Nissinen, prophecy is the "transmission of allegedly divine messages

by a human intermediary to a third party."[3] This definition is very useful as it highlights several

key features of prophecy, which distinguish and differentiate it from other forms of divination.

Prophethood does not only entail a solitary relationship between an individual and the divine.

Rather, what sets prophecy apart from various other forms of divination is the special status of a

prophet as a 'spokesperson' to a larger group of people.

While Near Eastern prophecy more generally includes diviners who were capable of

calling on God(s) to elicit answers to specific questions, Israelite prophecy relies mainly on the

will of God to call upon a chosen individual as his spokesperson. As James Kugel explicates, a

prophet in the Israelite sense is "a messenger sent by God to speak on His behalf"[4] and one who

relays a particular message from God. A prophet is usually sent to remind, warn, exhort, or

interpret the will of God for a group of people. The exact mode of transmission through which

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[2] As Jonathan Stokl notes in his introduction to *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, comparing evidence from different cultures is unavoidably subjective, but I believe it can ultimately be productive. (Stokl, 5)
[3] Nissinen, Martti. *Prophecy in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context: Mesopotamian, Biblical, and Arabian Perspectives*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000 (preface).
[4] Kugel, James. *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture Then and Now*. New York: Free Press, 2007 (439).

the prophet receives God's message and revelation is not always clear and varies amongst different Biblical and post-biblical prophets. I will be discussing the mode of transmission of prophecy[5] in greater detail later in the paper as I take a closer look at particular Jewish communities in the post-exilic period.

Along with the essential messenger aspect of a prophet, there are several other important distinguishing factors of prophecy and prophets. Prophets must of course publicly proclaim to be sent by God and must somehow demonstrate their special relationship with the divine. The intended audience must also validate the prophet's divine message by acknowledging the various signs that the prophet claims have occurred on his or her behalf.

In addition, prophets disclose God's mandated laws and announce God's judgments and punishments for various beliefs and behaviors using characteristic formulae such as "Thus says the Lord" or some similar variation.[6] These divine judgments are often conveyed as new codes of religious and social law. Prophecy is therefore as much about social interaction as it is about sacred religious knowledge.

It is also important to understand the differences between ancient magic and divination and (monotheistic) prophecy. While these phenomena do share certain elements, and some scholars have suggested that they even share a common heritage, there are undoubtedly integral differences sprouting perhaps from the integral differences between "monotheistic" Israelite religion and the pagan Near Eastern worldview.[7]

As I mentioned earlier, Israelite prophets are selected exclusively by God and serve as a mouthpiece for the divine. Ancient Near Eastern magicians are not selected by a divine being nor do they relay messages to a larger public. In fact, magicians manipulated physical environments

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[5] i.e., whether the prophecy was ecstatic, through a dream…, etc.

[6] Kugel, *How to Read the Bible*

[7] As Rudiger Schmitt describes, the Tanakh may not have in fact banned all forms of magic, but only prohibited the illegitimate pagan forms of magic. This complicates the distinctions between prophecy, magic and what is permitted versus what is prohibited. "The Problem of Magic and Monotheism in the Book of Leviticus" *JHS* 8, Article 11

and exhibited powers capable of changing natural laws.[8] Prophets are only capable of performing these physical "miracles" through the hand of God. Therefore not every magician is a "prophet" and not all prophets are capable of practicing magic.

Running parallel to the magic-prophecy comparison is the relationship between prophecy and divination. Divination is a vast term referring to various forms of consultation of the divine. While divination, like prophecy, involves revealing the divine will to humans, divination has different means of acquiring the divine will. Many scholars have accepted at least in part the ancient distinction between two types of divination, one involving a technique and the other involving nature (i.e., non-inductive). Nissenin explains that prophecy belongs to non-inductive intuitive divination because prophets do not "employ methods based on systematic observations and their scholarly interpretations," like technical diviners, rather prophets act as direct mouthpieces of the God(s) whose messages they communicate.[9]

Other aspects of prophecy, including the socio-religious context, the personal qualities of the prophet him/herself, the possibility of predictive or eschatological knowledge embedded in divine messages and the specific modes of transmission and redaction of prophetic messages are essential to understanding prophecy as a phenomena distinct from other forms of divination, yet these aspects are subordinate to the basic and crucial understanding of prophecy as a process of transmission.

Near Eastern Prophecy[10]

With this preliminary definition of prophecy in mind, we can now take a closer look at prophecy as a phenomenon in the Ancient Near East. In this section I will briefly outline the major sources on Ancient Near Eastern prophecy and briefly discuss some important aspects of

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[8] Borghouts, J.F. "Witchcraft, Magic and Divination in Ancient Egypt" in J.M. Sasson, *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East,* New York: Scribner, 1775-1785.

[9] Nissinen, Martti, Robert Kriech Ritner, C. L. Seow, and Peter Machinist. *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003 (1).

[10] By "Near Eastern" I will mainly be speaking about Assyrian and Babylonian prophecy.

prophecy as it is appears in the sources. I will not be delving into great detail about the sources as this section mainly serves as an introduction and contextualization for Biblical prophecy.

The archives of Mari, a major collection of texts from the ancient Mesopotamian city-state, have been particularly useful for scholars interested in prophecy in the Ancient Near East. The first letters recognized as prophetic were found during excavations in the eighteenth century and the first letters were translated and published by George Dossin by 1950.[11] The introduction of these new sources led to a wave of scholarly literature and for several decades the Mari letters formed the basis for the study of extra biblical prophecy in the Ancient Near East. Other "prophetic" sources including Ancient Egyptian texts like The Prophecy of Neferti, the Wenamun travelogue, the Memphis and Karnak stele and The Divine Nominations of the Ethiopian King Aspelta along with the Aramaic Zakkur inscription and Deir 'Allah inscription also contributed to the scholarly discussion on the presence of extra-biblical prophecy in the Near East.

Many scholars have written on the subject of prophecy in the Ancient Near East from a variety of perspectives. It may be informative to mention some important works that have emerged from the last few decades of scholarship and a few of the scholars whose work I have found to be useful and helpful.

There are several older book-length studies comparing certain aspects of biblical prophecy and prophecy at Mari in particular, all of which were in German. More recently there have been many articles comparing various aspects of biblical prophecy and Neo-Assyrian and Babylonian prophecy.

Martti Nissinen, among others, has been particularly prolific in the field of Near Eastern prophecy. In *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East* Nissinen translates some of the

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[11] Nissinen, Martti, Robert Kriech Ritner, C. L. Seow, and Peter Machinist. *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003 (intro)

major prophetic texts from Mesopotamia in particular, but also from Syria, Canaan and Israel into English. Nissinen provides a useful introduction outlining a short history of twentieth century scholarly work on prophetic texts and inscriptions from the Ancient Near East, ranging from the twenty-first to the second century BCE. *Prophecy in its Ancient Near Eastern Context,* another of Nissinen's books, is a compilation of essays by scholars in differing fields on various topics relating to prophecy from Ancient Near East including Arabia, Assyria, Mari and Israel. This work provides some important methodological insights for comparative scholars, especially those comparing Biblical and extra-Biblical prophecy[12] along with interesting anthropological and socio-political analyses of Ancient Near Eastern prophetic institutions.

Johnathan Stokl's *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East* has also been a very useful book for the study of Biblical and Israelite prophecy as it emerged in the milieu of a broader tradition of Ancient Near Eastern prophecy. Stokl calls his study a "philological and sociological comparison"[13] and directs much of his attention to delving for more profound connections between different manifestations of prophecy in the Ancient Near East. Stokl discusses and analyzes prophecy from Old Babylonian sources, Neo-Assyrian sources and finally Hebrew prophecy of the Tanakh. Stokl's thorough descriptions of the technicalities, messages, and social role of prophets in the Old Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian context are very enlightening and provide excellent fodder for comparison with classical Biblical prophecy.

Herbert B. Huffmon has long been considered an authority on Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy and has written prolifically about the Mari prophetic texts along with many topics relating to ancient Israelite culture and literature more broadly. *Inspired Speech: Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, Essays in Honor of Herbert B. Huffmon,* a collection of essays from different

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[12] Especially chapter 1, the article by Hans Barstad, ""Comparare necesse est? Ancient Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy in a Comparative Perspective", *Prophecy in its Ancient Near Eastern Context. Mesopotamian, Biblical, and Arabian Perspectives*. Ed. by. M. Nissinen (SBL Symposium Series, 13). Atlanta, Georgia (2000) 3-11.

[13] From the sub-title of the book.

scholars about prophecy in the Ancient Near East including Mesopotamia, Israel/Canaan and Biblical prophecy, and even some more contemporary prophetic interpretations and discussions in the Christian and Muslim traditions. This book, and especially the first two parts, has also been very helpful in delving deeper into the question of the meaning of prophecy in the Ancient Near East. Part II focuses mainly on Hebrew and Biblical prophecy and there are many intriguing discussions on Biblical prophets and their ancient near eastern counterparts.

Old Babylonian (2300-1600 BCE) Prophecy:

The first Old Babylonian prophetic text to be found was a letter from the important ancient city-state Mari which contained a prophetic oracle from the eighteenth century BCE and was published in 1948 by Jean-Marie Durand who has remained an important scholar in the field of Mari texts. Similar prophetic texts have also been found in the cities of Ešnunna, Uruk, and Kiš.[14] Though the picture of Old Babylonian prophecy is far from complete, scholars have been amassing what material they can from the approximately 90 available texts in the prophetic corpus. The main focus of scholarly attention has undoubtedly been Mari as the greatest numbers of texts have been found from this site.

In Old Babylonian prophetic texts there appears to be a distinction between lay prophets and professional prophets. The professional prophets, known as the *pilum* are people whose primary social role (or job) is to prophesy. Along with this class of professional prophets, there are also some ordinary people and temple workers, whose main role in society is not as a prophet, who may occasionally prophesy. Stokl includes the example of an ecstatic cult performer, known as the *assinu*, as an illustration of an incidental lay-prophet. The *mu•••m* is also a cult-official who sometimes goes into an ecstatic trance, often in cultic settings during the recitations of different laments. The *mu•••m* is another type of incidental or lay-prophet, whose

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[14] A complete list of available prophetic texts and materials from the Old Babylonian Period can be found in Stokl's introductory chapter to Babylonian Prophecy. *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, pgs. 29-34

main function in society is not to prophesy.[15] As the evidence aforementioned has illustrated, there is indeed an important distinction between professional technical diviners and prophets and lay intuitive prophets in Mari.

The exact definition of the professional *pilum* remains disputed amongst scholars of Akkadian. While many scholars believe the title to mean "answerer," some, including Stokl, have suggested the term be understood as "spokesperson."[16] Regardless of the exact definition of the title, it is evident from various Mari texts that the social function and role of the *pilum,* the professional spokesperson, was different than the more ecstatic prophetic experiences of the lay prophet groups mentioned above. This difference does not imply the superiority of the *pilum* over other forms of diviners, but simply asserts that the *pilum* had a more technical role as a full time prophet. In fact, it may be argued that lay diviners and prophets were more authentic since they received prophecies passively as opposed to the *pilum* who sought out prophetic messages and experiences. None of the *pilu* attested in the existing texts ever claim to have come from a deity. Sometimes *pilu* would be summoned by kings and sent to inquire different things from the gods (at various temple locations).

One example of this type of professional *pilum* prophecy a letter between Sammetar and Zimri-Lim documented in ARM[17] 26 199. The letter is fragmented and incomplete but it tells the story of Lupa•um, a spokesperson sent to Dagan-a deity located in the city of Terqa. The "prophecy" Lupa•um receives from Dagan warns Zimri-Lim of swearing a treaty with the King of Ešnunna before consulting a god.[18] There are two different versions of this story with different roles assigned to the prophet Lupa•um, and it is not clear what exactly the correct interpretation

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[15] Although Jean-Marie Durand, Herbert Huffmon and others have categorized the *mu•••m* as a professional prophet, Stokl argues that seeing the *mu•••m* as a lay prophet actually opens new possibilities for understanding prophets in Mari.

[16] I will not here go into the philological and linguistic reasons for suggesting the word means one thing of another. For a discussion about the roots of the word *pilum* and the connotation of each morpheme, see Stokl pgs. 39-43

[17] ARM=Archives Royales de Mari.

[18] Stokl, 46-47

of this incident should be. It is clear, however, that each individual *pilum* had a special relationship with a specific deity. It is also apparent that the *pilu* were bestowed with remunerations by the King for their professional prophetic work. For example, Lupa•um is given a donkey and the *pilum* Qišatum is given two bronze votive weapons for his service.[19]

The *pilum,* it seems, is thus a court official of some sort whose primary function it was to retrieve answers from the gods in their different temples regarding the King's queries. The *pilum* is not tied to one single deity unlike the temple officials, who also appear to sometimes experience ecstatic lay-prophecy. Rather the *pilum* is tied to one King and is capable of traveling and communicating with various gods in their various temple locations. There is no conclusive evidence regarding the ecstatic experiences of the *pilum* and whether or not they were self-induced through intoxication (i.e., alcoholic substances, etc.). This question remains open and debated amongst scholars.[20]

Despite the giving of remunerations by the King, it is interesting that the prophecy of the *pilum* is not always authoritative. In fact, Zimri-Lim agrees to a treaty with Ešnunna while the prophecy of Lupa•um the *pilum* advised the complete opposite.[21] The authority of prophecy is further undermined by evidence of manipulation on the part of the prophets. As Stokl explains, sometimes the "different messengers of the oracle added their own interpretation to the oracle" and manipulated the prophetic message which they delivered to the king. It is very difficult to separate the authentic from the invented words of the divine messages and it is unclear how many prophecies were not reported to the king and whether or not there was some sort of hierarchy of prophecy[22] even existed.

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[19] ARM 9, 22 (these stories can be found in Nissen's *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East,* pg. 15-70)
[20] See Stokl's discussion 49
[21] Stokl ,73
[22] Though it does not seem that the *pilum* actually had too much authority, since many times their prophetic guidance would not be followed.

Along with the *pilum* there a number of lay prophets who experience random and occasional ecstatic prophesies. They do not instigate the prophetic ecstasy but it overcomes them at times and their primary role in society is separate from their occasional prophecy. There are three different types of cult officials attested in the Mari archives. The *mu•••m,* the most famous of the cult-officials known to have prophesied, were of a lower social status and were previously associated with witchcraft, as Ringren asserted some decades ago, but most scholars now have debunked this belief.[23] The specific etymological origins and connotations of the word *mu•••m* is complicated but it appears that the title most probably has some connection to the word "ecstatic" and most of the documented actions of the *mu•••m* reflect this type fervent prophetic ecstasy and accompanying verb *mu••* most closely signifies "to rave." The *mu•••m* are undoubtedly less powerful than the central *pilum* but they still seem to have a relatively active role in the royal court since the king often invited them to take part in the monthly ritual of Istar.[24]

Another cult-official participant in lay-prophecy is the *assinnu*. The *assinnu* often appears with another court official, the *Kurgarru*. Both of these cult officials are attested to have performed dances and music at times during ecstatic experiences. Mari scholars still have not come to a consensus on whether or not the form of ecstasy experienced by the *assinnu* can be called prophecy per se. There are some ambiguities about the genders of the *assinnu* and there is one text that purports that the goddess Istar turned the male *assinnu* into females and vica versa.[25] The *assinnu* also apparently had the capacity to permeate beyond the living world and communicate with the dead. The *qammatum* is yet another cult-official associated with prophesies. The *qammatum* are only attested at Mari and the meaning of their title remains

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[23] Ringren, Helmer. *Religions of the Ancient Near East*. London: SPCK, 1973 (95) Stokl and others have debunked the idea of associating witchcraft with the *mu•••m.*

[24] This is attested in the Florilegium Marianum documents. See Nissinen *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East,* pg 81, for a translation of the Ritual of Istar.

[25] Stokl 59

cryptic and whether or not they were actually considered prophets or just diviners of some sort is still debatable.

Now that the main prophetic figures in the Babylonian context have been defined, a note about the actual transmission of the prophecies may be helpful. The redaction and transmission of Old Babylonian prophecies a vast topic which cannot full be covered in this paper, but I will outline some issues scholars studying the Mari archives face since some of these questions may be relevant to studying the redaction and transmission of Biblical prophecy. Many of the prophecies found in the Mari archives contain introductory phrases like, "Thus said/speaks [the deity]…" However, some prophecies do not include introductory phrases and directly dive into the words of the prophecy, presumably the words of the deity. All of the prophecies that have been found, though, are written in the first person.

Usually prophecies would not be sent directly to the king and an intermediary would deliver the message. Whether the prophecies were redacted verbatim immediately or whether they were passed orally through an intermediary. Most scholars would agree that the prophecies in the Mari Archive are probably not written down verbatim, but they may be relatively close to the original. Sometimes censorship of prophecies was necessary especially if there was information in the prophecy which may be threatening to the king's power for example, it would most likely be removed[26].

Whether or not dreams and visions can also be regarded as prophecies is another point of contention for scholars. The term *šuttam* has been used ambiguously for both dream and visions in the Mari archives. This initiates an internal philological and linguistic debate between the true meanings of "dreams" on the one hand and "visions" on the other and whether or not they can be approached in the same manner. Sally Butler offers several different classes of dreams. There

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[26] See the example of the prophecy sent to King Zimri-Lim regarding the superiority of a god over the power of Zimri-Lim. (Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East* 18-20)

can be "prognostic dreams" which can be subdivided into clear 'message dreams,' somewhat coded 'symbolic-message dreams' and completely coded "dream omens' which must be interpreted professionally. There are also 'clairvoyant dreams' and 'diagnostic dreams.'[27] Butler categorizes visions as another sub-group of somewhat or completely coded dreams.

Martti Nissinen believes that dreams and visions of prophets can be distinguished from the prophecies of prophets because the dreams of prophets have conventionally been counted as prophecies in their own right.[28] It is interesting to note, however, that no professional *pilum* has been found to have had a dream which was reported or redacted and most of the dreams found from Mari have been from the occasional lay prophets. Dreams and visions seen by people other than prophets are more difficult to assess. Nissinen makes clear that "not every dreamer qualifies as prophet in Mari society"[29] and not every dream was thought to be worthy of redaction and report.

The typical redaction structure of dream includes an announcement of the dream (*šuttam*), followed by a citation formula, an opening formula, and then the dream itself.[30] Usually the dream will be described as a *šuttam,* or dream, but sometimes the text simply mentions someone "seeing" something in the temple, for example. Since "seeing" and "dreaming" are inherently different actions, it follows that perhaps the texts which report someone "seeing" should be understood as vision texts and texts which report "dreaming" should be considered separate dream texts. This distinction has interesting parallels in Biblical prophecy as well.

Another interesting aspect regarding the authority of Old Babylonian prophecy is the method for checking whether or not a prophet is lying or speaking his/her prophecy in good faith. Several different tests for the prophets and their prophecies have been attested. One of the

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[27] Butler, Sally. *Mesopotamian Conceptions of Dreams and Dream Rituals*. AOAT 258, Munster: Ugarit-Verlag
[28] Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East,* 14
[29] Ibid., 14
[30] As sited in Stokl 80, from Annette Zgoll's study in German on Mesopotamian dreams.

more popular tests to check the prophet appears to be the 'Hair and Hem' test. William Moran

first wrote about the significance of sending the hair and the hem of the prophets' to the king.

Moran describes that the hair and hem were used to assert the identity of the prophet and also to

"guarantee [the prophet's] veracity."[31] The phrase, "Hereby, I give you my hair and my fringe.

Let them declare 'clean,'"[32] has been cited in ARM 26, 204 and provides evidence for the testing

of the hair and hem of the prophet. Hepatoscopy and extispicy (i.e., the reading and interpreting

of various animal organs as a form of divination) were also employed to check the veracity of a

prophet.

It is not entirely clear whether or not all prophets were tested in this way and some

scholars, Andre Finet in particular, have argued that only the lower status lay prophets had to

send their hair and hem to prove themselves. Other scholars have also argued that requiring the

hair and the hem of prophets insinuated that magical spells could be cast on the prophets if they

were caught lying or not actually being true prophets. Both of these theories have been disproven

by new evidence drawn from the Mari archives. For example, there is one text, ARM 26 237,

which relates the story of the queen mother Addu-duri having a dream and the related oracle of a

mu•••tum. Addu-duri sends her own hair and hem to be tested rather than the *mu•••tum* who was

a lay-prophet despite the fact that she was of royal status.[33] It is clear, then, that the hair and hem

test for veracity is more to confirm the message of the prophet or dreamer rather than check the

veracity of the individual diviner or dreamer.

The public versus the private nature of the prophecy may or may not have had an impact

on the necessity to check the veracity of a prophet. Many prophecies were revealed publically

while some other prophecies, especially oracles, were given in a more private context. There

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[31] Moran, William L. "New Evidence from Mari on the History of Prophecy" *Bib* 50, 19-20 (through JSTOR).
[32] Stokl, 82
[33] The whole story is translated by Martti Nissinen, but is also cited in part by Stokl, pg 84.

does seem to be a difference between how dreams and oracles were treated in terms of testing. Dreams appear to be much more apt to the hair and hem test while oracles and other more 'public' prophecies were not as apt to be tested this way.

The importance of a prophet's conscious awareness of being sent by a god and the mental state of the prophet while experiencing revelation have been important issues discussed in biblical and more generally monotheistic prophecy. Jean-Marie Durand believes that Mari prophets actually did have a conscious awareness of their being send by a deity since the word, or some form of the word *šap rum*, which means 'to send' is used in the relevant texts.[34] This is interesting because there is no abstract term in Akkadian for 'prophecy' and no abstract concept of prophecy is available. Stokl notes that not a single professional *pilum* prophet claims to be sent by a deity explicitly and there only three cases of lay prophets who claim to have been sent by a deity[35]. Durand also assumes ecstasy is a part of prophecy, while many would argue that ecstasy is in fact not a crucial component of prophecy.

Extreme forms of ecstasy were usually not part of the prophetic experience at Mari since the prophecies were redacted often without intermediaries by the 'prophets' and diviners themselves. There were multiple types of prophecies attested in Mari, some oracles were against certain nations, some were admonitions and some were warnings for the king. The king is at the center of many prophecies and the phenomenon of prophecy in Mari itself is closely linked and dependent upon the existence of a king. Prophets would receive divine messages which they would then convey to the king, after being checked, through a system which was supposed to help prevent the king from acting in a way which would upset the gods.

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[34] Durand as cited in Stokl. 92
[35] Stokl 99

There are many other aspects of Old-Babylonian prophecy which I have not described in detail or may not have mentioned at all, but this serves as an outline of the important popularities of Old Babylonian prophecy.

Neo-Assyrian Prophecy (8-7ᵗʰ Century BCE):

The study of Neo-Assyrian prophecy has in some ways been overshadowed by the study of the abundant Mari Archives, though the Neo-Assyrian prophetic sources are rich in their own right. Neo-Assyrian prophetic texts, mostly from Nineveh, were discovered in the mid nineteenth century but little scholarly attention was given to these sources until relatively recently. Simo Parpola and Karlheinz Deller reintroduced the importance of Assyriology in the 1960's; Simo Parpola in particular has written extensively about Assyrian prophecy in particular.[36] After the preliminary work of Parpola and Deller, Manfred Weippert, Manfried Dietrich, and Herbert Huffmon contributed and revived the study of Neo-Assyrian sources over the next several decades. Parpola published an influential collection of Assyrian oracular texts and prophecies a few years later. Parpola's ideas were very controversial since believed that Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Platonic Philosophy and Islam were all based on reconfigurations of the Neo-Assyrian understanding of the nature of the gods. The Neo-Assyrian prophetic sources come from a range of genres including oracular letters, oracles on tablets, royal inscriptions, ritual texts and various lists.[37]

The central distinctively Neo-Assyrian term for prophet is *raggintu*. The term *raggintu* can mean "to call, to call out", or "to summon" or "to lodge a claim, to sue, etc." It is probable that this term refers to the public nature of Neo-Assyrian prophecy, much similar to the public nature of the Old Babylonian prophecy. There seem to be both male and female prophets as the

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[36] See Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies (1997), Neo-Assyrian Letters from the Kuyunjik Collection (1979), Letters fro Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars (1993),* "Monotheism in Ancient Assyria" in *One God or Many? Concepts of Divinity in the Ancient World* (2000), etc.

[37] A complete list of the existing Neo-Assyrian prophetic texts can be found in Stokl, pg. 104-109

masculine plural *raggimu* along with the feminine plural *raggintu* are attested in SAA 9, a letter from Beel-ušezib to Esarhaddon.[38] This is interesting because the feminine singular of the word, *raggintu* has only been found in one text.

As a brief but important caveat, it is also unclear whether the Assyrians believed that the deities spoke directly through the mouths of the *raggimu* or whether the deities transmitted their messages to the *raggimu* first and then the *raggimu* transmitted the divine message to the intended audience after.

Parpola suggests that the *raggintu* is identical to the Neo-Assyrian *ma•••* and the Old Babylonian *mu••um* mentioned earlier in the paper. This is probably not the case since there is a clause in Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty which states, "if it [the message which the person who swears the oath agrees to transmit to the king] is the mouth of *raggintu*-prophets or *ma••u*-ecstatics, or 'askers of god'…"[39] Parpola suggests that the two terms *raggintu* and *ma••u* are synonomous here since the *raggintu* is a type of ecstatic prophet. Matthijs de Jong does not agree with Parpola's suggestion and argues that the *raggintu* is not in fact an ecstatic prophet since there is no evidence of a *raggintu* delivering oracles in an ecstatic state. The *raggintu,* therefore, is inherently different from the explicitly ecstatic *ma••u* prophetic figure.[40]

Most of the oracular letters in the Nineveh collection are letters addressed to Esarhaddon, with a few also addressed to Assurbanipal. Some texts deliver and report prophecies and oracles to the king, other letters quote from prophecies to prove or make a political point and some letters are used as royal epithets. It appears that Neo-Assyrian prophecy was taken more seriously than Old Babylonian prophecy sometimes was. For example, there is a letter with a short oracle from Nabu and Marduk, two of the most powerful Assyrian gods, announcing

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[38] SAA=State Archives of Assyria (can be accessed online through the University of Helsinki). Stokl 113

[39] SAA 9, 10 (quoted partially in Stokl 114. Also see Parpola, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* (1988) for the complete treaty).

[40] Je Jong, Matthijs, *Prophecy in Context: An Exploration of the Prophecies from Seventh Century Assyria. Master's Thesis, Oriental Institute, Oxford University.* Cited through Stokl 115.

Esarhaddon's rule over the entire earth.[41] This prophecy is clearly used as a proof-text to legitimize the position of Esarhaddon as ruler.

Another similar oracular letter to Assurbanipal by his harupex Marduk-šummi-u•ur quotes an oracle originally addressed to Esarhaddon. For Maruk- šummi-u•ur, the oracle to Esarhaddon is also valid for Assurbanipal on his campaign against Egypt.[42] There are many similar examples of times when Esarhaddon or another king or his advisor uses an oracular letter or a prophecy as legitimizing proof for their arguments or political actions. This royal propaganda is well attested in the Assyrian prophetic text collections, though the exact speakers of the prophecies are not always recognized.

While it was rare in the Old Babylonian prophetic sources to find an *pilum* or even a lay-prophet claiming to be sent by a god or deity, there is a text like this in the Neo-Assyrian collections. SAA 3 47 is a prophetic text which claims to be written by someone who has been 'sent' by Ninutra to deliver a message to the prince. The text is double sided. One side of the text contains an oracle by the god Ninutra to a royal figure and the other side seems to suggest that that royal figure (and the author of the text) is Assurbanipal. There is still debate amongst scholar about whether or not Assurbanipal was actually literate or not.[43] Regardless of the fact of the authenticity or validity of the actual prophet and his words, the prophecy was undoubtedly very convenient for the royal advisers and intellectuals to cite when legitimizing or making a point about the actions of the king. This is very interesting since Old Babylonian prophecy was often used to achieve the opposite effect, namely to warn the king before he acted in a way that would upset the gods.

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[41] Stokl, 115

[42] Nissinen, Martti. *References to Prophecy in Neo-Assyrian Sources* SAAS 7, Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Texts Corpus Project, 1998, pg 123

[43] Interesting discussion of whether or not Assurbanipal was literate can be found in Alasdair Livingstone, "Assurbanipal: Literate or not?" *ZA* 97, 98-118.

Like its Old Babylonian counterpart, it is clear that lay-prophets existed in Neo-Assyrian society along with the more exclusive royal prophecy. There are two specific texts in the Nineveh collection that testify the presence of lay-prophecy. Both of the texts seem to be letters or reports to the king Esarhaddon. The first letter is sent by three people: Iss r-šumu- reš, Adad-šumu-u•ur and Marduk-š kin-šumi to Esarhaddon. The letter relates a story in which two servants intervene in the return of the statue of B l to Babylon. One of the servants claims that B l and his consort •arbanitu have 'sent' him.[44]

The second text is of the female servant of B l-a•u-u•ur who prophesizes in favor of the rival political contender to the throne Sasi. No details about the woman are mentioned except that she was a servant. It is interesting then that the king Esarhaddon's official who transmits and records the prophecy should advise the king to perform an extispicy to inspect the possible effects of the prophecy. The female servant's prophecy is understood as being inherently powerful, despite the low social standing of the woman.

While there were few female prophets in the Mari archives of Old Babylon, there seems to be a greater number of female or at least ambiguous and effeminized actors in the Neo-Assyrian prophetic texts. B ia, Il•ssa- mur and Iss r-l -tašia• are three prophets which appear to be female prophets though there is still much debate about whether Iss r-l -tašia• is even a woman since the female version of the name would probably end in "•i" since that is how a masculine word is made feminine in Akkadian (and most other Semitic languages). Parpola has argued that Iss r-l -tašia• is a female since the female determinative is used on the tablet, though it was superimposed by the masculine determinative.[45] The evidence is not precise enough to come to any solid conclusions, but it can be agreed that both B ia and Il•ssa- mur were female prophets.

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[44] Stokl , 117

[45] Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies* (1997) pg 5

Briefly explaining the basic physical structure of the prophetic material form Neo-Assyria may also be useful here. Two types of tablets containing prophetic material can be found in the Neo-Assyrian collections. There are vertical tablets which contain more than one oracle presented in multiple columns. These types of tablets are used as archival copies of smaller scraps of prophetic material onto a larger single tablet. There are also horizontal tablets which contain notes and reports apparently for immediate use. These categorizations do not always hold true, but are helpful on a more basic level.

The problems of the redaction of prophecies which I discussed in the Old Babylonian Mari context are also relevant here in the Neo-Assyrian context. Were prophecies and oracles written down immediately following the events? Did the 'prophet' redact or dictate his/her prophecy or was there an intermediary scribe who redacted the prophecies? These questions are important to consider when analyzing prophecies since they are vulnerable and easily manipulated by external sources, such as scribal creation/invention. Regardless of how the prophecies were redacted, the written forms of prophecies were essential for the king and the relationship of the prophet and the king was solidified through the written medium.

Editing or manipulating prophetic material can have differing degrees of impact on the actual veracity and authority of the prophecy itself. The issue of whether or not there was a scribal phase in the redaction and transmission of prophecies in the Babylonian and Assyrian contexts is also extremely relevant in the case of the Biblical prophets of the Tanakh. The vertical tablets from Nineveh contain collections of prophecies that have been amassed and redacted on a single tablet (presumably they were previously written down on smaller tablets/texts). This in essence creates a series of prophetic writings.

In some ways this can be compared to the redaction and transmission of the prophetic books of the Tanakh. Though the vertical tablets are supposedly only amalgamated copies of

smaller prophetic texts, there is undoubtedly some editing and embellishment involved in the process, which may or may not impact the original core message of the prophecy. In fact, de Jong argues that the vertical tablet collections should be considered compositions in their own right, "in which the texts have transcended their original historical setting."[46]

Since the prophetic oracular texts had transcended their original historical setting, they obtained a certain type of authority. As I mentioned earlier, kings and advisers in the royal court often re-appropriated prophetic texts while making an argument in favor of some decision or to give legitimacy. This reinstatement of the prophetic texts in settings beyond the original does point to the great amount of authority accorded to the oracles and prophecies themselves. In other words, the authority of prophetic texts and oracles was not restricted to the original context in which it appeared and in fact could and was widely applied in different settings.

Prophetic material is also found in royal inscriptions, especially for propagandistic purposes and political arguments. Some prophetic references are found in treaties and political documents, like Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty, in which prophets and ecstatics are described as possible sources of information integral to the security of the kingdom. There are multiple examples of this kind of political power given to the prophets and ecstatics by the king in order to maintain some legitimacy.

There are also other types of prophetic materials in royal inscriptions which may be compared to some predecessor of 'fulfillment prophecy' as seen in the Dead Sea Scrolls and other Second Temple Jewish pseudopigrapha. There are two references to words of deities which were spoken long ago and which were manifested in Assurbanipal's actions. The first of these texts was found in Prism vi 113-118, and refers to Nanê's return from Elam to Eanna in Uruk.

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[46] De Jong, *Isaiah Among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets: A Comparative Study of the Earliest Stages of the Isaiah Tradition and the Neo-Assyrian Prophecies* (VT.S 117, Leiden: Brill) 2007, 395-400. Specific examples of embellishments of the original prophecies and oracles can be found in Stokl, 136-7 (a very helpful discussion of two specific examples).

Some scholars do not include this text in their Neo-Assyrian prophetic writings since there is no way to prove the genuineness of the prophecy. Yet regardless of if the prophecy was invented or genuine, the way it was used and employed by the king is what is truly interesting.

A similar oracle is attributed Sin who is reported to have ordered Assurbanipal to restore his temple in Harran. Assurbanipal's restoration of the temple is depicted as the fulfillment of an old oracle that foresaw the restoration of the temple. Assurbanipal seems to be the first king to employ prophetic texts and oracles in this manner, most probably in order to legitimize his re-building program, as Stokl contends.[47]

Assurbanipal employs another prophetic text in a votive inscription to the god Marduk. It is not of great importance at this point whether or not the text is genuine because it is an example of the power and legitimacy accorded to prophecy. The text cites an oracle by Marduk addressed to Assurbanipal in which he assures the king that the succession in a vassal-kingdom took place in a way favorable to Assurbanipal and that Marduk would help the successor of Assurbanipal. The king responds to this 'prophecy' by praising Marduk.[48] If this is an invention on the part of king, it would not be the first literary creation of prophecy since there is a much older famous example of this same phenomenon in the Egyptian 'prophecy' of Neferti. In fact there is a whole list of such literary prophecies including the Šulgi prophecy, the Uruk prophecy, the 'Dynastic Prophecy' and passages from the Akkadian epic Erra Epos.

It is clear then that Neo-Assyrian prophetic sources were employed in multiple ways and the oracles and prophecies themselves were often manipulated for political or royal advantage. It would not be surprising if prophecies were refashioned every time they were used in a different setting and the texts that have been found at Nineveh and other sites may be the original prophecies or they may be twisted versions. The process of literary redaction and maintenance of

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[47] Stokl 136
[48] Cited in Stokl, 136

Neo-Assyrian prophecy is also important in understanding the process of the composition and canonization of the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible and the Tanakh itself.

Surely there is much still to be learned about Neo-Assyrian prophecy and still many theories and propositions to be discussed. I have only attempted to sketch a basic outline of some of the important aspects of Neo-Assyrian prophecy and discuss some issues that will become important and relevant in the following section on Biblical prophetic literature of the Tanakh.

The eventual cessation of Old Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian prophecy cannot be traced exactly but can be presumed to have dwindled as their kingdoms diminished. Both Babylonian and Assyrian prophecies were intricately tied to kingship. Every prophecy and oracle that has been found has been described in a letter addressed to the king and every king has called on prophets, whether professional prophets or lay-ecstatics, to prophesy. The institution of kingship essentially relied on prophecy and the authority accorded to it to survive. The opposite is also true. It can only logically follow that will the demise of the Ancient Near Eastern kingdoms, the institution of prophecy also dwindled. It must be kept in mind while speaking of 'cessation' of prophecy that prophecy never truly 'ceases.' Prophecy simply takes on new forms in an unending cycle of transmission of divine knowledge.

CHAPTER 3: PROPHECY IN TRANSITION-CLASSICAL BIBLICAL PROPHETIC TITLES TO POST-EXILIC PROPHECY

Let us turn finally to the world of the early and classical biblical prophets of the Tanakh. There are several prophetic types and designations for prophets in the Tanakh including נָבִיא חֹזֶה and הָרֹאֶה. Each prophetic title has its nuances and will be discussed below. It is important to realize that the nuances of the Hebrew prophetic titles were lost with the Greek Septuagint translation. The ambiguous Greek term   (prophet) was inserted in place of the various

titles from the Hebrew. Not only did "   " replace the נְבִיא, זֶהה and רֹאֶה, but it was also used to translate מַלְאָך (i.e., messenger of God) in several places.[49]

I will begin the discussion of classical Israelite and Hebrew prophecy with a brief discussion of the etymology and significance of the word *nabi'*(נְבִיא). נְבִיא is the most common prophetic title in the Tanakh and is used over 200 times. Many scholars have worked extensively on the etymology of this word and have proposed various hypotheses on the origins and cultural history of the Hebrew word נְבִיא. I will briefly outline a few scholarly views below.

In Akkadian, the verb *nabu* means 'to name, to nominate or to decree' and is present even in Old Akkadian sources onwards. There is also the standard Akkadian adjective, *nabu*, which means 'I called' or authorized person x, and it is often attested as an honorific title for Mesopotamian kings or other royalty. The verb form of the Akkadian *nabu* was found in a bilingual lexical text in Ebla and early Biblical scholars concluded that the presence of the Akkadian *nabu* indicated the presence of prophecy at Ebla in the middle of the third millennium BCE and even began categorizing different types of prophets. However, as the Ebla lexical text and others have been studied and uncovered, the evidence for the presence of prophecy at Ebla has become less and less convincing.

Scholars have also drawn parallels between the Hebrew *nabi* and the *munabbiatu* found in texts from the city of Emar. Daniel Flemming, for example, has attempted to draw comparisons and has argued that there is a connection between the prophetic role of the Israelite *nabi* and the Emarian diviner *munabbiatu*. Stokl, Durand and others have resisted such quick comparisons since it is very difficult to convey any lines of "influence" between the prophetic titles.

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[49] See 2 Chron. 36:15

There is also some limited evidence for *nabi* in ancient Near Eastern epigraphic record found during the excavations at Tell ed-Duweir (ancient Lachish) and date to the early sixth century BCE. There are three relevant sources within this archive which mention or present context for the *nabi*. According to some scholars, most prominently Seow, argue that Lak (6): 1.3 uses formations reminiscent to of Jeremiah 38:4 and that there may be a connection between the "prophetic figure" being spoken about in the fragment and the Prophet Jeremiah.[50] Stokl, however, argues that the syntax of the fragments Lak (6): 1.3 indicate that 'the prophet' is actually Tobiah who is mentioned in the fragment, "As for the letter of Tobiah, the king's servant, which came to Sallum, son of Yaddua…"[51] Whether the identity of the figure being discussed is Tobiah or Jeremiah, it is clear that the fragment is speaking of something from 'the prophet.'

The prophetic title איבנ is attributed to many different figures and does not denote any specialized prophetic role, though some scholars have argued otherwise. D.L. Peterson, for example, argues that איבנ should be seen as a specialized "morality prophet" yet this does not seem to be true for all the מיאיבנ. While it is certainly true that there are central morality prophets in the Tanakh, many of the מיאיבנ, like Elijah, or Abraham, do not fit this categorization.

It is also interesting to note that in the later books of the Tanakh, namely the Book of Chronicles and the Deuteronomistic history found in 1 and 2 Kings, many figures appear to have more than one prophetic title. Samuel, for instance, is designated as both איבנ and also as האר in 1 Chronicles 9:29 and 2 Chronicles 35:18. Elijah is called both איבנ in 2 Chronicles 21:12 and "man of God" in 1 Kings 17:18. There may be various reasons for this conflation, one of the simplest being that איבנ eventually became the accepted general prophetic title as the later histories were being redacted.

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[50] Stokl, 170
[51] Ibid., 169

There are also two more major prophetic titles referring to "seers." I will first discuss חֹזֶה. The title חֹזֶה occurs a total of 16 times throughout the Tanakh, with more than half of the occurrences appearing in Chronicles. The disproportionate number of occurrences in Chronicles is often explained by the fact that חֹזֶה is an Aramaic loan word, yet there is again no hard evidence for such claims. An inscription from 8th century BCE Dier 'Alla describes Balaam (the same Balaam who appears in Numbers) as a "'seer (חֹזֶה) of the gods.'"[52] This inscription suggests a close connection between חֹזֶה and the king. The Zakir inscription, also from the 8th century BCE, similarly describes a close relation between the חֹזֶה and King Zakir in regards to an attack by another kingdom.

In the Tanakh as well, the חֹזֶה is often closely linked to the King. Gad, for example, in 2 Samuel 24:11 is called the prophet, the חֹזֶה of King David. The royal connotations of חֹזֶה appear to continue in the Tanakh. The concentrated usage of חֹזֶה in Chronicles expands beyond the royal seer. In fact, William Schniedewind argues that, at least in Chronicles, the title חֹזֶה also indicates the seer's role in writing historical records.[53]

The other "seer" prophetic title in the Tanakh is הראה. הראה occurs a total of 12 times throughout the Tanakh. The book of Isaiah employs the label הראה twice in highly rhetorical contexts when Isaiah speaks about "seers" who 'cannot see.' These highly rhetorical uses of the prophetic title make it difficult to arrive at any conclusions about the distinctive roles of this type of seer. In the books of Chronicles, הראה seems to be associated with the figure of Samuel (and to a lesser extent, Hanani). It is still not clear exactly what features distinguish the הראה from the חֹזֶה, besides the greater emphasis on the redactor side of חֹזֶה discussed earlier.

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[52] Schniedewind, William M. *The Word of God in Transition: From Prophet to Exegete in the Second Temple Period*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1995 (38)
[53] Ibid, 41

There are also other less precise prophetic titles used in the Tankah including אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים

("man of God") and "servant of God/YHWH." אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים is used a total of 71 times in the

Tanakh and is attributed to a variety of figures from Moses to Elija, Elisha, David and even Ezra.

There is still some debate as to whether the "man of God" title should even be considered a

prophetic title. It seems convincing that אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים was at some point used to designate a holy

man (who may or may not have been some sort of prophet) who performed miracles. Moses, for

example is simultaneously called איבנ and אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים. Yet Samuel and David are also called

אִישׁ אֱלֹהִים "men of God" and they do not perform any great miracles. Moses is also called

"servant of God" in Deuteronomy and throughout the book of Joshua. "Servant of God" can be

seen as a deuteronomistic prophetic title.[54]

Discerning the semantic relationship between the various prophetic labels in the Tanakh

can be difficult as all of the titles and terms are interconnected in some way. Rather than

attempting to compartmentalize each of the prophetic titles with a specific definition, it may be

best to image the prophetic titles as fluid concentric circles, overlapping in many places and

remaining distinct in others. It can be concluded, however, that there were various prophetic

titles used to describe the many types of "holy" men or women who in some way communicated

with the divine and delivered their messages to the appropriate audiences. As the Tanakh was

redacted and edited by various scribes throughout the exilic and Second Temple Period, the

various prophetic titles were simplified and איבנ became the major and most common and widely

used prophetic title.

I have not yet described the gender of prophets here and this is a much-debated topic that

I will only lightly dust for sake of the special and thematic constraints of this thesis. Jonathan

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[54] For more on the various prophetic titles, please see the bibliography of; Schniedewind, William M. *The Word of God in Transition: From Prophet to Exegete in the Second Temple Period*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1995

Stokl's book *Prophets Male and Female* is an excellent resource for further study of this topic. While it is clear from earlier in this chapter that there were many female prophets in Ancient Mesopotamia and Assyria, the same kind of distribution is not true in the Tanakh. There certainly *are* female prophets in the Tanakh including Deborah, Hannah, Hulda and Mariam. The gender of prophets seems to be less of an issue in the Tanakh and the actual social role of the individual prophet in society and their contribution to society seems to be the more important for the redactors of the Tanakh.

There is also the important discussion on the differences between prophets, messengers, inspired messengers and inspired exegetes. A "prophet" should be understood as more of a permanent 'occupation' while a messenger has more of a transient role. Anyone can be a messenger of God as long as he or she is called upon. Both prophets and messengers, at least in the Tanakh, tend to be humans. All prophets are also messengers of God but not all messengers are prophets per se. As I will discuss in the coming chapters, a new prophetic type emerged in the Second Temple period, namely the "inspired exegete" or the "inspired messenger." These new figures were not necessarily prophets in the classical sense, yet they thought themselves to possess special powers to interpret and unlock the true meanings of the earlier prophets. These interpretations were then applied to the changing face of Israelite life and religion. This hermeneutical technique would eventually lead to the development of the rabbinic movement in which rabbis became the main authority who could interpret the words of God and translate them into rules and laws that would govern daily life.

A word about *Scribalism* and Prophecy in the Post-Exilic Era:

Here I will briefly discuss the crucial relationship between the scribes and the canonical or legal texts they redact. Not only is this issue important for understanding Mesopotamian exegetical techniques as we have seen, but it is also becomes increasingly important in the

Second Temple period. In fact, as Martti Nissinen notes, "everything we know about prophetic activity [in the post-exilic era] in concrete historical terms comes to us through the filter of scribal activity."[55] It is important to remember that the prophetic books of the Tanakh primarily document how earlier prophecy was chosen, edited, interpreted, and rewritten to correspond to a form of prophecy that would conform to the understanding of the scribal class. As we saw earlier in the first chapter, the various pre-exilic prophetic titles were simplified to the overwhelming use of *nabi* in the Deuteronomistic histories and books of Chronicles.

All pre-exilic and even to some extent post-exilic "prophetic" literature and especially prophetic books were filtered through scribes, distorting and simplifying our understanding of the very institution of prophecy itself.[56] Most post-exilic prophets mentioned in the Tanakh belong to the non-believing peoples and are often associated with apostasy and are warned against.

Even in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, the only major biblical books that actually deal with the Second Temple period, there is almost no mention of contemporary prophecy. Other than the brief mentions of Zechariah and Haggai in Ezra 5:1-2, prophets are largely mentioned as figures of the past. Other than these brief moments, Ezra and Nehemiah are silent on the subject of prophets or inspired exegetes or any other divinely inspired messenger figure. Still most scholars remain convinced that certain forms of prophecy still continued (and new forms emerged) well into the second temple period.

Deuteronomy 13:2-6 warns the Israelites against false prophets who call them away from the one God. While there has been much scholarly discussion of these verses from Deuteronomy in regards to the parallels between these warnings and the Succession Treaty of Esarhaddon, I

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[55] Nissenen, Martti, "The Dubious Image of Prophecy" in *Prophets, Prophecy and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism* Eds. Michael Floyd and Robert Haak (26)

[56] Please see Ehud Ben Zvi's chapter, "Writings, Speeches, and the Prophetic Books-Setting an Agenda" in *Writings and Speech in Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy* (ed. E. Ben Zvi and Michael Floyd; SBL, 2000) for a more detailed discussion on the impact of scribalism on prophetic books and writings.

will focus instead on the implications this verse might have for understanding the perceptions of true versus false prophecy in the Tanakh. Other passages in Deuteronomy acknowledge the necessity for true prophecy, a phenomenon that was elevated far above all other forms of divination.

While it is clear that classical biblical prophets were seen as successors of Moses and were often compared with Moses, this literary parallelism appears to have disappeared in the post-exilic period. Perhaps prophecy in the post-exilic Second Temple period posed a political and social threat to the authorities who tried to implement a certain interpretation of the Tanakh or what was by then at least the Torah.

The harsh criticism of prophets and prophecy in Zechariah 13:2-6 further exemplifies how prophecy posed a threat to the socio-political authorities. A lot has been written on these particular versus and one of the most convincing arguments seems to be that these few verses reflect the position of the scribal redactors who thought themselves to be the only true prophetic figures in the Second Temple period and did not regard other contemporaneous prophetic claims to be true.

Two interesting questions emerge from the brief discussion about false or bad prophets: firstly, which forms of divination were discerned to legitimate and how? Secondly, how can one truly distinguish true and false prophets with accuracy? In the Ancient Near Eastern context, these questions about legitimacy and accuracy instigated the convergence of the scribal and the diviners. Whereas prophecy used to be a purely oral affair, the redaction of prophetic words or omens added both to their legitimacy and accuracy. Just as astronomy and astrology had become instruments of knowledge production for the ruling class, so divination was also used to assert power. More specific examples from the Ancient Mesopotamian context will be provided in chapter 3.

Before the emergence of full length prophetic books in the Tanakh, Israelite prophets presumably spoke their words directly to their intended audience. For example, in 1 Kings 22, King Ahab of Northern Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah seek prophetic guidance before finalizing their decision to attack Aram. Ahab calls Micaiah and while at first Micaiah tells Ahab of his success, he later admits that Ahab will actually not succeed. The actual imagery of Michaiah's vision of God is very striking. Yahweh sits on a throne surrounded by his heavenly host, just like a human king sitting surrounded by his army. There are other prophets present in these verses as well and they rival Michaiah and assure success for Ahab. It is not entirely clear until after Ahab has actually lost which of the prophets is true, though Micaiah is eventually correct[57]. No scribes seem to be involved in this example, but it was ultimately redacted in the Tanakh later.

Records of prophecies could either be made to facilitate their communication to a certain audience or even for pupils to study the prophecies for theological and other reasons. When a King refuses to listen to a prophet, the act of writing the prophecy down may be the only way to communicate the message. Only the most useful or important prophetic words were redacted and preserved, though there were surely other prophetic figures whose words have not been preserved in writing.

The post-exilic period following the destruction of Jerusalem undoubtedly saw a major shift in the Israelite worldview, including the role of prophecy and prophets. After such a catastrophic experience, prophecy as it had occurred in pre-exilic times was no longer viable. Prophecy most probably became concentrated in scribal circles since scribes handled and kept all the prophetic records from the pre-exilic period. This would also explain the growing authoritativeness of the various pre-exilic prophets and the birth of a new kind of "inspired"

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[57] See: Floyd, Michael, "The Production of Prophetic Books in the Early Second Temple Period" in *Prophets, Prophecy and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism* for more detailed discussion of this particular example

exegetical prophet in the Second Temple Period. Prophecy morphed from a purely oral to a largely written phenomenon and scribes and redactors of prophecy became powerful and important figures in society, even more so than they had been since now they often played the part of both redactor and diviner.

To conclude, I have tried in this chapter to briefly outline the various prophetic titles in Ancient Mesopotamian and Assyrian contexts as well as the Tanakh and the emergence of a largely written form of prophecy from the earlier oracular forms. I have certainly skipped over some important issues in this short chapter, and a separate thesis could have been written solely on the controversies of various prophetic titles and possible etymological and semantic intersections between the pre-monotheistic Ancient Near Eastern titles and the early Israelite prophetic titles. My purpose in this chapter, however, was only to make the reader aware of the many ambiguities of prophetic titles in the Tanakh and the important role of scribes in our understanding of the prophetic phenomenon. Prophecy is not a monolithic institution as it has oftentimes been rendered, even in the scholarly world. In fact, it should be noted that the very conceptions of prophecy in the Second Temple post-exilic period morphed significantly, allowing for new prophetic figures closely intertwined with interpreting the earlier (arguably) more authoritative prophetic words.

CHAPTER 4: MODERN SCHOLARLY CONCEPTIONS OF PROPHECY (AND ITS CESSATION) IN THE SECOND TEMPLE PERIOD

It is essential to understand the general scholarly attitudes on prophecy in the post-exilic period before looking more closely at some specific texts. Stephen Cook rightly notes that the past several decades have "witnessed a virtual explosion of studies examining various aspects of Second Temple Judaism."[58] New archaeological evidence paired with a renewed and growing interest in this crucial transitional phase from Ancient to Rabbinic Judaism and more generally from Antiquity to Late Antiquity have initiated important scholarly discussions on prophecy and more specifically the "cessation of prophecy."

There are many different theories on the exact date of the cessation of prophecy and whether there even ever was a cessation of prophecy in Ancient Judaism. The array of scholarly perspectives mirrors the diversity of Jewish thought and practices during the Second Temple Period and shortly thereafter, making the question all the more fascinating and exciting. The presence of multiple sects, ideas and conceptions of how exactly scripture was to be understood and applied to daily life has left a rich collection of resources (albeit often incomplete or cryptic) for scholars to speculate and attempt to reconstruct the ancient ideologies and practices. The four

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[58] Cook, L. Stephen. On the Question of the "Cessation of Prophecy" in Ancient Judaism. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011 (1)

hundred or so years between the prophet Malachi and the appearance of John the Baptist is of particular interest for this paper and much of the scholarship discussed will deal with this period.

This chapter will focus on the following several questions discussed in scholarship regarding the "cessation of prophecy": a) when did prophecy "end" in Ancient Judaism and how was it explained in the works various groups? b) Why did prophecy cease and what implications did it have for the perpetuation of the divine message, especially in regards to scripture? c) How was prophecy itself conceptualized in the beliefs of various groups and how did this affect their understanding of the "cessation" of prophecy? d) Is there evidence of continued prophetic activity during the Second Temple period and how have scholars interpreted this data? How has the approach to the question of the "cessation of prophecy" evolved throughout the past two centuries as scholars have adopted new methods of reading and understanding data?

Stephen Cook's book *On the Question of the "Cessation of Prophecy" in Ancient Judaism* provides a very useful survey of the primary and secondary sources that discuss the cessation of prophecy (or lack thereof). Beginning with an outline of Ancient texts, namely the Tanakh, Apocryphal works and Pseudepigrapha, texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls, Josephus, Philo, Rabbinic texts, and early Christian sources, Cook outlines some major trends in scholarship from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This overview is followed by a more detailed discussion of several sources including fragments from the Dead Sea Scrolls and Josephus in the next several chapters.

There seems to have been a general consensus in pre-twentieth century scholarship that prophecy had ceased after Malachi and few scholars actually pursued the question further, assuming there was a prophetic void until John the Baptist and the appearance of Jesus. Some scholars, however, placed great emphasis on the cessation of prophecy as having specific importance for the closing of the scriptural canon. H. A. C. Hävernick, for example, explains that

the most important factor in establishing the scriptural canon was the long period of absence of prophecy following Malachi (which he attributes to the fact there was no other person deserving of prophet hood and thus the necessity to conserve the tradition).[59] Hermann Gunkel, another prominent biblical scholar from the nineteenth century, agrees that John the Baptist was the first prophet since the Persian period, but does also realize that there were multiple traces of the Spirit's activity during the Second Temple Period. Gunkel notes that the Essenes, for example, were among those said to have possessed the prophetic gift along with the High Priest (some believed that the High Priests received the Spirit upon ordination).[60] Though Gunkel does acknowledge the presence of prophetic activity in the Second Temple period, after the official end of prophecy in the Persian period he does not believe these points contradict each other.

The canonization[61] of the Torah was accompanied by the rise of the written Torah, beginning with Eza's public reading as described in Nehemiah 8. The written Torah, according to most of the prominent scholars from the late nineteenth century, gradually became the principal source of religious and divine authority. As Julius Wellhausen writes, "With the appearance of the law came to an end the old freedom…there was now in existence an authority as objective as could be; and this was the death of prophecy."[62] According to Wellhausen, then, whether Ezra and Nehemiah had foreseen it or not, their reforms and the initiation of the written Torah ultimately ushered the end of the era of the prophets. In other words, the written law and Torah replaced the necessity for prophets.

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[59] H. A. C. Havernick (trans. T. & T. Clark) A General Historico-Critical Approach to the Old Testament, 1852 (24-25). Havernick mentions this as he is discussing the reasons for the modes of conservation after the return from the exile. The cessation of prophecy is stated as the most important factor to finalizing the canon.

[60] Gunkel, Hermann. The Influence of the Holy Spirit: The Popular View of the Apostolic Age and the Teaching of the Apostle Paul: A Biblical-theological Study. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979. (70)

[61] It is important to note, however, that scholars are also not in agreement about the particulars (process, dates, etc) of the canonization of the Torah and Tankah.

[62] Wellhausen, Julius, Prolegomena to the History of Israel, (402) as cited in Cook, L. Stephen, On the Question of the "Cessation of Prophecy" in Ancient Judaism. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011 (13)

Carl Cornill also presents an interesting argument in *The Prophets of Israel*. Cornill describes a general decline in the quality of prophecy until eventually there are no more prophets. "Whilst the older prophets feel themselves one with God, who is ever present and living in them, God now grows more transcendent…direct personal intercourse with God ceases," and this change in the means of attaining prophecy are a "clear witness to the growing deterioration of prophecy."[63] The distinctions amongst the various types of prophecy will become an increasingly interesting theme in the scholarship of the twentieth century. It can nonetheless be concluded that most nineteenth century scholars agreed that prophecy did in fact cease though the exact date at which it did was not agreed upon unanimously. The belief that prophecy ended after Malachi had already been criticized in nineteenth century scholarship as it became increasingly clear that some books of the Tanakh including Daniel and Jonah were compiled after Malachi and that there were also several examples of prophetic activity in the Second Temple Period.

Among the first to disagree with the notion that prophecy had ceased in Ancient Israel was Adolf von Harnack. In his two volume *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, Harnack argues that prophetic types were present in the milieu in which John the Baptist emerged (and also that John the Baptist himself was a prophet). Harnack cites passages from the gospels and Acts in particular which mention and condemn false prophets like Barjesus, among others. In addition to the presence of false prophets attested in the New Testament, Harnack also points to prophetic activity as recorded by Josephus, along with the abundant apocalyptic and oracular material that indicates that prophecy was in fact "in luxuriant bloom, and also that prophets were numerous."[64]

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[63] Cornill, Carl Heinrich, and Sutton F. Corkran. The Prophets of Israel. Chicago: Open Court Pub., 1899 (152-3)
[64] The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries, 2 vols. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1908 Vol. 1 (332)

Harnack is not in complete opposition to previous scholarship since he does acknowledge, as Cornill had previously pointed out, that there was a difference in the type of prophets and prophetic works which appeared in the Second Temple post-exilic period.[65] Despite Harnack's discussions on the presence of prophetic activity following canonization, some scholars remained convinced that the canonization of scripture and the initiation of "the law" as the primary access to the divine marked an end for legitimate prophecy. R. H. Charles writes, "the law has not only assumed the function of the ancient pre-Exilic prophets, but it has also, so far as law in its power, made the revival of such prophecy an impossibility."[66]

The association of prophets and law and the distinction between the pre-exilic and post-exilic "prophets" is echoed in the claims of many other scholars, and there does indeed seem to be a hierarchy of prophets. It has been argued that the prophets of the post-exilic period strictly dealt with ritualistic rites and practices rather than introducing any profoundly original ideas as the pre-Exilic and classical prophets had. Most of the discussion of the cessation of prophecy through the nineteenth and early twentieth century was often part of larger scholarly works about Ancient Judaism more generally and few scholars devoted longer pieces to the cessation of prophecy specifically.

Perhaps the first significant article specifically dealing with the cessation of prophecy was E.E. Urbach's "When Did Prophecy Cease?"[67] Urbach amassed and analyzed all the previously discussed evidence (rabbinic, Biblical, sectarian and later historical sources) and concluded that it was inappropriate to speak of a total cessation of prophecy in Ancient Israel, though undoubtedly prophecy following the exilic period had declined in value and power, as

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[65] Daniel, for example, is not included with the Prophets in the Tanakh along with some other apocalyptic writings which did not make it into the canon.

[66] Charles, R. H. Religious Development Between the Old and New Testaments, London: Williams and Norgate, 1914 (40) as cited in Cook, Stephen, On the Question of the Cessation of Prophecy (17).

[67] The Original was published in Hebrew, but I will be using Cook's useful summary of the article in English (Cook, On the Question 20-1) Urbach, Ephraim E, "Why Did Prophecy Cease?" Tarbiz 17 (1946)

Cornill and others had argued before him. For Urbach, what distinguishes the prophets from the other apocalyptic writings and Pseudopigrapa is the public character of the prophet and his relationship with the people. Anonymous authors composed the apocalyptic writings as well as much of the pseudopigrapa and Urbach argues that a prophet would not have hidden his identity in this manner.

Rather than viewing law as the major factor in the decline of prophecy, Urbach saw the destruction of the Temple and the emergence of Christianity in the first few centuries as the major turning points in the history of Jewish prophecy since it was around this time that the rabbis, according to Urbach, began to lose faith in prophecy. It is a convincing argument that the rise of Christianity and the fall of the second Temple may have initiated a loss in prophecy and certainly indicated a decline in the power of the prophetic institution as noted in the rabbinic literature (which will later be discussed). David Aune and others shared Urbach's belief that prophecy did continue into the Second Temple period but was nonetheless distinct from the classical prophecy of the Tanakh.

Thomas Overholt adopts a separate approach to the question of the cessation of prophecy. Rather than focusing on the inherent dynamic of prophecy, Overhalt proposes to study the social dynamic of prophecy, since as other scholars have similarly noted, prophecy requires certain social preconditions to exist. The most obvious necessity for the existence of prophecy is its acknowledgement from society (i.e., that prophecy be recognized as such from the society in which it appears).[68] For Overholt, prophecy has never truly "ceased" or ended, it has simply run out of fashion within the surrounding society in which it appears.

A similar and more particularized claim can be heard from Frederick Greenspahn's discussion in his article, "Why Prophecy Ceased." At the very opening of the article, Greenspahn

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[68] Overholt, Thomas W. Channels of Prophecy: The Social Dynamics of Prophetic Activity. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989 and "Commanding the Prophets: Amos and the Problem of Prophetic Authority," CBQ 41 (1979)

asserts, "it is in fact virtually impossible to identify a specific point at which prophetic figures no longer emerged."[69] It is essential to distinguish what actually occurred from what is later believed to have occurred since both do not always correspond with one another. The first part of Greenspahn's article engages the work of Yehezkel Kaufmann. Kaufmann turned to Biblical passages that threatened an end to prophecy as a punishment for Israel, concluding that the absence of prophecy was to be understood as the result of Jewish sinfulness; only the eschatological excitement in the post-exilic Second Temple period revives some prophetic activity.

Greenspahn dismantles Kaufmann's position by criticizing his treatment of prophecy as a phenomenon controlled by popular consensus since most prophets did not often hesitate to oppose popular sentiment. Greenspahn also finds Kaufmann's treatment of rabbinic literature regarding prophecy to be skewed since the rabbis never actually state that prophecy ended; rather they simply imply the departure of the Holy Spirit from Israel, and perhaps due to political opposition to an expanding Christian claim to legitimate prophecy. Greenspahn's major criticism of scholarship on the "cessation of prophecy" is the mistake of reading too far into ancient texts from the exilic and post-exilic periods individual preconceptions on the subject. Without giving much attention to the various levels of prophecy, Greenspahn seems convinced by the numerous mentions even of "false prophets" in sectarian works like the hymn scroll from Qumran and multiple examples from Josephus, biblical tradition and early Christian texts indicating the presence (or at least possibility) of prophecy during the Second Temple period. An important contribution of the Greenspahn article draws on Urbach's earlier theory about the polemical nature of rabbinic literature regarding prophecy, though not without criticism.[70]

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[69] Greenspahn, Frederick, "Why Prophecy Ceased," JBL 108, 1989 (37)
[70] Ibid., 42

It is not inconceivable to imagine why the rabbis may have wished to assert the canonization of prophecy as a protection against early Christian claims to continuing and inheriting true Israelite prophecy. This assertion runs the risk of being overly simplistic in terms of diminishing the work of the rabbis which is in fact much more complex than may be gleaned from Urbach's assertions. Greenspahn discusses some of the rabbinic excerpts and writings of Hillel, Gamliel, Akiba and others in greater detail intentionally problematizing the concept of the "Holy Spirit" which was sometimes applied to being responsible for everyone's actions, exclusively for the prophets or for no one at all.[71] Greenspahn concludes the article by highlighting the significance of the rabbinic claim that the Holy Spirit had departed from Israel as a mainly polemical attempt to secure their role in explicating past revelation.

Benjamin Sommer also presents a thorough critique of Greenspahn's evaluation in an article published several years later. Sommer reevaluates the conclusions found in previous scholarship and proposes to rephrase the question at hand. Rather than simply asking whether or not God (through the Holy Spirit or not) stopped communicating with the Jews through prophets, the question should rather be, "Did Jews in the Second Temple period tend to accept the possibility that God still communicated with the Jewish people by speaking directly to certain individuals?"[72] This restated question may actually prove to be very useful when actually engaging with the primary sources. Sommer is interested in revisiting the actual primary sources from the post-exilic period to see if the ancient texts themselves assert the decline of prophecy and why people stopped believing in the continued existence of prophecy.

Sommer is in complete opposition to Greenspahn's claim that none of the sources explicitly state the cessation of prophecy. In fact, Sommer claims "the notion of the end of

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[71] Greenspahn is clarifying the point that though the Holy Spirit may have initially been associated with prophecy they were not one in the same thing. It is also interesting to note that the spirit has been said to have departed Israel at various times, even in the times of the earlier prophets. (Greenspahn 46-7)

[72] Somme, Benjamin D, "Did Prophecy Cease: Evaluating a Reevaluation," JBL 115:1, 1996 (32)

prophecy was known and widespread in antiquity."[73] 1 Maccabees and 2 Apocalypse of Baruch

certainly state an absence of prophecy in the post-exilic period. While Greenspahn argued the

distinction between "holy spirit" and "prophecy," Sommer asserts that they are synonymous in

rabbinic Hebrew. Sommer quotes an excerpt from *b. Sanh.* 11a that states that Haggai, Zechariah

and Malachi were the last prophets and that the Holy Spirit withdrew from Israel following their

death.[74]

Sommer also quotes from *S. 'Olam Rab.* 86b, "Alexander of Macedonia reigned for

twelve years. Until that time prophets spoke prophecies through the holy spirit; from that time

on, 'Incline your ear and listen to the words of the Sages.'"[75] Sommer's literal reading of this

passage clearly establishes the cessation of prophecy, though Greenspahn may have read this

same passage in a more polemical sense (i.e., as a way to reassert the theological power and

prominence of the rabbis themselves).

Sommer's second major assertion that the methods and types of prophecy changed during

the post-exilic period from the methods and types of prophecy attested in the Tanakh is more

convincing. The prophetic activity of the Second Temple Period was understood as distinct from

classical Biblical prophecy for several reasons: most importantly, the prophetic activity during

this period was not synonymous with classical biblical prophecy. It was a distinct and mostly

inferior form of divine communication that may have intended to revive the dormant prophetic

experiences of the past but was certainly not a continuation of it. A vivid example of this is the

practice of Jewish mystics continuing well into the medieval era. Sommer explains how many

mystics, like Abraham Abulafia, sought to experience prophecy through ecstatic techniques such

as chanting and number arrangements, practices which clearly distinguished themselves from the

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[73] Ibid., 32
[74] Ibid., 33
[75] Ibid., 34

biblical prophetic experiences. As I discussed in chapter 1, prophets had to be formally called on by God before they called themselves "prophets."

For Sommer, the rabbinic sources evidently make claim to the absence of prophecy in the post-exilic period and understand it to be one of the things that were hidden away when the Temple was destroyed. The stream of prophecy would only to be reinstated with the appearance of the Messiah. This is one way of explaining the appearance of various prophetic figures preceding both the Maccabean revolt and the revolt of 66 CE. Greenspahn's testament to the presence of prophetic activity and prophecy in the post-exilic Second Temple period may be legitimate but Sommer sets a precise distinction between the Holy Spirit proper, which was responsible for transmitting prophetic messages through the prophets, and the "daughter of the voice," which indicates a lesser form of divine communication and is a mere "echo" of the voice of God, as opposed to the true voice of God.[76]

Finally, Sommer proposes a new theory to explain the decline of prophecy that counters the scholarship of Greenspahn, Aune, Overhalt and others. The termination of kingship may have been a leading factor to the decline of prophecy in the post-exilic period. Sommer argues that the institution of prophecy was so intricately connected to kingship and so much so that when kingship terminated, its prophetic counterpart could no longer serve its original purpose. This seems to be an attractive theory on explaining the absence of prophecy, yet it is still more convincing that prophecy in fact perpetuated in the Second Temple period, albeit in a different form, since kingship was not necessary for all types of prophetic activity to continue.

Despite Sommer's strongly argued case about the cessation of prophecy, many scholars remained unconvinced and tended to support the view that some kind of prophecy was indeed present in the post-exilic period. John R. Levison expands the work of Greenspahn and Overhalt,

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[76] Ibid., 39

discrediting the traditional view that Sommer had attempted to rescue. Rather than reading the

sources to be true literally as Sommer did, Levison approaches the texts from a critical angle,

supporting Greenspahn's claim that "interestamental"[77] authors never explicitly state that

prophecy had come to an end.

The sources from this period including 1 Maccabees, Psalms, 2 Apocalypse Baruch,

Josephus, and rabbinic texts refer to prophets variously as predictors, leaders, decision-makers

and legitimators of theocracy, writers of history and intercessors.[78] This wide array of prophetic

activity testifies to the complexity of the post-exilic period both socially and theologically.

Levison continues with a close reading of *Tosefta Sotah* 10-15, which establishes a pattern of the

deaths of certain rabbis accompanied by the loss of various gifts and ideas from the world.

The significance of this pattern, according to Levison, is not in the literal disappearance

of specific objects and characteristics, but the fact that the death of righteous people or things

leads to a loss of good until someone else appears and brings with him the presence of good.

Levison applies this theory to the apparent absence of prophecy. The recorded "withdrawal" of

the Holy Spirit should therefore not be seen as a permanent cessation to the gift of prophecy,

rather a temporary lapse until another righteous person appeared, in the case of the examined

excerpt, Hillel's righteousness made the return of the Holy Spirit possible.[79] This approach seems

to echo the earlier scholarship but the manner in which Levison presents his argument is rather

innovative.

An important additional piece should be mentioned. It may be useful here to discuss this

piece at greater length since its approach is so unique. Alex P. Jassen's article "Prophecy after

the Prophets," along with his other works, has been greatly helpful and especially interesting

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[77] This word is used by Greenspahn and then repeated in Levison, John R. "Did the Spirit Withdraw from Israel? An Evaluation of the Earliest Jewish Data" NTS 43, 1997 (45)

[78] Levison, "Did the Spirit Withdraw From Israel?" (45)

[79] Ibid., 52

since he explores the concept of the prophecy more generally and also the "cessation of prophecy" more specifically in the Dead Sea Scrolls, which many scholars have not discussed in their work. Jassen draws on the theories of both Greenspahn and Sommer, expanding their assertions and comparing their findings to the prophetic activity in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Jassen stresses the importance of looking beyond the strict terminology of a written work or group to uncover what was actually occurring. In other words, just because the Qumran community restricted its use of explicit prophetic terminology to ancient prophets does not mean that the community does not regard prophecy as a live institution. Jassen proposes to study the Qumran scrolls to emphasize the presence of prophetic-revelatory phenomena and the possibility of new modes of "transformed" prophetic activity.[80]

The Qumran community, as Sommer suggested, recognized a distinction between ancient prophecy and contemporary prophetic-like phenomenon that were also considered prophecy proper (unlike Sommer's assertion about the post-exilic communication with the divine not being considered prophecy proper).

Jassen begins with a close reading of the hymn scroll (the *Hodayot*) in which the hymnist repeatedly condemns the "enemies" for being false and lying prophets and for trying to modify the law. The hymnist is clearly a recipient of divine revelation but it is interesting that prophetic terminology is never used to describe the hymnist's experiences yet the enemies are always described as false "prophets." Through a series of repetitive verses about the hymnist receiving revelation from "the Lord," and the false peoples not accepting him, a kind of *inclusio* is formed with the repetition and anaphora of "revelation." This allows for the emphasis to be the fact that

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[80] Jassen, Alex P. Prophecy after 'The Prophets': The Dead Sea Scrolls and the History of Prophecy in Judaism" Pages 577–93 in volume 2 of *The Dead Sea Scrolls in Context: Integrating the Dead Sea Scrolls in the Study of Ancient Texts, Languages, and Cultures*. Edited by Armin Lange, Emanuel Tov, Matthias Weigold, and Bennie H. Reynolds III. Vetus Testamentum Supplements 140. 2 vols.; Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2011. (579). Jassen also discusses Ben Sira as will be discussed later.

the hymnist alone is the one who has received true revelation. Jassen also notes a sort of evolution of revelation throughout the hymn. The hymnist begins by thanking God for making his face "shine" by the covenant, an experience not quite prophetic.

Several verses later, in line 27, the hymnist writes, "by me you have illumed the face of many…"[81] The progression from just having his own face shine through the Lord (individual) to the faces of others being illumined through the him (public), essentially establishes the hymnist as a prophet.[82] It is also essential to understand the accusation by the hymnist to the "false" prophets attempting to incorrectly modify the law. This espouses the important concept of "progressive revelation of the law"[83] which may be understood as an aspect of proper prophecy and was undoubtedly an essential belief of the Qumran community as articulated in the *Rule of the Community* text.

The idea of progressive revelation is explicitly described in the hymn several times, the revelation of the Torah to Moses and then through certain other individuals and groups throughout time.

In the Qumran sense, then, the prophets are conceptualized as "possessing the proper understanding of the Torah of Moses and empowered to share this knowledge…this juridical knowledge is intimately connected with their prophetic status."[84] The identification of lawgiving as a prophetic duty is a unique perspective since other texts and authors including the rabbis conceived of a one-time complete revelation at Sinai in which the total law and its future amplifications are communicated to the prophet. The assignment of juridical functions to a

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[81] Ibid., 583
[82] This is also in line with Urbach's requirement for prophets to be public figures (i.e., the hymn scroll is different in this way from other written pseudepigrapha)
[83] This was the belief that God revealed the original law to Moses at Sinai and continued to reveal the interpretation and amplification of the Torah to special individuals throughout each generation. The Qumran community saw itself as the next chosen interpreters to whom God would continue to reveal the true meaning of the Torah.
[84] Jassen, "Prophecy after the Prophets" (587)

prophet as the hymn scroll demonstrates is evidence for the presence of prophecy in the post-exilic period, though it is certainly a transformed type of prophecy.

Similar evidence for an altered understanding of prophecy in the Second Temple Period can be gleaned from two "wisdom" works, namely the Psalms scroll and Ben Sira. In the Psalms scroll, David's prophetic capabilities are a direct result of the "sapiential revelation"[85] from God. In other words, David is not just a wise man capable of producing the psalms; he is in fact a prophet of God, receiving the words to be written directly from God. This represents an interesting and unique blending of the office of the *sage* and the *prophet*. A similar phenomenon occurs in the work of Ben Sira. In chapter 39, the path to becoming a sage is described.

The ultimate goal of a sage is to become a "conduit" through which knowledge can be transmitted to the community. The sage receives the divine word from God, just as the ancient prophets had, to be transmitted to the people but unlike the ancient prophet, "the revelation for the sage is a thoroughly sapiential experience."[86] This revelatory experience of the sage, then, also attests to the presence of prophecy in the post-exilic period.

Jassen states gracefully at the end of the article that "it is equally true that prophecy continues and that prophecy ceases,"[87] and indeed prophetic activity is attested in the Second Temple period in various sectarian and theological texts yet it is sometimes different than classical biblical prophecy.

It is clear by now that the question of the "cessation of prophecy" in ancient Judaism may not be appropriately fashioned. There have been numerous arguments in favor of the traditional view that prophecy ended following the destruction of the temple and the death of Malachi yet there have also been numerous arguments made in favor of the presence of prophecy and

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[85] Ibid., 591
[86] Ibid., 592
[87] Ibid., 592

prophetic activity well past the exilic period and in Second Temple Judea as documented in various sources described above.

Rather than necessarily adopting one view or the other, it seems more conducive to move beyond the limitations of such a question and, as Jassen appealingly proposes, to examine prophetic phenomenon in the post-exilic period as conceptualized by the community (or individuals) themselves. Much like the discussion on prophetic titles in chapter 1, it is crucial to realize the intricacies of prophetic phenomenon itself, as there are evidently various distinct manifestations that should not be lumped together into one monolithic "prophecy."

To state that prophecy merely ceased to exist after a specific point would be to ignore the attested trends of human behavior and patent affirmations of prophecy. Equally erroneous would be to oversimplify and embrace the opposite extreme that the prophecy continued uninterrupted from the ancient prophets through the post-exilic period.

As scholarship on the "cessation of prophecy" and prophecy more generally evolved from its first appearances in the nineteenth century, scholars have generally begun to realize that prophetic activity is not so easily present or absent at any given time. The Second Temple period, like other theologically transitional phases, was in fact teeming with myriad manifestations of scripture and "law" as well as a variety of practices some of which embraced prophecy as a means of legitimate understanding of the divine and others that honored the classical prophecy of old.

In the next few chapters, I will discuss several post-exilic primary sources to better understand how exactly various Israelite and later "Jewish" groups conceived of prophecy and how these various new conceptions of prophecy interacted with classical conceptions of prophecy.

CASE STUDY 1: *PESHARIM* AND THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

CHAPTER 5: RE-INTERPRETING PROPHECY IN THE *PESHARIM*

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls more than half a century ago provided Biblical

scholars and archaeologists with a vast amount of new and exciting, albeit often cryptic material

that has since completely altered the study of Second Temple Judaism and Biblical history more

generally. Indeed, as Stephen Cook notes, the past several decades following the discoveries

have "witnessed a virtual explosion of studies examining various aspects of Second Temple

Judaism."[88] Amongst the wide range of scholarly topics lies the question of the "cessation of

prophecy" and the role of Biblical and extra-biblical prophecy[89] in the Second Temple Period as

related to the literary sources produced in this time. The previously widely held notion that

Israelite prophecy came to an end after Malachi is now considered an anachronistic

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[88] Cook, L. Stephen. *On the Question of the "Cessation of Prophecy in Ancient Judaism*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011 (1)

[89] When I say "prophecy" I mean any revelatory experience that grants an individual special insight for understanding or knowing something that others are not capable of without inspiration.

oversimplification as scholars have realized the diversity of Second Temple Jewish sources which seem to indicate a continuation of prophecy well into the first millennium (though not all are in complete agreement on the matter). The *pesharim*, a collection of seventeen previously unknown commentaries on scriptural prophetic books found amongst the Qumran scrolls, are especially intriguing as a case study of mantic prophetic inspiration and exegesis in the latter half of the Second Temple period.

There has been much scholarly discussion regarding the presence of prophecy in the Pseudepigrapha, Apocryphal texts, the writings of Josephus and Philo, rabbinic texts, early Christian sources and the Dead Sea Scrolls.[90] I am particularly interested in how the Dead Sea Scrolls community understood "prophecy" and how this understanding may have been connected to theological developments and literary trends within the broader Second Temple and Ancient Near Eastern milieu.

The argument of this essay is twofold. I will argue first that a new perception of prophecy involving the interpretation of scripture emerged in the Second Temple period as can be evidenced most explicitly in the *pesher* writings from the Qumran sect. By comparing and contrasting the elements of *pesher* literature from Qumran with other Second Temple writings, including some pseudepigraphal texts, later rabbinic Midrash, Near Eastern dream and omen literature, and even various sections of the Gospels, it will become clear that *pesher* interpretation shares many aspects with its neighboring literary trends yet simultaneously maintains a uniquely Qumran eschatology and inspired mantic exegesis.

Before delving into a discussion of *pesher* literature and its particular characteristics, it may be useful to briefly highlight some of the caveats regarding the genres of various writings from Second Temple Literature that rely heavily on texts and themes related to the "Hebrew

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[90] See Cook's overview of the scholarly discussions regarding prophecy in these various sources and how the outlook of scholars has changed over the centuries. Cook, *On the Question,* (11-42)

Bible." Though there seems to be a general understanding amongst the ancient authors of most of these sources as to which of the Biblical texts were more or less authoritative (i.e., Pentateuch, The Prophets), there is still much scholarly debate about which texts were considered canonical at certain points throughout the Second Temple period and what exactly constituted the "Hebrew Bible" at any given point. This question becomes important when trying to distinguish the "authoritative texts" from those compositions that interpret them. It is also important in understanding how scholars have studied certain texts that fall into this category and how their readings have shaped the texts themselves. Yet the distinctions between genres and writings from the Second Temple period are far less precise than some scholars have purported.

Recalling Jacque Derrida's Law of Genre, "every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text; there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging."[91] No single text can define a genre and no one genre can completely satisfy all the elements of a given text. With this in mind, the genres of texts in the Second Temple period, especially the rather vague category of "Rewritten Bible" become much more problematic and less concrete. The "Rewritten Bible" genre, a coin termed by Geza Vermes, was used in its early years to describe the vast majority of pseudepigraphal works, but the limits of this title soon became clear. While texts including *The Book of Jubilees* and *Genesis Apocryphon* have been (and continue to be) understood as belonging to the Rewritten Bible genre, there are many other writings from the Second Temple whose genres are much less definitive.

Whether or not the *pesharim* should be understood as Rewritten Bible or whether they constitute genre on their own has been widely debated.. Though it is beyond the scope of this essay to attempt to concretely classify the *pesharim* into any one-genre category, discussing some possibilities may shed light on how the *pesharim* relate to other works in the Second

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[91] Derrida, Jacques and Avital Ronell, "The Law of Genre" *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Autumn 1980 (65)

Temple period. It should be remembered that the genre of a text should not overshadow the contents of the text itself.

For George Brooke (and others), the *pesharim* do not necessarily follow the pattern of the Rewritten Bible genre because the purpose of the *pesharim* is to uncover the mysteries of the future as predicted by the earlier Prophets while the Rewritten Bible texts often focused on "how authoritative texts that spoke to the past could be brought into the present,"[92] with special attention paid to projecting contemporary laws and practices onto the earliest patriarchs. *The Book of Jubilees*, for example, inserts its own calendar system of 49 years and even presents Adam and Eve observing the ritual purity rites in the Garden of Eden. These additions and insertions are undoubtedly mechanisms through which to assert legitimacy and primacy of later laws and to advocate a certain type of Jewish identity as pure and original. This approach to understanding, reading and re-reading the Biblical authoritative text meshes the original words and the contemporary additions so well that the distinction between the original and the contemporary are hardly discernible.

The *pesharim*, on the other hand, explicitly differentiate the contemporary commentary and interpretation from the original prophetic text. The foundational basis of the *pesharim* lies in the belief that the ancient prophets and their words do not refer to the specific time in which they were spoken, rather, "the words of the prophets are hidden ciphers that allude to the historical circumstances,"[93] and eschatological anticipations of the community of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The true meaning of the ancient prophecies can only be known and explicated by the contemporary inspired exegete who possesses the tools to decipher God's message.

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[92] Brooke, George. "Genre Theory, Rewritten Bible and Pesher" *Dead Sea Discoveries* 17, 2010 (379)

[93] Jassen, Alex P. "The Pesharim and the Rise of Commentary in Early Jewish Scriptural Interpretation" *Dead Sea Discoveries* 19:3, January 2012 (364)

One of the most telling statements from the *pesharim* comes from *Pesher Habbukuk*, "And God told Habakkuk to write down that which would happen to the final generation, but He did not make known to him when time would come to an end. And as for that which He said, *that he who reads may read it speedily*: interpreted this concerns the Teacher of Righteousness, to whom God made known all the mysteries of the words of His servants the Prophets."[94] This significant passage not only highlights the Qumran and specifically *pesher* understanding that the message of the prophets was one for the future, but it also inaugurates the Teacher of Righteousness as the one who is the inspired contemporary of the prophets.

A variety of exegetical techniques are applied to the scriptural text and the prophetic words are "re-contextualized" to apply to the new historical reality of the Qumran community through the inspired interpreter (i.e., fulfillment prophecy). The Teacher of Righteousness is the one whose divine revelation allows him to communicate God's indented message as uttered by the earlier prophets.

The *pesher* on Psalms also reiterates the important prophetic role of the Teacher of Righteousness as interpreter; the second verse of Psalm 45, "and my tongue is the pen of a ready scribe" is interpreted in the following manner, "[its interpretation] concerns the Teacher of Righteousness who…before God with purposeful speech…"[95] The scribal role is here reassigned to the Teacher of Righteousness as he inherits the special ability to properly interpret the divine message encoded in the prophetic words of scripture. Thus the Teacher of Righteousness becomes a new sort of "prophet" guiding his community with his divine insight.

The *pesharim* also follow a strict formula of citation of the lemma from the prophetic text followed by its *pesher* (interpretation)*,* which often begins with "this is an interpretation…" or

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[94] Vermes, Geza. *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*. New York, NY, USA: Allen Lane/Penguin, 1997 (481)
[95] Ibid., 491

"interpreted..." as can be seen in the excerpts noted above.[96] This explicit distinction between the prophetic words and the interpretation stands in stark contrast to the Rewritten Bible interpretations that drastically rework the scriptural text altogether. Rather than the prose style of the Rewritten Bible genre in which the reworked parts become part of the narrative, the *pesharim* consciously separate the scripture and prophetic words from their interpretation. For most scholars the various *pesharim* represent Qumran exegesis as a whole and have clearly been extremely important for the development of interpretive practices within Judaism and even for later Christianity.

The *pesharim* are also amongst the oldest explicit biblical commentaries. As Markus Bockmeuhl writes, "seemingly without precedent, the world's oldest biblical commentaries emerge among the Dead Sea Scrolls fully formed around the end of the second century BCE."[97] While it is true that the formulaic and structured interpretive method of the *pesharim* does not appear earlier in the biblical tradition, it should be noted that "inner-Biblical exegesis," a concept first elaborated by Michael Fishbane, was very much a part of the compilation of the Torah and Tanakh itself.[98] That being said, the question still arises as to why this apparently new method of interpretation, which separates the lemma from the commentary, appears in the Qumran corpus.

Is the interpretation style found in *pesher* uniquely *sui generis* or does it share and inherit elements from other forms of Jewish scriptural commentary? Most scholars agree that the process of canonization of the Tanakh influenced the shift from an open approach to scripture in

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[96] Jassen, Alex P. "The Pesharim and the Rise of Commentary in Early Jewish Scriptural Interpretation" *Dead Sea Discoveries* 19:3, January 2012 (366).

[97] Bockmuehl, Markus "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of Biblical Commentary," in *Text, Thought and Practice in Qumran and Early Christianity*. Ed. R.A. Clements and D.R. Shwartz, Leiden: Bril, 2009 (3)

[98] See Fishbane, Michael A. ""Inner Biblical Exegesis"" *The Garments of Torah: Essays in Biblical Hermeneutics*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1989. Also see *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985 or the chapter "Inner-Biblical Exegesis," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation, Volume I* 1996, pg 33–48.

which words, events and ideas can be reworked, to a more conservative approach in which the original scripture maintains its integrity and separation from the commentary; yet canonization does not seem to be the only or even the primary influence for the *pesharim*, especially since the process of canonization was probably still taking place in the first century BCE.

In the next section of the paper, I will discuss the similarities and differences between Qumran *pesher* exegesis and other interpretive models and literature in the Ancient Near East and Second Temple Judaism along with later rabbinic and Gospel writings to try and uncover any lost parallels or lines of convergence that may indicate a shared heritage. I am aware of the dangers of falling prey to an exaggerated 'parallelomania' in which scholars have been known to overdo and exaggerate the supposed similarities of various passages of biblical texts taken out of context, yet it is nevertheless necessary and important to discuss any significant points of intersection.[99] By discussing various significant parallels between the *pesharim* and surrounding literature, we may better understand the genealogy of a certain interpretive method rather than simply explaining away the *pesharim* as completely *sui generis.*

Many scholars have noted the similarities between the exegetical techniques from Qumran writings including some *pesharim* and later rabbinic Midrash. Paul Mandel has suggested studying the similarities between the exegetical techniques of literature from the Dead Sea Scrolls and rabbinic midrash by exploring three questions: How is the biblical material presented in each corpus, what type of content does the text containing the biblical interpretation exhibit, and what exegetical stance does the text take to Scripture?[100] While there are several different styles of presenting the Biblical text in the writings of the Qumran library, the *pesharim* directly cite the scriptural text with the interpretation following. For Mandel, "the modes of

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[99] See: Sandmel, Samuel, "Parallelomania" *Journal of Biblical Literature,* March 1962
[100] Mandel, Paul. "Midrashic Exegesis and its precedents in the Dead Sea Scrolls" *Dead Sea Discoveries* 8:2, June 2001 (150-1)

commentary accompanying citations of verses"[101] in the Qumran corpus, including the *pesharim,*

would be very familiar to the later rabbinic scholar as a parallel to his Midrash. Most Midrashic

literature does not completely rework the scripture as the Rewritten Bible commentators did;

rather rabbinic scholars explicitly made clear which Biblical verse was being interpreted. As with

the different forms of interpretation found at Qumran, there are several different hermeneutic

stances to the biblical text within the rabbinic Midrashic literature-namely the Tannaitic and

Amoraic.

The Tannaitic Midrash, mainly associated with Rabbi Ishmael, in which the later books

(often wisdom literature) are interpreted as referring to earlier Biblial events, most notably the

Exodus, may have some parallels to the *pesher* technique of interpretation.

In fact, George Brooke asserts that the *pesharim* should be called "Qumran

midrashim."[102] It is highly unlikely that such a bold claim can hold true but it is worthwhile

nonetheless to discuss any parallels. The passages in this particular type of Midrash are marked

by a specific formula ("[It is] to him that the verse refers…), which introduces the citation of the

verse. This is similar to the lemma separation from the interpretation in the *pesharim*. Rather

than the usual Midrashic derivations of meaning, these Tannaitic Midrashim from Rabbi

Ishmael's collection declare the real meaning and significance of the cited verses, comparable to

the declarations of the Teacher of Righteousness in the *pesharim.*

There are also major differences, however, between the Midrashic literature of the rabbis

and the Qumran *pesher* exegesis. The greatest difference is perhaps the lack of an explicitly

prophetic or inspired exegete in the Midrashim. The difference in purpose and intention of the

two interpretative methods also account for their distinctness. While the purpose of the *pesharim*

is to unravel the true meaning of the divine eschatological words of the Prophets as they apply to

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[101] Ibid., 155
[102] Brooke, "Pehser" (503)

the contemporary times of the Qumran community[103], the purpose of the Tannaitic Midrashim is the opposite. In other words, the midhrashim are written to portray all biblical texts as "adjuncts to the earlier pentateuchal" narrative.[104]

It is therefore not accurate to draw any direct connection between the *pesharim* and the Tannaitic midrashic sources and it is almost impossible to prove the direction of any stated parallel between the Midrash and the *pesharim*. As Azzan Yadin argues, there are undoubtedly "legal hermeneutics"[105] from Rabbi Ishmael's Tannaitic Midrashim that find some parallels in the techniques of Qumran exegesis including the *pesharim*, but the parallels go no deeper than the technical formulae employed. It is clear then that the rabbinic Midrashim do not inherit the interpretive perspective of the Qumran community, nor are the rabbinic scholars comparable to the prophetic figure of the Teacher of Righteousness. Parallels between the Midrashim and the *pesharim* are to be expected since the various Jewish movements in the Second Temple and later periods existed simultaneously in the same context and milieu and reflected broad overlapping ideas that could be found to be parallel or similar among many or most of the texts.

Other scholars have suggested, more convincingly perhaps, the connections between the form and content of the *pesher* approach to the scriptural Prophets, namely the belief in fulfillment prophecy, and an apparently parallel approach to the scripture found specifically in the Fourth Gospel. In fact, scholars like Richard Longenecker have argued that the Fourth Gospel uses "a *pesher* type"[106] of interpretation. The *pesharim* employ a lemmatic structure of interpretation to the scripture described above in which specific verses from scripture are cited and interpreted using a unique linguistic formula and then identified with a contemporary figure

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[103] i.e., Fulfillment prophecy

[104] Ibid., 163. Also see Kugel, James L. *In Potiphar's House: The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts* Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1990 (262)

[105] Yadin, Azzan. "4QMMT, Rabbi Ishmael and the Origins of Legal Midrash" *Dead Sea Discoveries* 10:1 2003 (149)

[106] Witmer, Stephen E. "Approaches to Scripture in the Fourth Gospel and the Qumran Pesharim" *Novum Testamentum*, 48:4, 2006 (314)

or situation. The *Pesher Habakkuk* provides a clear example of this structure: "*For behold, I rouse the Chaldeans, that [bitter and hasty] nation*…Interpreted, this concerns the Kittim [who are] quick and valiant in war…all the world shall fall under the domination of Kittim…they shall not believe in the laws of [God]."[107]

As described earlier, this lemmatic structure is necessary in a text to be considered *pesher*, but does not define it completely on its own. In terms of content, the *pesharim* primarily focus on contemporizing the texts from the Tanakh through a divine exegete. Saeed Hamid-Khani notes that the there are obvious similarities between the *pesharim* and the Fourth Gospel yet concludes, "The similarities are more of an appearance than reality."[108] Hamid-Khani's main contention is that the Gospel of John does not necessarily purport to be a divinely inspired exegete.

Stephen Witmer suggests, howeber, that John 6:45 can actually be read as an inspired meaning of the Biblical scripture as Jesus, the inspired exegete, explicates the meaning of a citation from the Tanakh about bread and manna during the wilderness years. The evangelists seem to have more in common with the *pesharim* as they depict Jesus as being the only one with the divine instruction to fully understand and contextualize the "Old Testament."

Specific references and citations from the Tanakh are also included in John's Gospel,[109] similar to the strict citation of Scripture in the *pesharim*. In fact there are even seven explicit Scriptural citations, which are introduced with a 'fulfillment formula' further highlighting the eschatological contemporizing present in the Gospel.

The second key feature of the *pesharim* is the eschatological or *ex-eventu* reading of the prophetic books of the Tanakh. Witmer seems to be convinced that there is an analogous

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[107] Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls* (479)
[108] As cited in Witmer, "Approaches to scripture" (319)
[109] A list of all the explicit Scriptural statements found in the Fourth Gospel are provided by Witmer: 1:23, 2:17, 6:31, 45, 7:37, 42, 8:17, 10:34, 12:13-15, 34, 38, 40, 13:18, 15:25, etc. (Witmer 321)

approach in the evangelist understanding of the meaning of the Tanakh in terms of Jesus' life. Psalm 69:9-10, for example, has been interpreted as refering to (and fulfilled through) Jesus' cleansing of the Temple after he finds it turned into a place of commerce in John 2:17.[110] There are also references to the Tanakh and the theme of the "suffering servant" mentioned in Isaiah 53:10-12, Hosea 6:2 and Psalms 16:10 at the end of the passion narrative in John's Gospel. For instance, John 20:9 implies that the aforementioned verses referring to the revival of the 'suffering servant' are correctly understood as references to Jesus's' resurrection from the dead: "for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead." In other words, the belief that Moses and the prophets wrote of Jesus, and that the scriptures bear witness to and predictions of Jesus can be compared to the eschatological understanding of the prophets depicted in the *pesharim* quoted above. The same authoritative stance is adopted to assert the correctness of the Teacher of Righteousness, in the case of the *pesharim,* or Jesus, in the case of the Fourth Gospel of John. For the author of John, the full meaning of the Scripture is revealed only when its reference to Jesus is uncovered.

The structure of the *pesher* exegesis has also been compared with the structure of exegesis in the Fourth Gospel, and in particular 6:31-58. As noted by Peder Borgen, these verses from chapter 6 of John paraphrase words and citations from the Tanakh and combine them with haggadic traditions and sequential explanations of the cited verses.[111] For example, the heavenly manna from Psalm 78:24 is cited in John 6:31 "He gave them bread from Heaven to eat." Verses 32-48 discuss and paraphrase the first part of the citation and verses 49-58 discuss and explain the last verb of the citation and what it means "to eat the bread." Jesus then explains that *he* is the 'bread of life' and even while explaining to the people what he means by claiming to be the

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[110] See Beale G. K. and D. A. Carson. "John" *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (431-434)

[111] As cited in Witmer, "Approaches to Scripture" (322)

bread of life, Jesus cites from the Tanakh again to enhance his discussion. These verses of Tanakh citations followed by explanations of the new interpretation resemble the lemmatic structure of the Qumran *pesharim*.

Witmer argues that there are even deeper parallels between the two forms of exegesis. The terminology in John verses 6:32-58 is used to identify and explain various parts of the scriptural citation. Specifically, the formulae "I am/this is…" and "this [the citation] is…" are used either by Jesus himself or in the explication. The first formula, "I am/this is" associates a contemporary figure back to Scripture. In John 6:35, 41, 48, and 51, Jesus claims to "be the bread" from Heaven. The second formula associates the Scripture to a contemporary figure or event. Both formulae are employed to declare and depict the eschatological fulfillment of the Scripture cited in the figure of Jesus.

Similar formulae are used in the *pesharim* to reveal the eschatological interpretation of Scripture. 9:3-4 of Pesher Habukkuk directly cites Habakkuk 2:8, "Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the people shall plunder you."[112] This citation is contemporized and the *pesher* interpretation associates the verse to the last priests of Jerusalem: "interpreted this concerns the last Priests of Jerusalem, who shall amass money and wealth by plundering the peoples…booty shall be delivered into the hands of the army of the Kittim, for it is they who shall be the *remnant of the peoples.*"[113] The cited verse from Habukkuk is broken down and the first part is explained first and then the last part is explained to be a reference to the Kittim[114]. It is

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[112] Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls* (483)
[113] Ibid., (483)
[114] "Kittim" was commonly used to designate the specific enemy at the time; at times it has been a reference to the Greeks or the Romans, though it is unclear what exactly the *pesher* is referring to. Kittim has also just meant any foreign nation that will bring destruction to Israel.. There is also debate amongst scholars as to whether the reference to Kittim is speaking of something which will happen since the verb proceeding it in the Hebrew is in the imperfect tense or whether the passage should be understood as speaking of the present time of the interpreters. See Neujahr, Matthew, "Ex-Eventu Prediction in the Dead Sea Scrolls." *Predicting the past in the Ancient Near East Mantic Historiography in Ancient Mesopotamia, Judah, and the Mediterranean World*. Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2012. 182-91 for a concise discussion of the scholarly debates particularly about the "Kittim" as referred to in the Habakkuk Pesher.

interesting to uncover the similarities between the *pesharim* and the Gospel of John in particular.

Not only do the two exegetical methods employ the same lemmatic structure, they also share

similar identification and interpretive formulae to explicate the eschatological significance of

given verses from the Tanakh.

Despite the apparent and significant similarities between the *pesharim* and the Gospel of

John as have been discussed by Witmer and others above, there are also important differences to

keep in mind. Some scholars have daringly ventured to claim a direct link between the *pesharim*

(and therefore the Qumran community itself) and the Christian movement. This hasty conclusion

does not appear to acknowledge the significant divergences between the two sources. The Gospel

of John does not sustain any continuous commentary of an extended section from the Tanakh;

rather specific verses and words are selected often out of context to best illuminate and reveal

their fulfillment in the words or flesh of Christ. Another obvious difference is the lack of the

word "*pesher*" or "interpretation" in the Gospel while the repetition of the word "pesher" is

undoubtedly one of the important criteria for the *pesher* genre as discussed above. The Fourth

Gospel does not present itself as an "interpretation," rather it claims to be revealing the ultimate

truth of the Scripture as fulfilled in and by Jesus.

The verses from John discussed above are not representative of the entire Gospel. Though

both the *pesharim* and the Gospel partake in fulfillment prophecy, the Gospel connects all the

citations from the Tanakh to the figure of Jesus himself while the Teacher of Righteousness is

not usually the main subject of his interpretation, simply the divine transmitter. Jesus proclaims

to be the bearer of a new revelation that overrides the previous Scripture while the *pesharim* do

not claim to replace the Scripture, only to uncover the mysteries of the prophetic revelation. The

differences between the *pesharim* and Gospel are enough to discourage referring to John as

"*pesher* exegesis" as some may have hastily assumed. That the Gospel of John shares some

commonalities with the *pesharim* and employs a form of "charismatic exegesis"[115] may be more accurately concluded.

It is clear that *pesher* exegesis shares some basic elements with later rabbinic Midrash as well as parts of the Johannine Gospel yet there is not enough to prove any solid "influence" of any one over the other. In fact, it is still not clear whether the lemmatization structure found in the *pesharim* is to be attributed to an independent factor within the sect (beyond the canonization or assumed authority of the Scripture) or whether there were prior interpretation techniques in the Ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman milieus which may have influenced the form and method of the *pesharim*.

Already in the 1950's, scholars studying the *pesharim* began suggesting various texts that shared the exegetical techniques of the *pesharim*. These theories and ideas remained relatively cursory until recently when scholars have again begun to realize the parallels between the *pesharim* and various Near Eastern and ancient Greco-Roman sources, particularly dream and omen interpretations and poetic commentaries. In the following section of the essay I will briefly outline some noted parallels between the methods and techniques of the *pesharim* and a series of non-Jewish and Jewish works written before or contemporaneous with the *pesharim* that may at least provide important background in the genealogy of the *pesharim* (if not unveil pathways of influence).

I will begin by discussing some Ancient Near Eastern texts that seem to share many interpretive characteristics with the *pesharim*. Michael Fishbane, Markus Bockmuehl, Daneil Machiela, and Alex Jassen, among others, have searched for similarities between *pesher* and other Ancient Near Eastern interpretations. Fishbane searches for isolated exegetical techniques

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[115] Witmer, "Approaches to Scripture" (328)

used in the *pesharim* (some of which I discussed earlier while defining the "genre") that may have been anticipated in earlier ancient Near Eastern literatures.[116]

Dream manuals from Mesopotamia and Egypt contain rigidly arranged lists of individual items and various schemes that usually have an introductory protasis followed by an apodosis. On one side of the page a particular item is listed, for example, "if he eats earth," followed by the interpretation and meaning of that particular item in a dream, for example, "confusion, he will become decrepit."[117] This, for Fishbane resembles the lemma structure of citation from the Tanakh followed by commentary seen in the *pesharim.* The Mesopotamian and Egyptian texts appear to be technical guidebooks for professional dream interpreters.[118] One of the main divergences from the *pesharim* in these texts would be the fact that the lemma or the initial protasis is not a fixed revelatory statement by a prophet or an oracle already in existence.

There are ancient texts, however, that do interpret previously existing dreams and oracles. Commentaries on an "Address of Marduk to the Demons," a work composed centuries before the *pesharim* recounting Marduk's[119] apocalyptic speech, employ interpretive methods very similar to those contained in the *pesharim*. In fact, in one commentary, each line of the original text is followed by an interpretation introduced by various introductory terms like "he meant." For example, the lemma cites a verse from the original text: "The same one who is clothed with dreadful fearfulness," is followed by the commentary, "he meant the lord, who from the month of Shebat to the month of Adar…"[120] This resembles very closely the form and structure found in the *pesharim*.

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[116] Fishbane as quoted in Machiela, Daniel, "Qumran Pesharim as Biblical Commentary" *Dead Sea Discoveries* 19:3, 2012 (328)
[117] Ibid., 329
[118] Ibid., 328-9
[119] Marduk is the patron deity of Babylon and an important storm god.
[120] Ibid, 330

Another example can be found in the Sumerian dream report of the shepherd king-deity Dumuzi. Dumuzi recounts his dream to his sister Geshtinanna and she interprets the dream. As Geshtinanna interprets her brother's dream, she breaks down each sentence and interprets the dream line by line. The dream line: "The rushes rising up for you, which kept growing for you" is then interpreted, "[the rushes] are bandits rising against you from their ambush."[121] The lemma-structure is visible in this interpretation as well. It is important to keep in mind, though, that the report of Dimuzi's dream is an oral, not a written text, and therefore does not contain specific formulae to introduce the dream elements or its interpretation.

A more precise comparison may be made with Akkadian omen and dream interpretations that specifically use the verb "to interpret" (i.e., *paš ru*- ורשפ) to introduce explanations for omens. Take an astrological omen about Scorpius. It begins: "In the night of the 10th of Tammuz, the constellation Scorpius approached the moon." This line is immediately followed by "Its interpretation is as follows: if the appearance of the moon…."[122] In this case, the introduction of the interpretation is identical to the introduction of the interpretation found in the *pesharim* discussed above, both etymologically and functionally.

Another example of successive commentaries on a written oracle is the Egyptian Demotic Chronicle that was composed around the second century BCE, almost contemporaneous with the composition of the *pesharim*. The exegetical formula for introducing the interpretation in the case of the Demotic Chronicle can roughly be translated to "that is to say." The lemma, or the original quotation from the omen: "Yesterday-that which has passed by" is followed by the exegetical interpretation "that is to say the first ruler, who came after the foreigners, which are

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[121] As cited in Jassen, Alex P. "The Pesharim and the Rise of Commentary in Early Jewish Scriptural Interpretation" *Dead Sea Discoveries* 19:3, January 2012 (390).
[122] Machiela, Daniel, "Qumran Pesharim…" (332)

the Medes…"[123] As the interpretation of successive verses of the omen continues, it becomes apparent that the commentary is contemporizing the oracle to be identified with characters, events and kings in the time of the interpreter. This feature adds another line of convergence between the *pesharim* and certain forms of ancient Egyptian oracle interpretation.

These ancient Near Eastern texts reveal that forms of interpretation very similar structurally and methodologically to the *pesharim* were already in existence well before the Qumran community composed their *pesharim*. Though not every feature of the two matches up completely in the several examples discussed above[124], the overall structures undoubtedly align. In the last Demotic example the interpretive method was more developed and even incorporated its own variation of fulfillment prophecy by contemporizing the lines of the successive omens to signify events in the present time of the interpreter, as a form of *ex eventu* prophecy. These Near Eastern texts certainly served as an important background for the interpretive methods and developments within the Israelite and later Qumran contexts.

The impacts of the ancient Near Eastern sources may also be seen in the "inner-biblical exegesis" within the Tanakh itself. There are several variations of this inner-biblical exegesis which may be as simple as clarifying simple geography or names as in Genesis 36:1, for example, "These are the descendants of Esau; that is, Edom" or more complex as in the dream interpretations within the Tanakh. Joseph's dream interpretations in Genesis follow very similar patterns as the ancient Near Eastern dream and omen literature. The Pharaoh recounts his dream to Joseph beginning in Genesis 41:15. Joseph follows with an interpretation, "The (double) dream of Pharaoh concerns one thing: God has told Pharaoh what he is…" Each element of

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[123] Ibid., 333

[124] There are many more examples of Ancient Near Eastern dream and omen interpretive texts that share structural and functional elements with Qumran *pesharim* that I have not discussed here.

Pharaoh's dream, "The seven good cows," for example, are interpreted separately, "The seven good cows; they are seven years…"[125]

There are several factors which make identifying the lemma plus structure within the Biblical narrative more difficult. There have been multiple translations of the Biblical texts that have eroded the lemma structure for smoothness of reading. Still, the original Hebrew and Aramaic text illustrates an acute awareness of Ancient Near Eastern dream and omen interpretation as can be evidenced in the cited verses above. Without necessarily arguing for a direct line of influence, it is essential not to forget that the *pesharim* did emerge from the Ancient Near Eastern milieu that produced both the dream and omen literature previously discussed as well as the Tanakh and extra-biblical writings as well.

The dream interpretation structure in the book of Daniel may in fact be the closest in structure and content to the *pesharim*, as parts of the Aramaic text linguistically resemble the *pesher* language, including the use of the word "*pesher*" (ורשפ) itself. Daniel recounts the dream of Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 2 along with an interpretation. Daniel retells an element of the dream, "You saw the feet and the toes, part potter's clay and part iron," and immediately interprets, "it shall be a divided kingdom; it will have only some of the stability of iron…"[126] Several chapters later in Daniel 4, Nebuchadnezzar recounts another dream to Daniel which he then interprets element by element. In these particular dream interpretations early in the book of Daniel there is no specific introductory phrase before the interpretation is presented. In the second half of Daniel, the more eschatological half clearly containing *ex-eventu* prophecy, specific introductory phrases and words are used before the interpretation of dream or vision. Also in the latter half of Daniel, Daniel's dreams and visions are interpreted in an eschatological

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[125] Genesis 41:25-27

[126] I'm using the text of Daniel as it is cited in Jassen, "The Pesharim and the Rise of Commentary in Early Jewish Scriptural Interpretation" (391). The translations may diverge but the overall structure remains the same.

manner as has been agreed upon by most scholars. The author(s) of the book of Daniel, or at least the author of the second half of Daniel, employs *ex-eventu* prophecy by contemporizing the supposedly earlier visions of the prophetic Daniel to signify events that are occurring in the authors' own time, namely the Macabbean Revolt[127]. The writing on the wall omen in chapter 5 has also been analyzed and placed in the lemma plus interpretation genre.

The Book of Giants from the Qumran scrolls may provide an additional example of the type of dream interpretation found in Daniel. The two giants Hahyah and Ohyah have troubling dreams. Hahyah's dream involves the destruction of a garden and Ohyah's dream regarding the "ruler of heaven descending to earth"[128] and the divine judgement. None of the giants are able to interpret the dream but the giant Mahawai succeeds in enlisting Enoch's help in interpreting the dream. Though Enoch's actual interpretation of the dreams is not fully preserved, the narrative itself may provide some helpful insight. Jassen notes that the verb "*pesher*" (רשפ) is repeatedly used to refer to the interpretation of the giants' dreams. Scholars, including Jassen, have noted the parallels between Daniel's vision in chapter 7 and Ohyah's divine throne dream. The main issue in studying the Qumran fragments, especially linguistically, is that oftentimes many of the words from the text are missing, as in *The Book of Giants,* which makes it difficult to draw any firm conclusions about parallels with Daniel 7 and the *pesharim*, though it is not unreasonable to imagine the connection between the apocalyptic dreams of the giants and Daniel's apocalyptic vision. The presence of the same structure of dream interpretation in Daniel and *The Book of Giants* indicates that the Qumran community would have been very familiar with the particular lemma plus exegetical structure that also appears in the *pesharim*.

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[127] For more about the ex-eventu prophecy of Daniel in terms of the Maccabean Revolt, see: Neujahr, Matthew, *Predicting the past in the Ancient Near East Mantic Historiography in Ancient Mesopotamia, Judah, and the Mediterranean World.* Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2012, or Collins, J.J *A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* 1997. There are many other works on Daniel, these are just two that have helpful bibliographies.
[128] Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls* (516)

Other ancient commentaries including Greco-Roman commentary traditions and the allegorical works of Philo have also been suggested for comparison, particularly by Markus Bockmuehl and Reinhard Kratz.[129] The earliest surviving verse-by-verse Greek commentary is that of a poem attributed to Orpheus from the Derveni papyri dated to the late fourth century BCE. There is a clear lemma plus outline in the poem's interpretation. The lemma of "Zeus then, when from his father the prophesized rule and power in his hands had taken, and the glorious daimon"[130] is followed by an interpretation which reworks the original sentence to iron out any confusing references. It is also clear that the interpreter believed the original poem to be an authoritative text and approaches the text much like the *pesharim* approach the prophetic Scripture. Though Lange and Plese have recently published a study comparing this particular poetic commentary to the *pesharim* and have found many parallels in the exegetical method and what they deem, "transpositional hermeneutics," there is no real evidence of any correlation between the Orphic interpreters and the Qumran exegete. Returning to Sandmel's precautionary note on parallelomania discussed at the beginning of the paper, and taking into consideration Michael Satlow's argument for a more organic understanding of Ancient Near Eastern and Israelite culture, it is really very difficult to prove any direct line of "influence" and it may not be the most fruitful approach. Still, it is important to become aware of the cultural and literary background in which the *pesharim* emerged and this necessarily involves discussing the significant parallels between certain Biblical and non (or extra)-Biblical texts.

Various Greek commentaries on Homer and other canonical Greek poets composed by the scholars and librarians of Alexandria have been studied in comparison to the *pesharim* as well, and there are several sources found amongst the Oxyrhynchus and Derveni papyri that

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[129] Bockmuehl, Markus "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of Biblical Commentary," in *Text, Thought and Practice in Qumran and Early Christianity.* Ed. R.A. Clements and D.R. Shwartz, Leiden: Bril, 2009 (3-29), Kratz in German.

[130] Machiela, 345

resemble certain aspects of the *pesher* commentaries. I will briefly discuss one such example. A commentary on Aristophanes' play *Anagyros* appears to follow a lemma plus pattern. The introductory interpretive phrase for this particular commentary is "this means to say." Each line or verse from the play is followed by an explanation. The Lemma: "As it is right to throw down these young [comedy] directors immediately" is followed by the interpretation: "this means to say that the young…"[131]

There are multiple other ancient Greco-Roman texts including Philo's commentaries on the Torah, Greek Homeric commentaries and many other dream manuals that share characteristics with the structure, form and techniques of *pesher* exegesis that have not been discussed here due to space limitations.

The most realistic genealogical source for the method and content of the *pesharim* lies in ancient Near Eastern dream and omen interpretations since dreams and omens, especially ones that were pre-existent were contemporized, re-contextuaized, and interpreted by specially gifted individuals using very specific linguistic formulae to apply to the historical moment of the interpreter. This formulaic structure seems to have influenced the dream interpretations within the Tanakh, most evidently in the stories of each Joseph and Daniel. The characters embodied prophetic access to interpretive knowledge from the divine that they in turn used to interpret the dreams of various rulers piece by piece using very careful linguistic formulae. Finally from the dream traditions in the Tanakh, the interpretive techniques are found in various Qumran scrolls including most notably the *pesharim*. The divinely inspired Teacher of Righteousness possesses the exclusive insight to interpret the words of the earlier prophets as they apply to the eschatological end of days in which the Qumran community believes itself to be.

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[131] Ibid., 348

The meticulous and exclusive eschatology, interpretive techniques, and *ex-eventu* prophecy in the *pesharim* do not only embody a re-interpretation of prophetic Scripture, but also a re-interpretation of prophecy itself as the Teacher of Righteousness inherits the prophetic gift, carrying vibrant prophecy well into the first century BCE. The belief that prophecy somehow ceased to exist after Malachi is inaccurate. Prophecy simply refashioned itself in the Second Temple period to be identified with inspired interpretation, a prophetic task with a profound genealogy in ancient Near Eastern dream and omen interpretations.

Due to space restrictions I have only briefly outlined some of the Ancient Near Eastern texts that served as the essential context for the Qumran *pesharim*. There are many elements of Ancient Near Eastern dream and omen interpretations as they relate to or differ from the *pesharim* that I have left out of this study. An intriguing question remains regarding the orality of some of the Mesopotamian and Assyrian dream and omen interpretations and what impact this orality has on its interpretation. How well did the written remnants retain the oral message being interpreted and what can the orality of various prophecies and oracles tell us about the understanding and perception of prophecy as a phenomenon of divine communication? While the oral versus written aspect of prophecies, dreams and oracles may seem insignificant, understanding the modes of transmission and translation from the original to the final written piece are essential in understanding divination in the Ancient Near East.[132] A more detailed close reading of several Ancient Near Eastern divinatory texts side by side with an analysis of a *pesher* may be a worthwhile exercise to be explored in the next installment.

To conclude, in this paper I have argued first that the seemingly *sui generis* appearance of *pesher* exegetical techniques and linguistic structures in fact belong to a long history of similarly

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[132] For a more detailed discussion on the transmission process from the oral to the written in Mesopotamian divination and prophecy, see: Van Der Toorn, Karel. "From the Oral to the Written: The Case of Old Babylonian Prophecy." *Writings and Speech in Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy*. Ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Michael H. Floyd. N.p.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000. 219-34.

meticulous commentaries on various "authoritative" texts throughout the ancient Near Eastern and, to a lesser extent, Greco-Roman worlds. I have also argued that prophecy sustained itself after Malachi in the form of a divine interpreter, possessing powers reminiscent of Daniel's role in Nebuchadnezzar's court. The new manifestation of prophesy as divine interpretation in an eschatological (and *ex-eventu*) scheme illustrated through the explanations and interpretations of the *pesharim* continued to influence later Jewish and even Christian exegetical methods and techniques well into the Common Era.

CHAPTER 6: INSPIRED INTERPRETATION-DYNAMICS OF LITERARY PROPHECY IN ANCIENT NEAR EAST AND DEAD SEA SCROLLS

In the previous section[133], I analyzed various aspects of the Qumran *pesharim* as they related to other literary and prophetic productions in their Ancient Near Eastern milieu. I discussed possible correlations with previous inner-biblical exegesis, later rabbinic Midrash and New Testament interpretive techniques, and Ancient Near Eastern dream and omen interpretations. Two issues quickly became evident. Firstly, it is almost impossible to prove any direct line of influence between two literary or prophetic texts as there are bound to be similarities due to a shared cultural context. The difficulty in proving any solid "influence" leads to the second issue: constructing a genealogy of the *pesharim* is extremely subjective, though it is clear that the claim of the *sui generis* appearance of the *pesharim* is not accurate. The question of whether or not the Teacher of Righteousness embodied a new variety of prophecy was also discussed but will be revisited in greater detail below.

In this section I will delve more deeply into the revelatory and divine nature of the *pesharim*, their composition and what we can learn, if anything, from Mesopotamian commentary sources. Can the *pesharim* be understood as prophetic texts, and if so, how do the *pesharim* contribute to the changing face of prophecy in the Second Temple Period? If the *pesharim* are prophetic, should the Teacher of Righteousness be considered a prophet? Is this new type of "prophecy" limited to Qumran and why is this significant?

Revisiting Mesopotamian Commentaries:

First, let us return to the question of the Ancient Near Eastern literary and cultural context of the *pesharim.* While the *pesharim* may not have exact genre parallels in the extant and deciphered Ancient Near Eastern sources, there are certainly technical and thematic similarities that are worth discussing.

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[133] See previous paper *Re-Interpreting Prophecy in the Pesharim.*

While some scholars have found little to compare between Ancient Near Eastern sources and the *pesharim* and have argued that there are no real correlations or similarities between the two, the reality is that there is still very limited research on Assyrian and Mesopotamian commentaries and their relations to various divinatory texts.[134] Though tablets containing commentaries have been known since the beginning of Assyriology as a discipline, many of these tablets have not yet been published, due in part to the difficulties in editing and reconstructing these texts. Most of the Mesopotamian commentaries are on omens and medical texts, with fewer commentaries on lexical texts and literary texts.[135]

A process of canonization of Sumero-Akkadian texts, roughly similar to the canonization of the Biblical corpus, also took place in the Neo-Assyrian context between the eighth and first centuries BCE.[136] After this process of canonization had been completed, there was much less freedom to create new texts and adjust the canonized ones so the scholarly and scribal focus shifted to the study and interpretation of the corpus. The Mesopotamian scholarly and scribal tradition had always been closely intertwined with politics and the period of canonization was no exception. In fact, scholars were very much dependent on political powers and politics would often dictate what was being studied. Letters from scholars to kings were ubiquitous and there is much textual and material evidence for this.[137]

Commentaries on this Sumero-Akkadian corpus continued after the fall of Babylon (i.e., the fall of Neo-Assyrian political power) during the Achaemenid period and continued even into the Hellenistic period under the Seleucids. These later commentaries were more sophisticated

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[134] Gabbay, Uri. "Akkadian Commentaries from Ancient Mesopotamia and Their Relation to Early Hebrew Exegesis" *Dead Sea Discoveries* 19:3 (2012) 267-312.

[135] Ibid., 269

[136] I will not go into detail about the Neo-Assyrian canonization process, but for a well round discussion, see: Eckart, Frahm, *Babylonian and Assyrian Text Commentaries: Origins of Interpretation* (Münster: Ugarit, 2011), 317–32 for a more detailed discussion regarding the canonization and canonicity of cuneiform texts.

[137] See: Gabbay, "Akkadian Commentaries" footnote 10 (pg. 270) for a helpful list of sources about letters from scholars to kings in this period (specifically during the reign of Assurbanipal).

and used a fixed terminology to discuss a series of designated hermeneutic issues from the corpus. After the fall of Babylon and the decline of Neo-Assyrian political power, scholars were no longer required to commit to the hermeneutical interests of the king. This scholarly "independence" allowed scholars to create their own community in which they were able to study, harmonize and interpret the canonical corpus of religious texts.

The main origin of the Akkadian exegetical tradition is divination. However, as Eckart Frahm describes, Sumero-Akkadian bilingualism and the attempt to find Akkadian equivalents to Sumerian words and grammatical forms also involved interpretive procedures and contributed to the exegetical tradition beginning in the third millennium BCE.[138] There was a long tradition of creating two-column lists of Sumerian and Akkadian words and there were also many interlinear Akkadian translations of earlier Sumerian literature from the corpus. Because of this tradition and the preoccupation with translations, one of the basic concerns of Mesopotamian commentaries was lexical, as can be evidenced by the philological *ṣâtu* commentaries.[139] These *ṣâtu* commentaries are continuous lexical commentaries interpreting the words from a Sumerian base text that can often have religious and political significance.

The more relevant Akkadian exegetical tradition is the divinatory commentary from the second millennium BCE. The *mulkallimtu* commentaries are usually thematic commentaries (as opposed to continuous) on various divinatory texts and omens. These commentaries claim to reveal the most accurate meaning of the omens and are therefore referred to as *mukallimtu* ("revealer"). Unlike the *ṣâtu* commentaries that were arranged continuously, the *mukallimtu* commentaries collect different texts that are relevant to a certain phenomenon (i.e., astrology, etc.) from a specific chapter or part of a base text.

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[138] Frahm, 13-22

[139] The word *ṣâtu*, as Gabbay explains, is the a plural of *ṣītu* which is derived from the verb *(w)aṣû,* meaning "to go out." It is not entirely clear how this word is connected to the designation of a genre of commentaries. See Gabbay pg. 272 footnote 13 for more references/discussions on the linguistic connection of this word to a type of commentary.

The divine manifestation in the Mesopotamian tradition is present through a divine message. This divine word is regarded as powerful and incomprehensible. It is apparently manifest through various signs in nature (i.e., internal organs of lambs/other sacrificial animals, various human body parts, etc.). The incomprehensibility of divine word in its original state is commented on multiple times in Mesopotamian lamentations. The following excerpt encapsulates the incomprehensibility: "His Word touches earth like day, its meaning (heart) is unfathomable…His Word which makes heavens thunder above, His Words which makes earth shake below!"[140] The only way to truly understand the divine message is through divination and human interpretation.

The 'catalogue of texts and authors' from Nineveh discussed above consists of a composition of Babylonian literature according to authorship. Most of the compositions are attributed to prophetic sages, kings and scholars. There are also divine texts from Ea, the god of wisdom. There are also lists of commentaries usually associated with a particular scholar, sage or diviner (most commonly associated with extispicy). The commentaries on the epic of Gilgamesh, for example, are attributed to the scholar Sîn-l qe-unn ni.[141] The gods Šamaš and Adad were in charge of extispicy and they seem to have revealed the secrets of divination to the legendary king Enmeduranki, who in turn revealed the secrets to the citizens of Nippur, Sippar and Babylon. The scholars then proceeded to transmit this divine knowledge through generations.[142]

There are also other commentaries on different theological or wisdom texts including the Babylonian Theodicy. There is also a commentary on the famous Code of Hammurabi from the first millennium BCE. Though Hammurabi's code appears to be simply a legal text, it is actually a theological text since it begins with a glorification and dedication to Marduk and it was

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[140] Gabbay, 274
[141] W. G. Lambert, "A Catalogue of Texts and Authors," JCS 16 (1962): 66.
[142] Gabbay, 277

probably seen as a proof of the divine political rule of Babylon under Hammurabi and can be seen as a quasi-divine text.

A note on Ancient Mesopotamian divine texts might be useful here. There were many different types of texts that were considered divinely inspired and canonical including legal texts, various religious liturgy or prophecies as well as astrological writings and literature. Though the designation "divine text" is broad and vague, it appropriately captures the difficulties in categorizing much of the canonical Mesopotamian writings that were interpreted. My purpose in discussing these Mesopotamian religious and political texts here is to argue that a lot can be learned about the supposedly new forms of prophecy that emerged in the Second Temple Period by studying the exegetical techniques and approaches in Ancient Mesopotamian and Near Eastern texts. Just as classical biblical prophetic titles and social roles should be situated in their Ancient Near Eastern milieu, so the figure of the inspired exegete should also be situated in the context in which it emerged. Though the comparison between Mesopotamian literature and Second Temple semi-canonical works (including the Qumran scrolls) may not be exact, it is extremely important to understand the genealogy of the tradition of inspired commentaries and exegetes.

Several important aspects of attributing base texts to divine authorship should be noted. Firstly, the commentaries that are based on divine texts emphasize the perceived difference between the "closed" canonical corpus of divine texts and the new written commentaries. In a sense this realization and emphasis also shifts the textual authority from the original divine author to the scholarly interpreter. This process is actually very similar to the *pesharim* at Qumran, since there clearly seems to be an understanding and distinction between canonized scripture and the newer texts and the commentaries on the canon. While Mesopotamian omens and divine messages were often not part of a related and ongoing narrative as are (most of) the

writings from the Tanakh, the notion that the commentaries were interpreting divinely inspired base texts made it seem as though the otherwise unrelated base texts were part of a one harmonic composition. In fact, scholars who commented on and interpreted the divine base texts often searched for ties and correlations between the texts which they could expound in their commentaries.

Despite these similarities, there are also significant differences between the *pesharim* and the Akkadian exegetical tradition. The most important of these differences relates to the status and nature of the interpreters. While the Teacher of Righteousness is thought to be the sole divinely inspired being to interpret and unveil the true eschatological meaning of the divine prophetic words, the Mesopotamian commentators are usually scholars and priests and are *not* considered divinely inspired. The Mesopotamian commentaries were regarded as scholarly interpretations that were separate from the base texts and the authority to interpret and even re-interpret a canonical text was in the hands of the ummân , the scholars.

Scholars and scribes were in charge of managing all forms of Mesopotamian knowledge, including the interpretations of divine messages and knowledge from the time it was revealed to the mythological divine sages (*apkallu*) and then transmitted orally through the generations by scholars, a process known as *š t pî*, or oral lore. This divine knowledge from their ancestors aided scholars in revealing the true meaning of the divine texts that they were interpreting (thus acting as a kind of "inspired exegete"). In fact, these scholars were the only ones who would have permission to access and interpret the divine texts that would have otherwise been incomprehensible without the special knowledge. Many times the scholarly study of divine canonical texts and their interpretations were used to teach younger scholars how to understand divine texts according to the interpretation. Younger scholars would either copy commentaries verbatim to study them or they would copy commentaries while listening to it orally.

As mentioned above, there are three main concerns of the Mesopotamian commentaries: lexical, thematic, and harmonizing. I will briefly discuss each and then transition to how we can use this information to possibly better understand the *pesharim*.

The most basic concern of the *ṣâtu* commentaries is lexical and grammatical since Mesopotamian writing can have meaning both syllabically and logographically.[143] The second type of commentary deals with a phenomenological or thematic concern. Sometimes the same divine text or omen can be interpreted using the linguistic techniques and the descriptive thematic techniques as well. For example, if an omen describes the shape of an organ of a sacrificial lamb as a plum, it can be interpreted in several different ways. A *ṣâtu* commentary would explain the lexical forms and syntactic construction of the sentence. On the other hand a descriptive commentary would consider and explain the thematic significance of the shape of the organ.

Finally, the more elaborate and more prevalent hermeneutic concerns of the interpreters is the harmonization of the corpus. Usually these commentaries seek a correlation and connection between the protasis and apodosis of an omen text. For example, a commentary from the medical diagnostic texts deals with predictions regarding the health of a patient and the healer's observations.[144] There are three successive interpretive entries regarding this text which try to harmonize the protasis and apodosis by connecting the episode to others in the diagnostic texts and attempting to arrive at the cause of the sickness from which the patient is suffering. Several different stories and omen texts are weaved together to create a sophisticated commentary in which the demon Šulak is thought to have initiated the sickness.

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[143] Ibid., 288

[144] A. R. George. "Babylonian Texts from the Folios of Sidney Smith, Part Two: Prognostic and Diagnostic Omens, Tablet I," RA 85 (1991): 144

Along with this type of harmonization of texts, another form which tries to harmonize apparent textual contrasts or contradictions are also important. One omen is interpreted and explained as not to contradict the other omen or divine text. Most of these types of harmonizing commentaries come from extispicies (of various organs, usually livers). Uri Gabbay describes an interesting type of commentary in which a master-scholar asks various questions following the actual text of the extispicy. These questions are then answered through an explanation of the interpretation of the master-scholar. Usually when there are conflicting accounts of omens or the meanings of certain divine signs, the scholars will harmonize the conflicting reports and interpret the texts in a way that does not seem contradictory. Another type of harmonization in Mesopotamian exegetical tradition is the treatment of variants in the base text, in which each of the different variants of the base text is understood to be for specific different situations.

Pesharim in Light of Mesopotamian sources:

This canonization process and the development of a more sophisticated and independent class of scholars in the Mesopotamian context may be compared, at least in part, to the canonization process of the Hebrew Scriptures (i.e., Tanakh) following the destruction of the first Temple and exilic periods through the Second Temple Period. Undoubtedly there was a group of scribal scholars and elite who worked on "canonizing" parts of scripture, though the process was much more complex and spanned a greater amount of time than the Neo-Assyrian canonization. As more of the scripture became authoritative, there was a greater emphasis on various forms of interpretation, some overt and some more implicit. This can easily be evidenced by the vast array of pseudepigraphical books and writings that have not been included in the canon. As I discussed in the previous section, the "interpretation" of supposedly canonized scripture took many different forms including Rewritten Bible (i.e., Book of Jubilees), other pseudepigrapha, later rabbinic and Midrashic texts, and even the fulfillment prophecy approach of the New Testament

can be seen as a form of interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures. Despite the general assumption of an unchanging biblical canon, there is still much scholarly debate on how early the canon was actually fixed.[145] The *pesharim*, therefore, belong to this tradition of organized and technical interpretation of authoritative base texts in the Second Temple Period.

Now I will delve a little deeper into more specific areas of thematic or historical intersection between the Mesopotamian sources and techniques I discussed above and what we can learn from them.

As has been made clear earlier, perhaps the most obvious parallel between the Mesopotamia and early Hebrew sources is the divine origin of their base texts. The majority of the Mesopotamian tradition was attributed to Ea, god of wisdom and the Tanakh was ultimately attributed to the divine revelation of YHWH. The *pesharim* in particular treat the texts that they interpret as divine words delivered through the prophets (or David in the case of Psalms[146]), though some scholars including Timothy Lim would argue that "the pesharite method of interpretation was applied to texts other than prophetic ones."[147]

The issue of the status of the interpreters in both settings is more complicated than the status of the divine base texts which they interpret. In the Mesopotamian tradition as we have seen, the interpretation of the texts was the duty of the *ummân* scholars who, as I described earlier had inherited the knowledge of the divine messages and words from the mythological sages (the *apkallu*). The perception of the scholar interpreters in Mesopotamian tradition is closer to the perception of rabbis as scholars of the textual and oral tradition of the Torah since it was

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[145] The limits of this paper do not allow me to get into too much detail about this process of canonization and the scholarly debates about around it. Lots of work has been published on this topic, and I will only mention a few here. For a recent and useful starting place, see: Satlow, Michael L. *How the Bible Became Holy,* Yale UP, August 2014.

[146] There is much scholarly debate on whether or not David was considered a prophet at Qumran and whether, in turn, the Psalms were considered prophetic. See: T. H. Lim, "'All These He Composed through Prophecy,'" in *Prophecy after the Prophets? The Contribution of the Dead Sea Scrolls to the Understanding of Biblical and Extra Biblical Prophecy* (ed. K. De Troyer and A. Lange; Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 61–73.

[147] Lim, "All These He Composed through Prophecy," 65

revealed to Moses and the rest of the Hebrew Scripture as well. Much like the Mesopotamian tradition, much of rabbinic literature is presented in the format of a dialogue or scholarly teaching.

However, there is also an important difference between the rabbis and the Mesopotamian scholars. While the rabbis did not necessarily believe that the knowledge of the Hebrew Scripture was secret and restricted only for themselves, the Mesopotamian conception was that the knowledge to interpret and understand was secret and strictly limited to the scholars. In this sense, the Mesopotamian tradition is closer to Qumran since the knowledge to interpret the Scriptures correctly was only available to the Teacher of Righteousness. Still the comparison is not exact. While the Mesopotamian *ummân* scholars have inherited their special interpretive skills, there is still an important distinction between the scholarly authority to interpret based on social status and the divine authority of the texts that they study and interpret. The Qumran *pesharim* do not achieve their interpretation through scholarly discourse or philological analysis itself, rather it is achieved through the divine inspiration of the Teacher of Righteousness: "the Priest [in whose heart] God set [understanding] that he might interpret all the words of His servants the Prophets, through whom He foretold all that would happen to His people and [His land]," (1QpHab 2:9-10).[148] The question of the real status of the Teacher of Righteousness will be addressed at greater length in the next section of the paper.

Before delving further into the questions of prophecy at Qumran, let us finish the comparison between Mesopotamian commentaries and the *pesharim* and more specifically philological similarities. The first and most obvious linguistic similarity between the Mesopotamian sources and the *pesharim* is the use of the Akkadian noun *pišru* in scholarly interpretations of natural phenomenon and the Hebrew use of פשר. In Akkadian, the root *pšr* can

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[148] Vermes, Geza. *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English,* New York, NY, USA: Allen Lane/Penguin, 1997: 479

have several meanings when used in relation to divination. These are outlined by Martti Nissinen: (1) the release or annulment of a bad omen, fate, or dream, (2) the release or solution of a prediction from an enigmatic divine message, or (3) the release of a dream from the mind of the dreamer through the dream interpreter.[149]

The second meaning of the root as a noun is relevant to the context of the *pesharim*. In the Mesopotamian tradition, omen entries are composed of a protasis, a conditional sentence describing a possible phenomenon, followed by an apodosis providing the prediction the phenomenon foretells. The apodosis is called the *pišru,* or interpretation. The term *pišru* is also used when the protasis of the omen or divine text is considered cryptic and needs to be explained or clarified. An example of this is provided in an astronomical text describing the conditions in which a lunar eclipse can occur: "When Coma Berenices culminates, and a moon eclipse should begin, (and) Coma Berenices, Virgo and Regulus (are present in the sky) until the sun reaches Virgo—its interpretation: (*pišrirša*): the eclipse will not begin."[150] The use of the word *pišru* in this context explains the correct understanding of the phenomenon of the lunar eclipse that was otherwise undecipherable from the omen. The *pišru,* interpretation of the omen or divine text links the text to a present and earthly reality, as can be exemplified in the excerpt above. The conditions for the alignments of various constellations in the omen were interpreted to mean that there would not be a moon eclipse that could be witnessed and experienced in the interpreter's present reality. The scholars studying the canonical omens, whether astronomical, medical or divine, must arrive at the correct link between the phenomenon being predicted and a present situation being described to interpret or explain the prediction. Many omens are considered to be

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[149] See: M. Nissinen, "Pesharim as Divination: Qumran Exegesis, Omen Interpretation and Literary Prophecy," in *Prophecy after the Prophets?*
[150] Gabbay, 299

cryptic and need interpretation in order to fully understand their consequences in the present time.

Now that the role of the word *pišru* has been briefly explained in the Mesopotamian context, we can return to the *pesharim* from Qumran. The Akkadian noun *pišru* and the Hebrew noun רשפ are not only related etymologically, but they also serve a similar purpose, as both are used to indicate an interpretation of a hidden divine message. In an article on the *pesharim* from 1973, Isaac Rabinowitz even characterized the *pesharim* as interpretations or solutions to ominous messages.[151]

The relationship between the two traditions may not be so transparent though, since *pesharim* are not exactly solutions or interpretations of ominous messages. The biblical occurrence of the root רשפ and its cognate רתפ often appear in relation to dreams and the Akkadian *pašaru* is also used in relation to dreams. This linguistic similarity has led some scholars have tried to draw exact parallels between the Mesopotamian dream and omen tradition and the approach of the *pesharim*, the analogy should not be taken too far. The *pesharim* seem to be engaging in a much more complex process of interpretation and with a different objective than many of the Mesopotamian dream and omen interpretations. Still, an important connection between the two remains; namely that both processes involve exegesis and oftentimes specific elements in the protasis must be associated with material reality in the present. For example, in the Mesopotamian context, Lyra in the protasis of the aforementioned astronomical omen is equated with Venus in the present reality of the interpreter; the mention of the Chaldeans in the *pesher* on Habakkuk is equated with the Kittim (Romans?) in the present reality of the Qumran community.

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[151] I. Rabinowitz, "'Pꞌsher/Pittꞌrꞌn': Its Biblical Meaning and Its Significance in the Qumran Literature," RevQ 8/30 (1973): 219–32

Another important difference to keep in mind is the distinction between oral and literary nature of the things being interpreted and the interpretation itself. Ancient Near Eastern and Mesopotamian divination, including omens, dreams, and other sources, were heavily oral in nature. The implications of these difference has already been discussed in chapter 1 of this thesis.

CHAPTER 7: ON THE STATUS OF THE TEACHER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Let us now return to the question that was posed earlier in the chapter on the apparent pseudo-prophetic nature of the Teacher of Righteousness and whether or not he was considered a prophet at Qumran. Before attending to the complexities of the question at hand, it should be noted that there is still debate about the Teacher of Righteousness and whether or not he was a historical figure, though these scholars are becoming the minority. I agree with Lawrence Schiffman, James VanderKam, George Brooke and others that the Teacher of Righteousness was indeed a historical figure who was active more or less in the middle of the second century BCE.[152] Hartmun Stegemann was amongst the first to put forward the idea that the Qumran community was settled (probably) after the death of the Teacher of Righteousness in the late

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[152] See: Schiffman, Lawrence. *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Philadelphia, Pa: The Jewish Publication Society, 1994), VanderKam, James, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today*, Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1994.

second century BCE or even first century BCE.[153] This means that the Teacher of Righteousness was not actually the founder of the Qumran community per se, though he was undoubtedly at the center of their beliefs.[154]

Perhaps the best way to begin the discussion is by organizing the information that is known about the Teacher of Righteousness and a rough chronology. The Teacher of Righteousness is mentioned explicitly in the *Damascas Document*, and in four *pesharim*: *Habbaukuk Pesher*(1 QpHab), the *Micah Pesher* (1Q14), in one version of the *Isaiah Pesher* (4Q163) and two copies of the *Psalms Pesher* (4Q171; 4Q173 and possibly 4Q172).[155] The *Damascus Document* was probably composed sometime in the second century and the *pesharim* were most probably composed later in the first century.

Let us begin with the *Damascus Document.* There appear to be several stages in the construction of the *Damascus Document*. The first stage, according to Philip Davies, is relatively early and fits the description of a "missionary document."[156] This stage involves the author writing of the emergence of the movement and its hope for one who would teach righteousness in the end days and insinuates that the Teacher of Righteousness had not yet actually arisen in this stage (i.e., that the community was anticipating a figure in the future). Some scholars, as John J. Collins and others, had proposed that the community looked for the resurrection and return of the Teacher after his death, but this view has since not remained very popular.[157]

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[153] See Brooke, George, "Was the Teacher of Righteousness Considered to be a Prophet?" in *Prophecy after the Prophets,* footnote 9 pg. 80.

[154] There are of course scholars who disagree with this notion. See, for example, Wise, Michael, "Dating the Teacher of Righteousness and the Floruit of his Movement" *JBL,* 122 (2003) 53-87.

[155] Brooke, 81

[156] Davies, Philip R. *The Damascus Covenant: An Interpretation of the 'Damascus Document'* Sheffield, UK: JSOT, Dept. of Biblical Studies, U Sheffield, 1983: 119-25

[157] See John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and other Ancient Literatre*, Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York, NY: Doubleday, 1995: 113-14. This is an earlier work of Collins and he has refined his view in more recent scholarship which will be cited below. Many scholars tried to prove the similarities between the Teacher of Righteousness and the figure of Jesus as Messiah, but the comparison does not hold for reasons that will be discussed.

It may be worthwhile to ask what the status was of this anticipated Teacher in this early stage. As an eschatological figure, it is not unreasonable to assume that he may qualify for some sort of a messianic status. Philip Davies contends that the Teacher was indeed seen as a messianic figure, "it emerges that this era will come to an end with the arrival of the Messiah and this raises the suspicion that the phrase 'teacher of righteousness'…designates no other than a (priestly?) 'Messiah'."[158] Though the idea of the Teacher of Righteousness as the Messiah is appealing, it may not be the best association. The view that the Teacher of Righteousness was to be a kind of anointed prophet has in fact been more of a popular view.

The next logical question to ask would be whether or not the community accepted the role of Teacher of Righteousness (once he had arrived), either in non-eschatological terms or as an anointed messiah or eschatological prophet. The surviving sources are disappointingly silent in terms of any clear answer. In fact, it is not clear that the Teacher of Righteousness referred to himself as such and that he wanted others to know him by this title. According to James Charlesworth, the Teacher of Righteousness is really neither a messiah nor a prophet, but a Priest and even of a High Priestly family, but this will be discussed in greater detail later.[159]

There is a possibility that the *Hodayot* (Thanksgiving Hymns) are autobiographical to some degree and that we may be able to learn something of what the Teacher thought of himself. Yet there is really not enough overt evidence to prove that the Teacher of Righteousness claimed to be a prophet. It can be argued that the allusions to earlier writings of prophets, as in the prophetic servant from Isaiah and the very act of composing hymn poetry like the *Hodayot* indicate the prophetic inclinations of the Teacher of Righteousness. Undoubtedly the Teacher was a charismatic figure and wanted to be seen that way, but charismatic figure does not equal a prophet.

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[158] Davies, *The Damascus Covenant*, 125.
[159] Charlesworth, James. *The Pesharim and Qumran History: Chaos or Consensus?* 31

The second stage of the composition of the *Damascus Document* appears to be a first edition of the document, which was most probably composed in the forty year period after the death of the Teacher, as would be logical after the apparent mention of his demise in CD XX, 14.[160] This stage also seems to predate the actual settlement at Qumran. The role of the anticipated figure has now been fulfilled in the person of the Teacher of Righteousness, "and God observed their deeds, that they sought Him with a whole heart, and He *raised* for them a Teacher of Righteousness to guide them in the way of His hear."[161]

Was the Teacher of Righteousness seen as an eschatological prophet by the community at this point in the composition of the *Damascus Document*? It is again a complicated question with a complicated answer, but generally speaking, the community probably did *not* understand the Teacher to be an eschatological prophet. There is no explicit mention of any prophet in the document, yet it would seem only natural for the community to commemorate a prophetic figure after his death. In fact, CD XIX, 35-XX, 1 speaks of the Teacher separately from the Messiah who "shall arise from Aaron and from Israel."[162]

Whatever the case may be for the absence of the prophetic label, איבנ, from the title and literary designations, and the seemingly cautious avoidance of prophetic labels, we may also need to loosen the rigid standards of biblical prophecy by which we evaluate the status awarded to the Teacher of Righteousness. As Alex Jassen reminds us, "the exclusive reliance on biblical prophetic terminology ultimately misses a much wider and variegated world of prophecy in the Dead Sea Scrolls."[163]

The third stage of the composition and editing of the *Damascus Document* appears to be when the community is solidifying its identiy and separating itself as a sect. The earliest

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[160] See Brooke, 85

[161] Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls,* CD I, 11, pg. 127

[162] *The Zadokite Documents*, 36 as cited in Brooke, 86.

[163] Jassen, Alex P. "Prophets and Prophecy in the Qumran Community." *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 32:2 (2008): 309

manuscript copy of the document comes from the first half, maybe even first quarter of the first century BCE.[164] The Teacher was to continue to play an important role in the life of the community, even after his death, but more the role of a Teacher perhaps than that of a prophet.

A note here on the conceptions of prophecy in the Qumran community will be inserted before moving on to discussing the *pesharim* as they depict the Teacher of Righteousness. If the Qumran sectarian writings are read carefully, it becomes evident that the sectarians in fact recontextualized the classical biblical prophets in the mold of their own conceptions of prophets as mainly lawgivers and prophecy more generally. In fact, the theme of recontextualizing and re-signifying classical biblical prophecy was a prevalent phenomenon is Second Temple society and there were myriad ways through which to understand prophecy. In the case of Qumran biblical conceptions of prophecy and prophetic figures are adapted to their new social reality. The next section of this paper will discuss the notion of prophecy at Qumran at much greater length. For now, it is important to see that the absence of the word איבנ does not indicate the absence of prophecy from Qumran in any sense, and I am not just referring to the debate on the status of the Teacher of Righteousness.

Along with the *Damascus Document,* the Teacher of Righteousness is also mentioned in the *pesharim* as well as the *Hodayat* hymns several times. The *pesharim* in fact seem to be dependent on the insights and approach of the *Damascus document.* Again in the *pesharim* the title of Teacher of Righteousness is never explicitly identified as that of a prophet. It is rather curious that prophetic titles are actually used to describe the community's opponents. Though there can be many explanations for this, it is clear that the distinction in the labels and the application of prophetic titles to outsiders and opponents of the community is a deliberate

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[164] Brooke, "The Pesharim and the Origins of the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Methods of Investigation of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Khirbet Qumran Site: Present Realities and Future Prospects*, ed. Michael O. Wise, Norman Goib, JJ Collins, and Dennis Pardee; Annals of the New York Academy of sciences 722; NYC, NY, 1994; 339-48

technique in the sectarian writings as a way to distinguish and differentiate themselves. Each reference to an outside prophetic figure has weighty implications regarding sectarian relations with "others" and probably also indicates competing conceptions of prophecy and claims to true access to the divine.

For example, in column 12 of the *Hodayot*, places the Teacher of Righteousness opposite false prophets; "I seek Thee, and sure as dawn Thou appearest as [perfect Light] to me. Teachers of lies [have smoothed] Thy people [with words], and [false prophets] have led them astray;"[165]

This excerpt outlines a bitter dispute between the leader of the community-Teacher of Righteousness-and his opponents who claim to be [false] prophets while employing very polemic language. Other places in the *Hodayot*, the enemies of the Teacher are described as "visionaries of deceit and error" (יזוח ה and יזוח תועת) and "lying prophets" (יאיבנ בזכ).[166] It would be logical to predict that since the opponents of the sect and Teacher are labeled false and deceiving prophets that the Teacher himself would be identified as a "true" and "honest" prophet, but this is not the case. The specified use of prophetic language in the hymn is most probably meant to generate an antagonistic and polarized relationship between the community, its leaders, and its enemies.

The Teacher of Righteousness (and the sect more broadly) are the only legitimate mediators of the divine and there is no need to use a prophetic label, in contrast to the so-called prophets and deceiving leaders whom the sect opposes. The mention of the "perfect light" in the opening of the hymn can be read as an affirmation of the hymnist's (Teacher of Righteousness?) receiving of true revelation and apparent unmediated access to the divine "Light." While many scholars would argue that these subtleties are not enough to conclude that the Teacher of Righteousness was considered (or considered himself) to be a prophet, I am more inclined towards Jassen's reading of the presence of a nuanced and polemically aware prophetic

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[165] Vermes, *Complete DDS*, 263 (1QH 12:5-10)
[166] Jassen, 312

consciousness, though I am not sure if there is enough clear evidence that the Teacher thought of himself as a prophetic figure.

Let us return now to the *pesharim* and their mentions of the Teacher. The exegete of *Pesher Habakkuk* comes very close to calling the Teacher a prophet, but refrains from taking the final step. Again the conflict between the Teacher, who has apparently received knowledge from the mouth of God, is portrayed and the Teacher is contrasted from the Wicked Priest and the Man of Lies. Brooke argues that this phraseology echoes that associated with Jeremiah (2 Chr 36:12) and "seems indirectly to mark the Teacher out as functioning *like* a prophet."[167] The Man of the Lie appears to have rejected the Law that the prophets brought. 1QpHab VII, 1-4 also indicates some prophetic relationship between the Teacher and God: "and God told Habakkuk to write down that which would happen…but He did not make known to him when time would come to an end…*interpreted* this concerns the Teacher of Righteousness, to whom God made known all the mysteries of the words of His servants the Prophets."[168]

The Teacher is also the inspired interpreter, like Daniel, whose interpretations were as much a matter of divine revelation as the prophetic texts he was interpreting. The office of inspired interpreter would appear to merit the label of a prophet. There is also another important aspect of the Teacher's prophetic role which Hakan Ulfgard expounds. The Teacher's importance as the "prophetic herald of the secrets of the end of days" also indicates his other role, namely that through their fidelity towards the Teacher and his ways of interpreting the Torah and prophetic scriptures of the Tanakh, the members of the sectarian community will be saved.[169] This also poses an interesting distinction between the Teacher and other Tanakh

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[167] Brooke, "Was the Teacher of Righteousness Considered…" 92, my emphasis.
[168] Vermes, 481
[169] Brooke, 93, see footnote 52.

prophets, certainly the classical biblical prophets whose words and prophecies often regarded the present and near future, not the "end of days" as the Teacher of Righteousness claims.

Another passage from *Pesher Habakkuk* speaks of the Teacher of Righteousness as an object of faith for those who practice the Law, and the role of the Wicked Priest in offending the Teacher and his community. 1QpHab XI, 5 also describes the pursuit of the Teacher of Righteousness by the Wicked Priest on the Teacher's Day of Atonement: "*interpreted* this concerns the Wicked Priest who pursued the Teacher of Righteousness to the house of his exile that he might confuse him with his venomous fury…And at the time appointed for rest, for the Day of Atonement, he appeared before them to confuse them, to cause them to stumble on the Day of Fasting."[170] The polemical conflict between the Teacher and the Wicked Priest are again brought to the foreground.

There are also three references to the Teacher in the *Pesher Psalms* (4Q171). The first reference is an interpretation of the *geber*, the figure of Ps. 37:23-24. While the commentary identifies the *geber* with the Teacher (as a priest), it is possible that the reference may also indicate an eschatological figure, probably that of a prophet of some sort. The other two mentions within the *pesharim* are too fragmentary to arrive at any solid conclusion.

It is also important to discuss the role (if any) or a sort of legal code of the Teacher of Righteousness by which the community members lived. This brings into question the interpretation of the technical terms *nigleh* and *nistar*. Lawrence Schiffman describes DSD 5:7-12 as mentioning these two terms.[171] The *niglot* are presented as the opposite of *nistarot. Nigleh* (pl. *niglot*) is often understood to signify the revealed laws or knowledge of the Torah and *nistar* (pl. *nistarot*) the hidden laws or knowledge of the Torah. An interesting paradox is at play in the way the Qumran sect sees itself in relation to the hidden and revealed divine knowledge. Since

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[170] Vermes, 484

[171] Schiffman, Lawrence H. *The Halakhah at Qumran*. Leiden: Brill, 1975 (23)

the sect sees itself as being the true Israel, the knowledge that is otherwise hidden, *nistarot*, is actually *nigleh*, revealed to the sect. Moses is the only one who knows all the secrets of the Torah, and the Qumran sect sees itself and the Teacher of Righteousness the direct successors of Moses and the classical prophets.

To begin the Qumran community, it was necessary, as it is recorded in DSD 8:1-16, for the first 15 members (12 men and 3 priests) to have perfect knowledge of the *nigleh*, revealed law of the Torah. The Teacher of Righteousness was designated as the community's inspired exegete who would expound and interpret the prophetic words beyond the Torah and would make the *nistar*, hidden knowledge and law, known to the rest of the community members. Because they belonged to the chosen community and were the true successors of Israel, the Teacher of Righteousness was able to divinely and accurately interpret and decode the words of the pre-exilic prophets for the rest of his community as can be evidenced in the previously discussed *pesharim* and other sectarian texts.

The question naturally arises; does all of this make the Teacher a prophet? It is impossible to know for sure. It is certain, however, that the Teacher of Righteousness was definitely a diviner and was probably considered to be a prophet or a prophetic figure at least by the community in whose memory and writings he survives.

CASE STUDY 2: Josephus

CHAPTER 8: PROPHECY IN JOSEPHUS

In the previous chapter, we saw how the *pesharim* exemplify a type of literary and interpretive prophecy as they project the experiences of their community onto the biblical text and we also dealt with the complexities of trying to categorize the Teacher of Righteousness as a prophetic figure, whether similar to or distinct from earlier prophets.

In this chapter, I will discuss the concept of prophecy in the writings of Josephus, the great prolific Jewish historian apologist of the first century CE. Despite the fact that there are many interesting aspects of prophecy in Josephus, not many full-length studies exist on this topic. Though Louis Feldman lists several scholars who have written about Josephus and prophecy including Erich Fascher, Joseph Blenkinsopp, Rudolf Meyer, and Gerhard Delling, Horsley and Hanson, most of these studies either focus on the relationship of prophecy to the priesthood or only focus on the classical Biblical prophets.[172] Rebecca Gray's study on prophetic figures in the late Second Temple is perhaps the only book-length study of the various aspects of prophecy in Josephus[173].

This section will address the following questions: (a) what is prophecy according to Josephus and what is its purpose? (b) How did Josephus understand the Biblical prophets and how does he view their continuation or culmination? (c) What other contemporary Second

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[172] Feldman, Louis. "Prophets and Prophecy in Josephus" *Journal of Theological Studies,* NS, Vol. 41, Pt. 2, October 1990.

[173] Gray, Rebecca. *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine: The Evidence from Josephus*. New York: Oxford UP, 1993.

Temple prophetic figures does Josephus mention in his writings and what is their relationship to the Biblical prophets? And finally, (d) did Josephus see himself as a prophetic figure and why is this important? Due to the practical constraints of this paper, I will not be able to discuss each of these questions in great detail, but it is nonetheless important that I discuss prophecy in the writings of Josephus since his works serve as the primary testimony of attitudes of prophets and prophecy within some Judean circles of the late Second Temple period. It would be wrong to assume Josephus as a spokesperson for all Jews, but his writings nonetheless serve as an important primary source. I will use all three major works of Josephus, namely *Jewish Antiquities, The Jewish War,* and *Against Apion,* throughout the paper.

The best place to begin this study on prophecy and Josephus would be to understand what exactly Josephus meant by "prophecy." The answer to this question is unfortunately rather unclear. Though Josephus speaks of prophecy and prophets multiple times throughout his works, especially *Antiquities* and even in *Against Apion,* he never explicitly defines these terms. Josephus does not seem distinguish between "prophets" and other "diviners" like ecstatic wise men, apocalyptists, or prognosticators. Many of these categories are modern scholarly impositions attempting to organize and categorize various figures in the Second Temple period. It is essential to realize the ambiguities of prophetic identities and to broaden the classical conception of prophecy to include such diverse figures and practices as we see in this period.

Not only does Josephus fail overtly define prophecy, he is also often inconsistent in his discussions and views on prophecy as we will see later in the paper. Still, certain aspects of his understanding of prophecy can be deduced from his writing. In a very broad sense, it can be assumed that Josephus shared the general view that prophets received direct revelation from God

and they relayed this revelation to their people. All prophets must have had some direct encounter with God.

Beyond this basic point, Josephus' writings imply that he believed that prophets had three major functions, corresponding temporally. According to Feldman, the three functions are as follows: a prophet was a contemporary mediator between God and the people and conveyed the divine message of God to the people; a prophet also interpreted the past and created the Scripture that recorded the past (i.e., Torah), *and* a prophet predicted the future.[174]

It is noteworthy that Josephus uses the prophetic label (   ) mostly in accordance with the use of the Hebrew איבנ in the biblical text. For Josephus, the most important of these prophets is Moses, who he calls "the prophet" (*Ant.* 2.15.4, 4.8.49). Prophets like Nathan, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and others are also referred to as "prophets" (as they are in the biblical text). Some references, which are not entirely clear in the biblical text, are also interpreted by Josephus to indicate prophets. For example, Josephus understands the "man of God" reference in 1 Kings 13 as referring to a prophet. Josephus even labels Daniel as a "prophet" (*Ant.* 10.11.4, 10.11.4, 11.7.6),[175] and he repeatedly speaks of him.

In addition to these, Josephus also calls Phinehas, Joshua, Samson, Samuel, and a number of others "prophets" despite the biblical text giving them no such label.[176] There are a total of 169 instances in which Josephus deliberately introduces the words "prophet" or "prophesy" where it is not in the original text.[177]

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[174] Feldman, "Prophets and Prophecy" (394)

[175] Note that I am using an online source for *Antiquities,* but exact page numbers may be found in Grabbe, Lester "Thus Spoke the Prophet Josephus…" in *Prophets, Prophecy and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism* (241)

[176] Feldman actually provides a full list of figures Josephus labels as "prophets" but who are not labeled as such in the Tanakh. See Feldman, "Prophets and Prophecy" (389-90).

[177] Begg, Christopher T. "The Classical Prophets in Josephus' *Antiquities*" *Louvain Studies*, 1988, 343.

I will give a few examples here. When there is a famine in 2 Sam 21:1, King David seeks "the face of God" directly (דודו שקיב תא וינפ הוהי) and God answers him directly without the presence of a prophet. Josephus, however, inserts a prophet in his retelling of the story; "David besought God to have mercy on the people…and when the *prophets* answered, that God would have the Gibeonites avenged…" (*Ant.* 7.12.1).

Similarly when God is angry with David in 2 Sam 24:10, David beseeches God directly without the intervention of a prophet (…וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל-יְהוָה חָטָאתִי); yet Josephus inserts a prophet, "Now when *the prophets* had signified to David that God was angry at him, he began to entreat him…" (*Ant.* 7.122). Josephus continues this pattern of inserting prophets where there are none mentioned in the biblical narrative throughout *Antiquities*. There may be several reasons for this, but one obvious reason may be Josephus' desire to present prophets as the sole intermediaries between God and the eventual recipient. To stay constant with this assertion and belief, prophets must be inserted whenever God speaks to the people or a King.

The question of how exactly Josephus understood the concept of prophecy remains an open one and will be incorporated throughout the remainder of the discussion.

It may be useful now to ask how Josephus saw the classical biblical prophets and their relation to the Second Temple period. What was the role of the classical prophets and what significance did they have for the period in which he lived? From the outset, it is reasonable to accept that Josephus was well acquainted with the biblical text both in Hebrew as well as the Greek Septuagint and therefore would have had a well-grounded understanding of the prophets. This appears to be the case since Josephus repeatedly paraphrases prophets like Jeremiah and

makes reference to the teachings of various prophets including Haggai and Zechariah (*Ant.* 10.84 or 11.96).[178]

One important aspect of the classical biblical prophets for Josephus is their role as historians. In *Against Apion*, Josephus gives a brief description of the books of the Jews: "Of these, five are the books of Moses, comprising the laws and the traditional *history* from the birth of humanity down to his [Moses'] dea*th*…From the death of Moses until Artaxerxes, who succeeded Xerxes as king of Persia, the *prophets subsequent to Moses wrote the history* of the events of their own times in thirteen books," (*Against Apion* 1.39-40[179]).

This description is followed by a further comment in the next section, where Josephus compares the history of the classical prophets until the time of Artaxerxes to his own time: "From Artaxerxes to our own time the complete history has been written, but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with earlier records, because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets" (*Against Apion,* 1.41). This passage is usually cited as evidence that Josephus believed that prophecy, or at least "true prophecy," according to Horsley and Hanson, had ceased in Israel sometime in the Persian period.[180] It is convincing that Josephus probably thought that classical prophets had ceased because the divinely inspired history ended in the Persian period and these prophets were responsible for recording the divinely inspired history (*Against Apion,* 1.37). The process of the canonization of scripture of course plays a crucial role in determining how far the "divinely inspired history" is allowed to continue.[181]

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[178] Despite his familiarity with the classical prophets, Feldman notes that Josephus rarely makes mention of the minor prophets in any of his work. See Feldman, "Prophets and Prophecy," (393, footnote 40).

[179] The chapter references here are for the Greek original text, the English equivalent is: *Against Apion* 1.8. I am not including page numbers since various editions may have differing pages.

[180] Horsley, Richard A., and John S. Hanson. *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus.* San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988 (146).

[181] I will not delve into the topic of canonization at this time as it would grow into a cumbersome digression, but its importance should be noted.

However, the statement that history is no longer at the same level as the history written by the classical prophets does not necessarily suggest that there were no longer "prophets" or "prophetic figures" during the Second Temple period. As Rebecca Gray aptly notes, Josephus wrote *Against Apion* in response to critics doubting his account of the origin of the Jews and about the claims of the extreme antiquity of the Jews and the fact that Jews are not mentioned in the best-known Greek historians of antiquity. In response to this, Josephus argues that the Greeks are not reliable historians of the earliest history and therefore fail to mention the Jews. While the Greeks have contradictory and inconsistent sources and the oldest sources (i.e., Homer) were originally transmitted orally only to be written down much later, Jewish history is firmly based in a tradition of divinely inspired prophets to whom God provided exact knowledge of the most ancient periods of history (*Against Apion*, 1.28-41).

At one point Josephus explains that the priests are in charge maintaining and preserving the written records of the prophets while later in the next few chapters he emphasizes the unique role of the *prophets* in actually composing the records. The role of priests in relation to composing and or preserving the sacred histories and Scripture is difficult to establish based on the words of Josephus alone since there are many inconsistencies in his own descriptions.[182]

There is undoubtedly evidence, however, that Josephus believed that high priests also practiced some form of divination involving their vestments. Antiquities 2.102-187 recounts the construction of the tabernacle and its provisioning. While describing the tabernacle, Josephus describes the significance of each of the vestments of the high priest, including the blue tunic, the ephod, the breastplate and the headdress. Priests were often practiced various types of divination

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[182] To read further about this issue see: Mason, SN, "Priesthood in Josephus and the 'Pharisaic' Revolution" *JBL,* Vol. 107, No. 4, Dec. 1988, or Blenkinsopp, Joseph, "Prophecy and Priesthood in Josephus," *JJS* 25, 1974.

especially by means of Urim and Thummim, each of which were associated with a particular vestment.

Without going into too much detail, I will just mention here that Josephus believed this sort of priestly divination came to an end after John Hyrcanus. Josephus explains that the stones on the breastplate and the sardonyx on the ephod had both "ceased to shine two hundred years before I composed this work" (*Ant*. 3.218). It is difficult to determine whether Josephus carefully calculated the years so that it would correspond to the reign of John Hyrcanus or whether he was using two hundred as an approximation.

Most scholars have assumed the statement is referring to John Hyrcanus, since Josephus later writes of Hyrcanus that "so close was he in touch with the Deity, that he was never ignorant of the future" (*War* 1.69). The end of priestly prophecy is not elsewhere related to John Hyrcanus and Josephus probably chose John Hyrcanus because he was known to be a successful military leader and priestly divination is associated with the oracular consultation with Yahweh through the high priest to determine whether a battle should be fought during a war.[183]

We return now to the question of what Josephus meant by the "exact succession of prophets" and why this apparent succession had come to an end in the Persian period. Apart from this one mention, there are no other references to an exact succession of prophets in Josephus. It is clear that Josephus knew generally the chronology of prophets that Joshua came after Moses and that Elisha had succeeded Elijah, but there is no evidence that he had an elaborate theory on the succession of prophets. Gray suggests that this conception of prophetic succession was derived from the fact that Josephus believed that only prophets who were inspired by God could write perfect and accurate history and since there existed an exact history from the beginning of

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[183] For more detail on priestly prophecy see Gray, *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple*, 20, especially notes 47 and 48.

humanity (recorded by Moses) through Artaxerxes I (in the Book of Eshter), there must have been a prophet in each successive generation to record the inspired history. This logic is convincing yet hypothetical. It is more likely that the belief in the failure of the exact succession of prophets was due to the lack of written history or other evidence available to Josephus at the time of his writing.

Though Josephus *did* write that the exact succession of prophets had ceased, it does not mean that he thought that no more prophets at all were capable of writing history or that prophecy in general had ceased. Since he states that his history begins where the prophetic history left off (*War* 1.18), how does Josephus see himself in relation to the classical prophets and in relation to prophecy in general? Whether or not Josephus saw himself as a prophet in the sense of writing an inspired and accurate history is hard to tell. Josephus never explicitly calls himself a prophet and never defends the accuracy of his history of the Jewish Revolt through prophecy. Rather than prophetic knowledge, Josephus defends the accuracy of his account on the basis that he was eyewitness to most of the events (*Against Apion* 1.47-55). While there were other ways in which Josephus may have claimed prophetic capabilities and which will be discussed later, it can be concluded that he did not see himself as a prophet-historian in the sense of a successor in the exact line of succession of prophets.

Though Josephus mainly uses the term "prophet" (   ) to refer to figures from the past, he mentions a number of contemporary figures whom he depicts as prophets without calling them such. Rather than distancing these contemporary figures from the prophets of old, he draws on their similarities through prophetic inspiration and predictive prophecy (which he himself claims to possess!).

Dreams are paramount to understanding Josephus' conception of prophetic inspiration. In his own autobiography, Josephus describes how he had once received a wonderful dream that encouraged him early in the revolt to release his fears and holdfast to what he believed (*Life,* 208-10). The famous prediction that Vespasian would be emperor also apparently appeared to him in several dreams that were interpreted according to the prophecies of the scriptures (*War*, 3.351-4). Josephus also believed that other groups and people in the Second Temple period could receive divine messages through dreams and then interpret their dreams. These groups, including the Essenes, will be discussed below. The idea that the ability to interpret dreams and to foretell the future will very much have an impact on later New Testament like John of Patmos and others who claim to be "prophets" and possess skills to interpret the future.[184]

Interestingly enough, it appears that Josephus believed that received most of their revelations in dreams. In fact, he often adds a reference to a dream where there is none in the actual text. John Barton's *Oracles of God: Perceptions of Ancient Prophets in Israel after the Exile* is an important work on perceptions of prophecy in the Second Temple Period more broadly and has been immensely helpful in shedding light on Josephus as belonging to a prophetic world as well.

It is interesting that in his close paraphrase of the biblical text, Josephus omits the passage form Num. 12:6-8 in which God tells Aaron and Miriam that he will speak to other prophets in dreams but he will speak to Moses mouth to mouth (*Ant*. 3.2). Compare this with the paraphrase of 2 Sam. 12:1 in which God appears to Nathan and communicates his displeasure with King David for the affair with Bathsheba. Not only does Josephus add the label "prophet" to Nathan, but he also adds that God appeared to Nathan in a dream (*Ant*. 7.147). Josephus also

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[184] This is a really interesting topic that will be discussed at greater length in the subsequent chapter. See Feldman, "Prophets and Prophecy" for more details, esp. pg. 404-7.

adds a dream to the story from 1 Kings 9:2 when God reassures Solomon that he would abide in the new Temple provided that the Jews remained righteous (*Ant*. 8.125).

As already mentioned, Josephus also calls Daniel a prophet several times.[185] Josephus appears to have a special admiration for Daniel, perhaps because he was devoted to interpreting dreams and communicated with God this way. Josephus was probably aware of the Greco-Roman belief that divine revelation usually came through dreams and may have read this view back into the biblical "prophets." Rebecca Gray argues that Josephus may have instead been reading his *own* experience with dreams back into the revelations of the prophets, but Josephus was more than aware of his cultural surroundings so the truth probably lies somewhere between these two points.[186]

Developing the thesis of Barton, it may be observed that the concept of prophetic revelation and inspiration through dreams places Josephus more in accord with pagan Greco-Roman understandings of revelation as opposed to the "stricter" Jewish tradition. For example, in Ben Sira 34:1-5 dreams are considered foolish; "A man of no understanding has vain and false hopes and dreams give wings to fools." The passage continues to portray dreams as a false, "Divinations and omens and dreams are folly." Rabbinic and Talmudic sources also share a general skepticism of dreams while other rabbinic sources placed credence in dreams. Though a lot has been written on this subject of dreams and prophecy, I will not discuss it here.[187]

Prophetic inspiration also causes individuals to act irrationally and ecstatically as a method of communication and oftentimes enables them to perform superhuman tasks. Josephus narrates a story in *Antiquities* 6.56 where Saul encounters an assembly of prophets at Gibeath-

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[185] See Feldman, 408 for exact references in the texts of Josephus.
[186] Cf. Gray, 28
[187] Cf. Ackerman, Susan, "Transformation of Prophecy"

elohim. Samuel predicts that Saul will meet an assembly and he will prophesy with them (presumably a sort of mantic prophesy). A similar encounter is mentioned in *Antiquities* 6.221-3 when Saul loses his reason "under the impulse of the mighty spirit" and strips his clothes and prostrates on the ground for a whole day. In terms of superhuman strength, Josephus describes a "divine inspiration" that helped Saul to dismember a team of oxen to rally against the Ammonites (*Ant*. 6.76) and a similar divine inspiration that enables Elijah to outrun Ahab's chariot from Mt. Carmel to Jezreel (*Ant*. 8.346).

This same "divine inspiration" was present when the kings of Israel, Judah and Edom came to consult Elisha. Elisha requests a musician and upon hearing the music, he becomes 'divinely inspired' and is able to give the kings the advice they came to seek (*Ant*. 9.35).

Josephus even refers to himself as being divinely inspired to understand his dreams and predict that Vespasian would become emperor (*War* 3.353). Josephus must have understood himself to be divinely inspired in the same way he described the earlier prophetic figures as divinely inspired. It is again difficult to interpret whether Josephus was drawing a parallel between himself (and other contemporary figures that experienced divine inspiration) and earlier biblical prophets or whether he is distinguishing between two types of prophecy.

Another key feature of prophecy is the predictive element that presumably must come true. Josephus emphasizes the fulfillment and truth of prophecies in his retelling of prophetic stories, even when the biblical narrative does not necessarily emphasize this point. For example, Josephus stresses and emphasizes the truth of Elijah's prophecy of the death of the Samarian king from 1 Kings 22:38 (*Ant.* 8.417). Josephus repeatedly draws attention to the *truth* of the biblical prophets and prophetic accuracy and labels those who oppose the prophets, like

Zedekiah, who refused to believe the predictions of Ezekiel and Jeremiah or Micaiah, who's

prediction of Ahab's death opposed Elijah, as "false prophets".

Not only did Josephus find false prophets in the stories of the opponents of the biblical

prophets, he also believed in a type of fulfillment prophecy. He believed that the ancient biblical

prophets had already predicted many of the events in his own day. According to Josephus, many

prophets including Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel had already forseen the destruction of the Temple

in 70 CE long before it actually happened (Ant. 10.79 and 10.276).

Daniel was specifically noted for having many long-range predictive prophecies of events

that remained long into the future, even for Josephus. He interprets Daniel 2:34-5 as an

indication that the Roman Empire would one day be overthrown by the Jews. Josephus esteems

Daniel's prophecy so much that he calls him one of the greatest prophets who was honored by

kings. According to Josephus, Daniel's writings are a convincing testament that he "spoke with

God, for he was not only wont to prophesy future things, as did the other prophets, but he also

fixed the time at which these would come to pass," (*Ant.* 10.266-7).[188]

In a more contemporary context, Josephus does not hesitate to accuse various groups of

false prophecy leading up to and during the Revolt against Rome, and these are specifically

called the 'sign prophets.' Theudas, for example, asserted that he was a prophet around the year

45 to 46 CE and led a large number of followers to the Jordan River, which he claimed would

part at his command (*Ant*. 20.97). Theudus' decision to go to the Jordan River probably reflects

his desire to recall Moses at the Red Sea and Joshua at the Jordan as a sign of the deliverance of

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[188] As an aside, I think it's very interesting that Josephus sees Daniel as an ancient prophet like the earlier classical prophets, when most modern scholars would date the book of Daniel somewhere in the second century BCE (especially the second half, chapters 7-12, which are presumed to be written after the Maccabean revolution). This also shows the discrepancy between Josephus' understanding of prophets and the modern conception and critical approach.

the people. Howevr, Fadus, the Roman prefect at the time, captured many of Theudus' followers and even Theudus himself was captured and immediately beheaded. Josephus considers Theudus a false prophet and calls him an "imposter" since he deceives a large group of people to believing in a miracle that never occurred. Interestingly Theudas also appears in the Book of Acts 5:6, but is not labeled as a prophet, but rather Josephus simply states that he "claimed to be somebody." Josephus adds Theudus to his list of false sign prophets.

Another self-proclaimed prophetic figure in Josephus under the "procuratorship" of Felix is the Egyptian. Josephus describes how The Egyptian gains the reputation of a prophet by deceiving the people. Josephus calls him a false prophet (   ) and an imposter (•   ). The Egyptian declared that he was a prophet and led masses of people to the Mount of Olives and claimed that the walls of Jerusalem would fall down (Ant. 20.169). This prophetic claim is reminiscent of the story of the conquest of Jericho under Joshua and there is almost no doubt that the Egyptian had modeled his "prophetic" claims on this story.

There are several different accounts of the actions of The Egyptian within Josephus and it is not entirely clear what actually took place. The Egyptian and his followers apparently headed to the Mt. of Olives to witness the miraculous toppling of the city walls, but before anything can be seen the Romans arrive and capture most of the followers. The Egyptian escapes and his end is not known. A version of the story of someone claiming that the walls of Jerusalem will fall is also told in Acts 21:38, however, there is no mention of the Egyptian as a prophet. The version in Acts conflates The Egyptian with the violent revolutionary group of the Sicarii.

There is another unnamed prophet who witnesses the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE and Josephus describes the figure and other prophets like him who "were planted among the people by the tyrants to announce that they [the followers] should wait for help from God…"

(*War* 6.286-7). The exact signs that this unnamed prophet was supposedly promising his followers are never alluded to in the narrative.

As was mentioned earlier, Josephus claims that he is the beneficiary of divine dreams and predictive capabilities. We can distinguish two different, but interconnected prophetic roles in Josephus:

Firstly, Josephus presents himself as a "Jeremiah-like" figure, to use Shaye Cohen's terminology.[189] There are some striking similarities between the lives of the prophet Jeremiah and the priestly "prophetic" Josephus. Both Josephus and Jeremiah denounced sin and argued that it was God's will to submit to foreign rule (as a collective punishment). In the early sixth century BCE, when the Babylonians besieged Jerusalem, Jeremiah encouraged the Jews to surrender much like Josephus would do in the first century during the Jewish Revolt against Rome. Both Josephus and Jeremiah are accused of deserting to the enemy and bringing down the morale of the people against foreign invaders. Both Jeremiah and Josephus also had to deal with prophetic figures that promised the Jewish people victory and deliverance. Jeremiah must confront false prophets who claim that Jerusalem will be saved from the Babylonians and Josephus must confront the various sign prophets who make false promises of victory against the Romans. Josephus also denounces false prophets, some of which have been noted earlier and attempts to preserve the Temple (*War* 5.362-419 and *Ant.* 10.113).[190]

Josephus is clearly familiar with the story of Jeremiah and even the Greek Polybius who also predicted the rise of Rome and the fall of his own Greece and condoned surrender to Rome

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[189] See: Cohen, Shaye J. D., "Jospheus, Jeremiah, and Polybius" *History and Theory*, Vol. 21, No. 3, (Oct. 1982)
[190] See Gray, Rebecca, 78 for reference.

as God's plan. The question still remains whether or not Josephus based his own experiences on these two previous stories. Even if he did base his perspective in these stories, was he trying to campaign his prophetic status by comparing himself to Jeremiah? It is not entirely clear.

Josephus' knowledge of God's plans and his prophecy about Rome are apparently based on what he sees in his dreams. His ability to interpret these dreams is based on his priestly expertise and his extensive knowledge of the prophecies in the Tanakh. As Cohen writes, Josephus' divinely inspired dream "is not a case of reading sacred scripture and awaiting its divinely inspired interpretation, a procedure we find elsewhere in ancient Judaism, but a case of remembering dreams and interpreting them in light of Biblical prophecies."[191] This is an essential difference to keep in mind. In part 1 of this thesis, I discussed the emergence of the "inspired exegete" and the role of the *pesharim* and the Teacher of Righteousness as the divinely inspired interpreter of the prophetic words. Josephus' prophetic dream is distinct from this inspired exegetical process and rather involves memory of earlier prophetic words rather than necessarily divine inspiration to interpret them.

Throughout his autobiography, Josephus also interestingly compares himself to Daniel.[192] The comparison with Daniel emphasizes the point that both Daniel and Josephus interpret dreams with divine help. Josephus interprets dreams and omens not only with divine insptiration, but also because of his deep knowledge of the prophecies in the Tanakh. Like Daniel, Josephus rose to power under a foreign ruler as a result of his prophetic gifts of interpretation, and most importantly, he also came to know God's plans for the future through his various dreams as well (*Life* 422-3).

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[191] Cohen, Shaye J. D., "Jospheus, Jeremiah, and Polybius" (370*)*
[192] Gray, 74-76

It can be concluded, then, that the classical prophets were held in high esteem and as a source of authority. Each of the prophetic and pseudo-prophetic figures discussed above draw in some way on the actions and words of earlier classical prophets to solidify their legitimacy. Even Josephus presumably draws heavily from Jeremiah and interprets his dreams with extensive knowledge of the imagery and terminology of the classical prophets. Was Josephus a prophet then? Yes and no. It is extremely difficult to discern which parts of his experience he drew from earlier prophetic works and which parts have some bearing in reality. It is not unlikely that Josephus would have had dreams, but whether these dreams contained special prophetic material is another question altogether.

The purpose of discussing the case of Josephus after the Dead Sea Scrolls is to draw the reader's attention to the diverse examples of prophetic or pseudo-prophetic activity in the Late Second Temple period and first century CE. The purpose of this thesis is not to explain every example of prophetic activity and writing in the post-exilic period, but rather to provide the reader with a taste of the various conceptions of prophecy that were present in this transitional formative period for Judaism.

The emergence of other prophetic figures like John the Baptist is thus simply another example of the types of prophets that were present and their relations to the canonized scripture. Whether the Tanakh was fully canonized in the first century CE is not my concern here, but it *is* clear, as I have discussed in earlier chapters, that the Pentateuch and certain prophetic books had certainly gained an authoritative status. This is most overtly evidenced in the explosion of exegetical works on prophetic books.

This world of diverse exegetical perspectives on prophetic books and massive amounts of Pseudepigrapha form the context in which early Christianity emerged. In a very similar manner

to earlier Jewish movements, early Christianity followed interpretations of Tanakh by the charismatic Jesus. Prophetic inspiration allowed Jesus to interpret the prophetic books of the Tanakh in a way that was simultaneously new while also being firmly rooted in the fulfillment prophecy of earlier Jewish movements including the Qumran community. For sake of space, I will not discuss the gospels in greater detail since I already outlined important parallels ad distinctions with the *pesharim* in chapter 5. In the next chapter, we will skip ahead to the figure of John of Patmos and the changing face of prophecy in the Book of Revelation.

CASE STUDY 3: JOHN OF PATMOS AND

BOOK OF REVELATION

CHAPTER 9: REVELATION OF JOHN: AN INQUIRY INTO THE CHANGING FACE OF

PROPHECY

The previous two parts of this thesis have looked at the various manifestations of prophecy in the early and late Second Temple Period, more specifically the *pesharim* in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the writings of the first century Jewish historian Josephus. We have seen the undulations between the continuations of select pre-exilic prophetic themes in Josephus as well as the rupture of and creation of new ways to understand the function and forms of prophetic experience in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The *pesharim* not only embodied a new form of prophetic exegesis but also a new type of prophetic message in which the words of the earlier prophets were applied to the present and imbued with eschatological significance. In this way the *pesharim* represent a kind of rupture for the classical forms of prophecy[193]. Though Josephus' writings may be understood and interpreted in many different ways, the very act of writing his history reflects his desire to continue the work of the pre-exilic prophets, whom he depicts as divinely inspired historians and the only true intermediaries between the divine and the people. We have also seen other prophetic types appear in the late Second Temple Period as messianic fervor arose in an increasingly complex Roman Palestine.

The emergence of Jesus and his Jewish followers in the first century undoubtedly had an impact on the understanding of prophetic roles and the immediacy of pre-exilic prophetic utterances. Though the Dead Sea Scrolls already exhibit an appropriation of earlier prophets, the systematic fulfillment prophecy that surfaces in the sayings and message of Jesus indicate a significant shift. The differences between "Jewish" and "Christian" prophecy may be debated, but it is important to remember that distinguishing between first or second century Jews and first or second century Jewish followers of Jesus is much more difficult than most have imagined.

In this chapter, I am interested in taking a closer look at the changing nature of prophecy after the emergence of the Jesus movement and destruction of the Second Temple. There are many ways to approach this question, and I will be focusing on the prophetic and apocalyptic aspects of the Book of Revelation,[194] presumably written by John of Patmos in the late first century. Unlike any other book in the New Testament canon, the eccentric imagery of the Book of Revelation has captivated the interest of so many scholars and readers throughout the ages. What kind of book is Revelation and what is its relation to earlier Second Temple Jewish writings? Can Revelation be understood solely as apocalyptic or are there other prophetic features as well? How does Revelation make use of earlier prophets and does it embody a new prophetic consciousness? Can an argument be made for the emergence a uniquely

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[193] These prophetic types were discussed in the second chapter of this thesis. Definitions of prophecy are in the introduction.
[194] I will refer to the Book of Revelation simply as *"Revelation"* for the remainder of the essay.

"Christian" prophecy and how is this different from previous prophetic types? These questions can help us better understand the dynamics of prophecy in the late first century and also to locate a transition, if any real transition can be discerned, from earlier Jewish prophecy to a newer Christian prophecy.

Before identifying and problematizing the genre of Revelation, it would be useful to briefly discuss the history and definition of "apocalyptic" literature and how, if it all, it is related to prophetic literature. The words "apocalypse" and "apocalyptic" have become synonymous with a grand cosmic catastrophe and oftentimes the end of the world. The title and imagery of the Book of Revelation or the Apocalypse of John have undoubtedly influenced the popular notion of the word. However, the word "apocalypse" actually comes from the Greek *apokalypsis*, meaning "to uncover" or "to reveal."

The study of apocalyptic literature gained great interest in the nineteenth century amongst German Biblicists like Freidrich Lucke, who published the first comprehensive study of the subject in 1832.[195] Lucke's work was perhaps inspired by the recent translation and publication of the Ethiopic book of Enoch and he included 1 Enoch along with 4 Ezra and the Sibylline Oracles to reconstruct a literary context for Christian apocalyptic (i.e., Book of Revelation). The corpus of apocalypses was enlarged in the twentieth century as more ancient apocalypses were discovered in a range of languages. The almost contemporaneous discoveries of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Library of Gnostic gospels revealed many new apocalyptic pieces. These discoveries renewed scholarly interest in understanding apocalyptic literature and trying to delineate its boundaries.

Yet despite this interest, there was (and still is) a great ambivalence amongst scholars as to the role and significance of apocalyptic literature. On the one-hand scholars like Ernst Kasemann declared that "apocalyptic was the mother of all Christian theology."[196] On the other hand, many scholars have been perplexed- if not ashamed of Christian apocalyptic writings as Klaus Koch described in his 1972, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*. Though both views convey the exaggerated extremes, there is some truth

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[195] As stated in: Collins, John J. "What Is Apocalyptic Literature?" *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature.* Ed. John J. Collins, 2014, (1-16).
[196] Kasemann, Ernst, "The Beginnings of Christian Theology," *JTC* 6, 1969 (40)

in them. Many authoritative biblical scholars of nineteenth century, including Julius Wellhausen, Emil

Schurer and others did not see apocalyptic literature as worthwhile to study and considered it to be a

product of "'Late Judaism,' which was greatly inferior to the prophets."[197] This attitude was perhaps due

to the confusion and conflation between "apocalypse" as a literary type and apocalypticism as an

historical millenarian movement.

In his famous *Dawn of the Apocalyptic,* Paul Hanson proposed distinctions between "apocalypse"

as a literary type, "apocalypticism" as a social ideology and "apocalyptic eschatology" as a set of ideas

and motifs. In 1979, John J. Collins published a definition and morphology for the genre of "apocalyptic"

literature written between 250 BCE and 250 CE. The definition was as follows: "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 special insofar as it involves another supernatural world."[198] Collins further

distinguished between two major types of apocalypses, namely 'historical' apocalypses, such as Daniel, 4

Ezra or 2 Baruch, in which elaborate and broad views of history are presented through prophecy, and

'otherworldly' journey apocalypses, like 2 Enoch, in which the central plot is the journey. Of course these

two types many times overlap, but most apocalypses are predominantly one or the other.

Klaus Koch's definition of apocalyptic literature differs from Collins. Koch identified six typical

features of the genre: discourse cycles, spiritual turmoils, paranetic discourses (usually with or through

some angelic or other-worldly figure), pseudonymity (usually by inserting the name of a venerable

patriarch or figure from distant past), mythical imagery, and composite character.[199] Not every apocalypse

necessarily has all six of these elements, but they serve as useful tools to organize and deconstruct

apocalyptic writings, at least literarily.

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[197] Collins, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature.* Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1998 (1)
[198] Collins, "What is Apocalyptic Literature" (2).
[199] Russell, D.S. *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, Philadelphia: Westminister, 1964 (103-39).

While many aspects of these classifications and definitions have been accepted, scholarly debate continues about whether it is even appropriate to speak of an apocalyptic genre, or any genre at all[200] that claims to unify a group of writings from Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity. Carol Newsom, for example, rejects the idea of a distinct genre of apocalyptic literature and prefers to speak of these writings as participating in some of the same themes and narrative structure, but never belonging together to one genre. This approach "accommodates better not only the mulitgeneric nature of many apocalypses but also their irreducible particularity."[201]

There is a great risk of rigidly compartmentalizing various "apocalyptic" writings and projecting the rise and fall of these genres onto a linear understanding of history. The concept of delineating a distinct apocalyptic 'genre' often stems from what Hindy Najman calls the "chronological thesis," namely the idea that as prophecy came to end, apocalypse increasingly flourished. In this way, apocalypse is depicted as the successor of prophecy or, as H.H. Rowley states, "the child of prophecy."[202]

The prophetic genre, as opposed to the apocalyptic genre, is identified with prophetic speech, which can either be unmediated revelation from God, or through oracles and inspired speech, often reported by the attached phrase, "thus says the Lord." Other features of the prophetic genre include prophetic announcements and dialogues with God. The main figure of prophetic literature is always the divinely appointed Navi' and depending on the content of the revelation, different subcategories can also be distinguished. The features of the apocalyptic genre described above are often and usually depicted in deliberate contrast with the features of the prophetic genre.

As I have argued earlier in this thesis, there was probably not yet any generally accepted canonical scripture known as "the Bible/Tanakh" in the Second Temple period and to speak of the canonical Bible in distinction to apocryphal books (many of which are in some way "apocalyptic") is

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[200] Recall the discussion about the problems of delineating genres and the discussion on Jacques Derrida's 'law of genre' in section 2 of this thesis, "Re-Interpreting Prophecy in the Pesharim: An Inquiry into the Genealogy of a Tradition." Please see pages 1-2 of this earlier section for more detailed discussion on genre.

[201] As quoted in Collins, "What is Apocalyptic Literature?" (3)

[202] Najman, Hindy, "The Inheritance of Prophecy in Apocalypse," in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*. Ed. John J. Collins, 2014, (37).

inaccurate. Florentino Garcia Martinez has described the Second Temple literary situation in terms of "pluriformity."[203] Though the argument for "pluriformity" was made in the context of the texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls, the concept also applies to the wider array of Jewish texts in the Second Temple period. In my discussion of the *pesharim*, I argued that while there was a wide range of writings and Pseudepigrapha at Qumran and elsewhere, there was also a sense of at least the Pentateuch being authoritative, since parts of the Torah was often quoted or imitated in the Pseudepigrapha.

It is also interesting that of the many Jewish writings of the Second Temple period, none of the authors proclaim to be prophets in their own right, nor are the names of any new prophetic figures.[204] Yet many texts were written in the name of, or at least attributed to, earlier prophets. The attribution of a text to an earlier prophet is undoubtedly a method to claim authenticity and authority. Writers could claim authority either by writing in the name of an established prophet, or by recasting an established textual tradition in a way that incorporated the author's preferred legal and theological position. *Revelation* arguably belongs to this tradition of claiming authority through pseudonymity.

While we have seen throughout this thesis that there is no rupture marking the "cessation of prophecy," there is certainly a discernable trend toward a kind of mediated prophecy that involved angels, or otherworldly figures as intermediaries, rather than the classical biblical prophecy in which direct revelation was the standard method of communication between God and the prophet. The prophetic project in which human prophets served as the mouthpiece of God continued through the Second Temple Period, but as Hindy Najman convincingly argues, these prophetic texts increasingly relied on "strategies of inheritance."[205] It is in the context of this transition that the relation between prophecy and apocalypse should be understood.

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[203] Garcia Martinez, Florentino, "Parabiblical Literature from Qumran and the Canonical Process," *Review de Qumran,* 2013 (25)

[204] Even when we do hear of new prophetic names and figures as we saw in the earlier Josephus section, none of the so-called prophets have any writings.

[205] Najman, Hindy, "The Inheritance of Prophecy in Apocalypse" (49)

The relation between prophecy and apocalypse is intertwined with the emergence of Christianity and the relation between Christian apocalyptic tradition and prophecy and Jewish apocalyptic tradition and prophecy. In the next part of the essay, I will discuss these relationships as they appear in *Revelation* and what we can learn about conceptions of early Christian prophecy.

First, let us return to the question of problematizing the genre of *Revelation.* Can we categorize *Revelation* as a Jewish apocalypse or understand it as a prophetic book, or perhaps a combination of both?

The definition and features of Jewish apocalyptic writings discussed earlier can be useful in understanding *Revelation* as well. There are many similarities in literary form and revelatory content between *Revelation* and the Book of Daniel chapters 7-12, 1 and 2 Enoch, 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch. In each of these works the revelation is delivered in the form of a heavenly vision (or ascent) and it is always mediated by a heavenly figure, usually an angel, who interprets the vision. In terms of content, each of these writings is eschatological and expresses the hope of cosmic transformation. The combination of this method of revelation and the eschatological content of the revelation is the basic foundation for works that can be seen as apocalyptic.

The opening verse of *Revelation,* "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place; he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John…"[206] (Rev. 1:1) immediately highlights the eschatological expectation of what will soon transpire as well as the method of revelation through an intermediary angel. This opening line connects *Revelation* to the Jewish apocalypses.

There are also important differences between *Revelation* and the Jewish apocalypses. Most Jewish apocalypses, like Daniel or 2 Baruch indulge in lengthy *ex-eventu* prophecies, in which supposedly distant future events are predicted through earlier revelations. While *Revelation* does refer to

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[206] Revelation 1:1, I'll be using the NRSV translation.

earlier history and future events to come, there is no explicit *ex-eventu* prophecy.[207] Unlike the Jewish apocalypses that had to argue for the proximity of the end days, there was already a widespread belief in Early Christian writings that the last days had been initiated by the death and resurrection of Christ. The second coming of Christ was not assigned to some distant future, but was fast approaching. Paul assures the Corinthians, for example, that "We will not die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet" (1 Cor. 15:51). In Mark 13:26-31, as well, the imminent second coming is emphasized; "Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels…. truly, I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place."

The mostly widespread belief regarding the imminent nearness of the second coming in the first centuries of Christianity made the technique of *ex-eventu* prophecy largely superfluous. Still, there is no lack of historical review in *Revelation*. In Rev. 17:9-12, the reader is told that the seven heads of the beast are seven kings of whom five have fallen, the sixth is living and the seventh is yet to come and will only last a short time. The kings are presumably Roman emperors, as John challenges the evil empire.[208] History as presented here in *Revelation* is predetermined; in other words, God has already planned the end and it is very near.

Rev. 12:10-11 also refers to the past, "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of God and the authority of his Messiah, for the accurses of our comrades has been thrown down…they conquered him by the blood of the Lamb." Though the passage is rather vague, it is relatively clear that it is referring to the crucifixion of Christ (i.e., the blood of the lamb) and the early martyrs and the assurance that Satan will be overcome since God already cast him down from Heaven in the past. Though *Revelation* does repeatedly make use of historical events, there is no explicit *ex-eventu* prophecy as in the Jewish apocalypses.

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[207] See Collins, John j. "Pseudonymity, Historical Review and the Revelation of John," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 39:3, 1977, 338. Collins presents a much more detailed discussion on this topic.

[208] See Pagels, Elaine, *Revelations: Visions, Prophecy and Politics in the Book of Revelation*, Penguin Group: New York, 2012, especially chapter 1, "John's Revelation: Challenging the Evil Empire, Rome" for a more detailed discussion of the politics and historical review of Rome in *Revelation.*

There are several other distinguishing factors between *Revelation* and many of the Jewish apocalypses listed above.[209] One of the most notable differences is, perhaps, the lack of pseudonymity in *Revelation*. Many scholars regard pseudonymity and the accompanying esotericism an essential feature of the Jewish apocalyptic tradition. P. Vielhaeur also claimed that the issue of pseudonymity is important as a distinguishing factor between *Revelation* and other apocalypses. Vielhaeur further distinguished these apocalypses by the fact that John is "a genuine prophet" who is presenting his visions in the form of a letter rather than someone from the scribal class writing prophecies of supposed future events after they have already occured.[210] While pseudonymity may have been part of many Jewish apocalypses, it was by no means peculiar to apocalyptic literature. In fact, pseudonymity was a widespread phenomenon in the Hellenistic world and often simply indicated the desire to increase the authority of the work by attaching the name of a prophetic or authoritative figure. Therefore it would not be correct to use the lack of pseudonymity as a reason to not identify *Revelation* as part of the Jewish apocalyptic tradition.

Determinism in *Revelation* can also be seen in the idea that the plan of God has unalterably been laid down in the book with seven seals, and, once the Lamb has opened this book, the divine plan is unfolded without obstruction. This determinism can be seen as a "Christianized" version of a theme already found in earlier Jewish apocalypses. The dualism between heaven and earth, believers and pagans, good and bad, and the insistence on the imminence of the end (for John, "the End" is when the Kingdom of heaven will descend) is also a common feature of apocalypses.

But the fact that *Revelation* shares these features with other apocalyptic writings does not necessarily mean that the whole book is apocalyptic. Indeed there are clearly important "prophetic" aspects as well. The importance of prophecy is already visible in the first chapter, Rev. 1:3, in which John writes, "Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear

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[209] I am referring to Daniel, Enoch, 2 Baruch, 4 Ezra, etc. I realize that these books are not all identical and each has its particular nature, I am placing them in the same group because they do share many aspects.
[210] See Collins, John j. "Pseudonymity, Historical Review and the Revelation of John," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 39:3, 1977, 330.

and who keep what is written in it; for the time is near." Clearly John sees himself as a recipient of revelation and therefore a prophet, at least in a general sense of the term.

Prophecies from the Tanakh seem to be fulfilled in *Revelation* in a variety of ways. None of these prophecies are necessarily introduced with any kind of fulfillment formula and this can be understood as "informal direct prophetic-fulfillment uses."[211] In Rev. 1:7, for example, the promise of Christ's return is stated, "Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him…" This passage appears to be a reference to and fulfillment of Zech. 12:10. There is an interesting universalization to the prophecies in *Revelation* that is not present in the earlier prophetic books of the Tanakh, since the earlier prophets prophesied for an Israelite Jewish audience, whereas John seems to be speaking to the multiple nations of God.

In chapter 10 as well, John appears to be the recipient of a prophetic call. The appearance of an angel in the interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets and the symbolic account of the "little scroll open in his hand" (Rev. 10:2) is reminiscent of the commissioning of Ezekiel as prophet in Ezek 2:9, "and when I looked, behold, a hand was put forth unto me; and lo, a roll of a book was therein" though verse 5 of chapter 3. John's proclamation of the oracles of God on the nations also resembles Jeremiah 1:10, "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms…"

What is the purpose of recalling previous prophets and fulfilling their prophecies? On the one hand it can be argued that this is a method of gaining authenticity by basing the text in the language of authoritative prophets (a method we saw used by earlier apocalyptic works). On the other hand, recalling the classical prophets of the Tanakh may indicate, as some have argued, a renewal of prophecy.[212] I will return to this question later when I discuss whether there is such a thing as uniquely "Christian" prophecy and whether John can be understood as being part of this new system of prophecy.

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[211] Beale, G. K., and D. A. Carson. *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, 2007 (1085)

[212] See Hill, David "Prophecy and Prophets in the Revelation of John" *New Testament Studies*, 18:4, 1972, (403-18) for more detailed discussion of John as a genuine prophet.

Undoubtedly prophets and prophecy have a major role in *Revelation*. There appears to be a direct line of transmission of prophecy to which John belongs at least for the duration of his vision in *Revelation*. The message of the impending end and the second coming appears to descend from God to Christ who transmits it to an angel and finally to John, making his words authentic. This can be seen in Rev. 22:6, "And he said to me, 'These words are trustworthy and true, for the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place." A few verses later in Rev. 22:8, John proclaims to be the one "who heard and saw these things," presenting himself as a prophetic figure with access to the divine realm through an intermediary angel.

There is an interesting warning at the end in Rev. 22:18-19, "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book." This warning ensures that no one will alter the words of his prophetic visions and the words will remain authentic. This warning also has its precedent in the Torah. Deuteronomy 4:1-2 and 29:19-20 express similar warnings, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord."

Now let us turn to the question of whether a uniquely "Christian" prophetic consciousness can be determined from *Revelation*. It is clear that prophetic formulas and references are present in *Revelation* and that the classical Tanakh prophets are seen as authoritative. I will argue that an independent prophetic consciousness does exist in *Revelation*, though it may not be uniquely "Christian."

The very act of composing a book like *Revelation* indicates that its author is a visionary figure, not necessarily a prophet. John does not write *Revelation* in his capacity as a prophet per se, but rather at direct command from God. This direct line of communication with God assumes an authentic prophetic consciousness. John employs certain aspects of classical Tanakh prophecy, like the prophetic formula "Thus said the Lord," and yet clearly does share everything with the classical prophets. Though early Christian prophetic figures existed when John is presumed to have written *Revelation*, he does not share much with this kind of prophet. Most church prophets in early Christianity were limited in their social and

political impact to the to the Church itself. John, on the other hand, does not appear to be bound to any particular location in this way.

John may be seen as a distinct sort of in-between hybrid prophetic figure since he does not belong to any particular prophetic tradition. David Hill has drawn a parallel between the Teacher of Righteousness at Qumran and John of Patmos as both were understood to be prophetic figures in the end-days and as the legitimate successors of the ancient prophets.[213] This comparison is not compelling because the prophetic aspects of the Teacher of Righteousness were present in his inspired interpretation and exegesis of the words of the classical biblical prophets. John, on the other hand, composes an entirely separate book of visions and prophecies that is not solely dependent on the classical biblical prophets. This is not to say that John does not possess exegetical abilities since he clearly applies fulfillment prophetic techniques to selected words of classical prophets as I have discussed earlier in this chapter.

Rather than focusing on the predictive aspects of his visions, John focuses on the immediate consequences of the described eschatological events for the church of his time. John witnessed the devastating destruction of Jerusalem and the establishment of Rome in the Levant. These events must have worried John and the real focus of his prophetic visions should be seen as a commentary on the contemporary events during his lifetime and the changing nature of Judaism and an increasingly distinct "Christianity." This emphasis on the present situation and its presumed close connection to the second coming of Jesus in the visions of John is distinct from other New Testament prophets who had a largely pedagogical function to interpret the Tanakh for daily use.

The book of *Revelation* is undoubtedly an enigmatic text and its author, John of Patmos, even more allusive. As the case is for many of the other texts in the Late Second Temple early Christian period, it is extremely difficult to pinpoint how exactly prophecy was conceived and which figures were identified as prophets. While it is important to try to understand conceptions of prophecy and the different

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[213] Hill, David "Prophecy and Prophets in the Revelation of John" *New Testament Studies*, 18:4, 1972, (415)

types of prophets, it is also important to understand that many figures and writings cannot be neatly categorized into "types."

John of Patmos is a visionary prophet of some sort who is reacting to the fast changing world around him and writes the fantastical book of *Revelation* as a method of drawing people's attention to the consequences of the destruction of Jerusalem, the rise of Rome and the fulfillment of earlier prophecies. *Revelation* appropriates elements from Jewish apocalyptic tradition, classical biblical prophets, Qumran sectarian writings and other New Testament prophetic and pedagogical texts. *Revelation* is one of the most complicated books to understand and categorize and this is precisely why I chose to end my thesis with it. The complicatedness of John's visions reflects the diverse and volatile perceptions of prophecy and prophetic words in the first century by various Jewish and early Christian groups.

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have tried to argue for the simultaneous continuation and change of prophecy from the pre-exilic classical biblical period to the first century CE. Through analyzing various primary documents from the late Second Temple to early Christian period, we have seen the changing natures of prophecy and how various Jewish and early "Christian" groups in ancient Palestine conceived and perceived prophecy.

There was a significant shift from oral and ecstatic prophecy in the early Israelite periods to more classical written prophecy in the eighth to the sixth centuries BCE. Finally, as we saw with the *pesharim*, Josephus and *Revelation,* the Second Temple period initiated another significant shift in the nature of prophecy. This time, the *writers* of scripture and the *interpreters* of scripture became prophets.

The complex common Judaism of the Second Temple period cultivated a vast array of literature and Pseudepigrapha. The explosion of anonymous Pseudepigrapha and apocalyptic

writings and prophecies reflected the volatile socio-cultural and religious tensions in post-exilic Palestine. Conceptions of prophecy and revelation varied widely, and the social roles of prophetic figures changed from public figures to inspired exegetes of previous scripture. Various theological groups made claims to prophetic legitimacy and produced a number of texts seemingly containing prophecies. This makes it extremely difficult for scholars to make any conclusions on the nature and status of prophecy in the last few centuries BCE.

Issues of the canonization of scripture also affected perceptions of prophecy. Various groups including those from scribal and priestly classes endorsed different beliefs about the continuation, change, or complete cessation of prophecy. I have tried to focus on the relations of different Second Temple texts with the classical prophets and the emergence of new forms of prophecy in the aforementioned writings. There are many texts that I have not discussed in this thesis and many issues that I have not touched upon due to the practical restraints of this thesis.

It is important to note that I have only briefly problematized the issue of continuity and change of prophecy in the late post-exilic period. This thesis is just the beginning of what I hope will be a long-term study of the transition of prophecy in Late Antiquity as I pursue my graduate studies.

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