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Apocalypticism in the Homiletic Text of *Pesiqta Rabbati*: Catastrophic Events at the End of Time

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Abstract

The rabbinic homiletic work *Pesiqta Rabbati* contains several apocalyptic topoi in its homilies that culminate in descriptions of divine intervention in history, total destruction followed by the messianic age at the end-of-time, and justice at the final judgment. Nevertheless, *Pesiqta Rabbati* does not present itself as an apocalypse, nor does it belong to the text-type “apocalypse.” It contains midrashic apocalypticism by interpreting scriptural passages, and relied on the existing language of apocalyptic sources to augment the midrashic statements. Previous scholarship relating to the apocalypse in *Pesiqta Rabbati* focused mainly on the apocalypses of 2 Baruch, Paralipomena Jeremiou, and 4 Ezra. However, 1 Enoch (Similitudes) and Ascension of Isaiah should also be considered as possible sources. The Revelation to John contains numerous suggestive parallels to *Pesiqta Rabbati*. The apocalyptic topics address predicaments in Israel’s past history and apply these to its present and future state.

Keywords

Midrash – apocalyptic – *Pesiqta Rabbati* – rabbinic homilies – 2 Baruch – 4 Ezra – 1 Enoch – Ascension of Isaiah – Revelation to John

1 Introduction

Can a midrashic work create apocalyptic visions through interpretations of biblical passages? This article argues that midrashic apocalypticism is present in the rabbinic homiletic work *Pesiqta Rabbati*, which contains numerous apocalyptic topoi that culminate in descriptions of divine intervention in

history, total destruction followed by the messianic age at the end of time, and justice at the final judgment. Nevertheless, *Pesiqta Rabbati* does not belong to the text-type (or genre) “apocalypse.” Rather, *Pesiqta Rabbati* contains midrashic apocalypticism by interpreting scriptural passages, and it relied on the existing language of apocalyptic sources in order to augment the midrashic statements. The combination of midrash and apocalypticism is atypical.¹ The homiletic texts of *Pesiqta Rabbati* present a sequence and density of apocalyptic topoi that is absent in other rabbinic collections such as *Midrash Rabbah*, the *Tanḥuma* literature, and the *Talmuds*. Midrashic interpretation presents apocalyptic topics in scriptural exegesis in *Pesiqta Rabbati*. Apocalyptic thinking is rare in midrash and its presence in *Pesiqta Rabbati* has not sufficiently been researched. Previous scholarship relating to the apocalypse in *Pesiqta Rabbati* focused mainly on the apocalypses of 2 Baruch, Paralipomena of Jeremiah, and 4 Ezra;² however, 1 Enoch (Similitudes) and Ascension of Isaiah should also be considered as possible sources of *Pesiqta Rabbati*. Furthermore, *Pesiqta Rabbati* was not only in conversation with Jewish apocalyptic texts but also with Christian visions; it has been noted that Revelation contains numerous suggestive parallels to *Pesiqta Rabbati*.³ There are apocalyptic topics which are simply so pervasive in *Pesiqta Rabbati* that questions about the exact mode of their transmission are unresolved. These apocalyptic topics are strategically deployed in certain homilies to address predicaments in Israel’s history and to apply these topics to the incessant threats and losses experienced by the Jewish community in the time of the homilist(s) of *Pesiqta Rabbati*. As Collins writes:

We can appreciate easily enough why these texts were appealing in times of persecution, or in the wake of a disaster like the destruction of Jerusalem. Apocalypses gave people hope in times of despair. They also gave people the strength to endure. The goal of life was not the traditional one of living long in the land and seeing one’s children’s children, but eternal life with the angels in heaven.⁴

1 Jassen mentions the isolated explicit exegesis in Jewish apocalypses: “The least commonly encountered method of interpretation in apocalyptic texts ... is explicit exegesis” (“Scriptural Interpretation,” 81).

2 Bogaert, *Apocalypse de Baruch*; Gry, “Ruine.” See Lévi, “*Pesikta Rabbati*”; Ulmer, *Synoptic Edition*, vol. 1, xiv.

3 Ulmer, “Culture of Apocalypticism.”

4 Collins, “Apocalypse Then,” 8.

2 Midrashic Apocalypticism and Apocalyptic Theory

I argue that rabbinic literature developed its own kind of apocalypse in the form of midrashic apocalypticism, which is extensively found in Pesiqta Rabbati. Midrashic apocalyptic thought has a specific form that is embedded in the midrashic process. Midrash may be viewed as the rabbinic hermeneutic approach to scripture; the propositions and statements by rabbis are based upon the interpretations of scripture. Midrash is part of the Oral Torah, which contains God's secrets that are accessible to Israel and distinguish it from other nations.⁵ Furthermore, homiletic midrash in particular displays numerous passages that were conveyed in the "Holy Spirit" (e.g., Pesiq. Rab. 34), emphasizing God's role in communicating secrets.⁶ Midrash as created by the rabbis and as used in rabbinic literature⁷ may be reduced to a basic definition, according to which midrashic literature "has its starting point in a fixed, canonical text, considered the revealed word of God by the midrashist and his audience, and in which this original verse is explicitly cited or clearly alluded to."⁸ Midrashic exegesis focuses upon a specific scriptural word, sign, or phrase and provides it with meaning through interpretation. Goldberg's formalistic definition, which applies a minimalist approach to rabbinic texts, defines midrash as a metalinguistic sentence consisting of a scriptural lemma, a hermeneutic operation and a dictum.⁹ Examples of hermeneutic operations include rules of interpretation or simple elements such as "this is" or "this means." The dictum refers to a rabbinic statement or proposition. Goldberg's definition is highly applicable to midrashic apocalypticism, because the "dictum" usually contains an apocalyptic reference.

A single scriptural verse or even a shorter lemma can be the starting point for a long thematic discourse on apocalyptic topoi in a homily. Midrashic exegesis is used to discover apocalyptic messages; this discovery process is based upon the idea that midrash continuously reveals divine plans that are inscribed in the Written Torah. The rabbinic apocalyptic passages are creatively and strategically deployed in the late antique rabbinic homilies that comprise

5 This is expressed in Pesiq. Rab. 5:3 and parallels; see also Fraade, "4 Ezra and 2 Baruch," 373, who writes about another part of the Oral Torah, "scholars have compared the seventy esoteric books in *4 Ezra* to late rabbinic traditions that state that God's mysteries are contained within the Oral Torah (Mishnah)."

6 Polen, "Spirit among the Sages."

7 An overview of different definitions of midrash is found in Ulmer, "Rabbinic Judaism."

8 See Porton, "Midrash," 112.

9 Goldberg, "Midraschsatz," 118.

a significant portion of *Pesiqta Rabbati*, and the apocalyptic messages complement topics raised in such homilies.

Midrashic apocalypticism is different from prophecy which may lead to eschatological speculation; however, often the boundaries between different experiential writings focusing upon the eschaton are blurred.¹⁰ Collins argues that prophecy is distinct from apocalypse, because apocalypse offers a wider view.¹¹

Why is *Pesiqta Rabbati* not an apocalypse? The analysis of apocalyptic literature, including the question what constitutes an apocalypse has been extensively debated. Collins's approach of the genre "apocalypse"¹² provides a heuristic structure of elements, such as describing a revelatory experience, expounding this experience in a narrative framework, receiving assistance from a heavenly being, disclosing an alternative reality, and exhibiting symbolism. Additionally, some apocalypses describe events of the past and contain *ex eventu* prophecy or contain a review of history by retelling Israel's history in symbolic language that leads to the current crisis experienced by the apocalyptic author.¹³ Collins revised his genre theory¹⁴ and brought it into conversation with philosophical investigations and outright rejections of genre definitions. The genre theory is mainly applicable to *Pesiq. Rab.* 26, which contains a narrative concerning the life of the prophet Jeremiah and depicts him as a visionary. Additionally, there is an "ascent" midrash in *Pesiq. Rab.* 20, which includes Moses's ascent to heaven,¹⁵ where he encounters the heavenly realms and God's retinue.¹⁶ A question that addressed the problem whether the term apocalyptic genre relates only to the whole of a text, as in apocalyptic books, or to parts of a text as well, has been addressed by Osborne, who concludes that a text that is only partially apocalyptic is still an apocalyptic genre.¹⁷ This partial

10 Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*, 14; Uffenheimer, "Prophetic to Apocalyptic," 201; Wright and Wills, *Conflicted Boundaries*, 11-13.

11 Collins, *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigraphy*, 68-69.

12 Collins, *Morphology*, 9. Collins hypothesized that apocalypses constitute a distinctive genre of ancient Jewish and Christian revelatory literature. In my opinion, this approach by Collins is analogous to text-linguistic morphology, which defines morphemes as designating the smallest units of meaning in a text.

13 Collins, "Apocalypses."

14 Collins "Genre Apocalypse," mentions additional factors in analyzing apocalyptic texts such as family resemblance between texts.

15 See Grözinger, *Ich bin der Herr*, 134-39.

16 Yarbro Collins, "Seven Heavens." "Seven heavens" is a common theme in rabbinic literature. God is seated in the seventh heaven, *Midr. Ps.* 114; *Pesiq. Rab.* 5:21; *Tanḥ. B Naso* 24; *b. Ḥag.* 12b; *'Abot R. Nat.* a, 37.

17 See Osborne, "Genre Criticism," 3.

text pattern applies to *Pesiqta Rabbati*, which is not an apocalyptic book, but nevertheless contains topics typical of apocalypses, including revelation, wars and famine, the cause of human suffering, the eradication of evil, and eschatological predictions.¹⁸

The heuristic devices in the previously stated morphology of the apocalyptic genre are instrumentalities that clarify and provide structure to the late antique text of *Pesiqta Rabbati*. Several of these features will guide my investigation in order to demonstrate that apocalyptic passages were midrashically created, while others were skillfully integrated as quotations of existing apocalypses into *Pesiqta Rabbati*. These apocalyptic sections were used to dramatize the homiletic texts. Several apocalyptic passages in *Pesiqta Rabbati* insert apocalyptic topoi into homiletic messages of future consolations, which will only transpire after the apocalypse has taken its course.

Pesiqta Rabbati is a rabbinic midrashic work that follows the liturgical reading cycle of the ancient synagogue in its homilies. The dating of single homilies in *Pesiqta Rabbati* is notoriously difficult, since it grew by accretion. The core of *Pesiqta Rabbati* was composed in the land of Israel in the fifth/sixth century,¹⁹ but it contains some older material,²⁰ while the dates of its redactional stages and the accretion of text continued into the diaspora of the early Middle Ages. At the cusp of the Islamization of the Middle East, *Pesiqta Rabbati* was transferred to Europe and several sections were added in the Rhineland and in southern France (11th-13th centuries). One problem of determining socio-historical information from textual passages in midrash is whether the filiation between midrash and actual historic events is too distant and mainly hypothetical.²¹ In my opinion, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to prove the historical, contextual referentiality of most midrashic works. Attempting to state the historical context is often reduced to an educated guess.

This fascination with apocalyptic events suited the homiletic voice regarding special Sabbaths and festivals. As a homiletic work, *Pesiqta Rabbati* was created by a redactor and the apocalyptic sections in *Pesiqta Rabbati* had to conform to the lectionary portions assigned to a specific day. The messages concerning catastrophic events of the past and in the future may be condensed into a specific apocalyptic meta-narrative for *Pesiqta Rabbati*. The apocalyptic agenda in *Pesiqta Rabbati* parallels the “meta-narrative” that underlies the

18 Wortley, “Literature,” 2.

19 See Ulmer, *Synoptic Edition*, 1:xv-xvii, xxiv.

20 Several passages in *Pesiq. Rab.* 1 and 30 are only attested to in Josephus.

21 I delineated a possible timeline for the evolving text of *Pesiqta Rabbati* in Ulmer, “*Pesiqta Rabbati*,” 89.

entire work. The objective of the redactor of *Pesiqta Rabbati* may have been to construct a meta-narrative, since a meta-narrative may be defined as a “privileged discourse”²² intended for a certain group of people and it represents a final and apodictic truth.²³ Thus, a meta-narrative retains the capacity of eventually offering the “truth” about history and Israel’s relationship with God. All “historical” events are subsumed under the assumption that the end of time conforms to a divinely predetermined plan that is revealed and may be discovered through interpretation. The meta-narrative in *Pesiqta Rabbati* presents the transition from “normalcy” to the apocalypse with its destructive forces and the final salvation of the righteous.

With regard to religious perspectives, apocalyptic literature expressed the belief that God had determined the conclusion of history from the beginning of creation. Since apocalyptic predictions were generally based upon past historical events, apocalyptic authors were able to map one situation upon another. The notion that what had happened to “sinful” Babylon of the past would happen to contemporary “sinful” Rome is applicable to both Judaism and Christianity in antiquity.²⁴ One “evil” nation is supplanted by another and one savior figure is replaced by another, e.g., the Christian messiah or the Jewish messiah, Messiah Ephraim²⁵ in *Pesiqta Rabbati*. The biblical conflict between Israel and Babylon as well as between Jacob and Esau was thus applied to new historical situations, in which Rome or subsequently such groups as the armies of the Byzantine Christians, the Persians and the Arabs, were viewed as evil. Apocalyptic works describe past events such as the destruction of Jerusalem²⁶ from the viewpoint of an often pseudonymous author, who is presented as the visionary. In *Pesiqta Rabbati* there is an anonymous homiletic exegete in the midrashic text, who is predicting the downfall of human society. The past event becomes a proof-text for the apocalyptic prediction. In respect to the remainder of the apocalyptic vision that had not yet been fulfilled, it was believed by the apocalyptic followers to become fulfilled in the near future.

22 See Schwartz, “Adultery,” 335, who postulates that the “ambition of midrash was to construct a metanarrative, a privileged discourse capable of offering eventually the truth about history.”

23 Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, 13-14, defines postmodernism as an incredulity toward meta-narratives.

24 Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 11.

25 Ulmer, “Contours”; Ulmer, “Psalm 22”; see Schäfer, “Der leidende Messias,” 133-77, which provides a summary of his many analyses of the messiah. Because of my previous work, I purposely did not repeat a detailed analysis of the role of the messiah in *Pesiqta Rabbati* in this article.

26 See the survey by Saldarini, “Uses of Apocalyptic,” 407; Grossman, “Jerusalem”; Daschke, *City of Ruins*, on 4 Ezra.

The imminent fulfillment of such predictions is obtained through scriptural analysis.

Homilist(s) shaped the apocalyptic vision in *Pesiqta Rabbati*, which conveys consistent messages of destruction, redemption, and the end of time.²⁷ These messages are thought to be present in the history of Israel and its God; they are discovered through midrashic exegesis and homiletic composition, which are unlike apocalypses in which God elects a visionary to whom secrets are disclosed. However, one may argue that in *Pesiqta Rabbati* the rabbinic interpreters of scripture occupy the place of a visionary.

Why is the apocalyptic material in *Pesiqta Rabbati* important? Most of the apocalyptic material in *Pesiqta Rabbati* was extant when other Jewish apocalypses in Byzantine Palestine of the 620s began to emerge.²⁸ In my opinion, many of the apocalyptic passages in *Pesiqta Rabbati* were written in the early seventh century.²⁹ The wars among the Byzantine, Persian, and Islamic armies in the Near East in the first part of the seventh century may be the backdrop for messianic speculations in the apocalyptic passages in *Pesiqta Rabbati*. One may perceive a literary gap between the biblical apocalypses (for example, Daniel), the extra-biblical apocalypses (for example, 1 Enoch and 2 Baruch) and the revival and rewriting of apocalypses in the early Middle Ages.

Between these apocalyptic “periods,” there was only a small amount of apocalyptic thought in rabbinic literature (for example, b. San. 98a-b; b. Hag. 14a). Thus, with respect to rabbinic literature, *Pesiqta Rabbati* bridged the gap concerning apocalyptic thought between the two eras when a return to apocalyptic writing occurred in the medieval Jewish apocalypses.³⁰ One could further argue that *Pesiqta Rabbati* contains a crystallization of apocalypticism within the corpus of rabbinic literature by combining rabbinic traditions with tropes found in apocalyptic literature in its expression of eschatological concerns, while creating its own narrative concerning the final battles before the eventual restoration of Israel. *Pesiqta Rabbati* demonstrates a further development of apocalyptic thought beyond biblical and extra-biblical apocalypses

27 Cohn, “Consummation,” 23.

28 Ulmer, *Synoptic Edition*, 1:xiv. Olster emphasizes the importance of the Byzantine era with regard to apocalyptic thought: “The seventh century, the period of the Arab and Slav invasions and the final shattering of the imperial hegemony stands as the formative period of Byzantine apocalypticism” (“Byzantine Apocalypses,” 60).

29 Bamberger favored the view that *Pesiq. Rab.* 34-37 reflect the disillusion of the Jews with the Sasanians by alluding to the kings of Persia, Arabia, and Edom (“Messianic Document”). The Persians conquered Palestine in 614, see Baras, “Persian Conquest”; Greatrex and Lieu, *Roman Eastern Frontier*.

30 Novick also recognized this chronological and literary position of *Pesiqta Rabbati* (“First-Century Apocalyptic”).

in the particular form of homiletic midrash. Apocalyptic thinking became integrated into well-reasoned scriptural analysis, namely, homiletical exegesis. *Pesiqta Rabbati* displays a significant difference from the genre of “apocalypse” in that there is almost no disclosure of divine knowledge by direct revelation to a human protagonist; the apocalyptic message is created by homilist(s). Exceptions to this statement include *Pesiq. Rab. 20*, in which Moses obtained direct revelation in an apocalyptic context. Alternatively, the homilist(s) qua rabbinic interpreters may have assumed the role of an apocalyptic visionary. Many festival and special Sabbath homilies have their own “small” apocalypse assigned to their scriptural reading. In an unusual manner, which is not attested to in other classical rabbinic literature, *Pesiqta Rabbati* maps apocalyptic topoi onto the liturgical year. In this sense *Pesiqta Rabbati* is unique in classical rabbinic literature.

3 Overview of Apocalyptic Topoi in *Pesiqta Rabbati*

Apocalyptic topoi in *Pesiqta Rabbati* include the destruction of the wicked and those not following God, the redemption of the righteous, and the perceived immediacy of catastrophic events. The following *Pesiqta Rabbati* homilies contain dense apocalyptic materials: *Pesiq. Rab. 1* envisages the date of salvation, the future restoration of the temple;³¹ *Pesiq. Rab. 8* announces the liberation of Jerusalem from the Roman yoke; *Pesiq. Rab. 9* states that God will be victorious; *Pesiq. Rab. 10* predicts the defeat of Amalek, Israel’s antagonist, who represents evil; *Pesiq. Rab. 15* revisits the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar; *Pesiq. Rab. 16* promises the redemption of Israel through faithful obedience of God’s commandments; *Pesiq. Rab. 17* and *18* foresee Israel’s deliverance during Passover based upon “historical” antecedence; *Pesiq. Rab. 19* predicts the punishment of the oppressive gentile nations; *Pesiq. Rab. 20* depicts Moses’s ascent to heaven; *Pesiq. Rab. 26, 27/28, 29, 29/30* describe the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; *Pesiq. Rab. 31* and *52* envision the rebuilding of the temple; *Pesiq. Rab. 32* describes the ornaments of the future temple; *Pesiq. Rab. 33, 34, 35, 37* contain messianic expectations at the end of time; *Pesiq. Rab. 36* mentions apocalyptic wars; *Pesiq. Rab. 40* indicates that God will blow the shofar to signal redemption; *Pesiq. Rab. 51* views the dawn of a new era. The presence of apocalyptic content in *Pesiqta Rabbati* may be summarized in a

³¹ See Hahn, *Wallfahrt und Auferstehung*, 4.

meta-narrative,³² which complements the homiletic structure that follows the progression of the liturgical year from Ḥanukkah to Simḥat Torah.

Moreover, apocalyptic scenes fill semiotic gaps in the homily by visualizing the events that will transpire in the land of Israel in respect to Israel's relationship with God and with other nations. The war at the end of time is dramatized and visually described. For example, some of the weapons employed in the texts point to the cultural and political environment of the late Roman Empire or to Byzantine influences, such as the description of a fire spreading machine utilized by the angel Gabriel, which is reminiscent of Roman and Byzantine military weapons.³³ The tactics of warfare in Pesiqta Rabbati provide the reader or listener with well-known battle scenes. The texts compare God's actions with the military strategies of "a king."

\And\ it was the same in Egypt. First, [God's] measure of justice struck their wealth: { \ *He struck their vines and fig trees* (Ps 105:33); *He gave over their cattle to the hail,*} and *their flocks to thunderbolts* (Ps 78:48). And afterwards: \ *He struck all the first-born in Egypt* (Ps 78:51). R. Levi bar Zekhariah in the name of R. Berekhiah [said]: God attacked them with the tactics³⁴ of kings [in battle]. First, [God] shut off the water conduits; then he brought loud explosive noise upon them; then he shot arrows at them; then he brought legions upon them; then he brought spear bearers upon them; then he flung burning sulphur [*naphta*] upon them; then he shot stones from catapults; then he arrayed the scalers of walls against them; [he] imprisoned them; then he took away each one of the most cherished among them and killed him³⁵

PESIQ. RAB. 17:19³⁶

The above text is part of a homily on the passage "And it happened at midnight" (Exod 12:29), which is read in the synagogue during Passover. The above passage is an interpretation of Exod 12:29, the killing of the firstborn. Within a

32 See note 22.

33 Pryor and Jeffreys, *Age of the ΔΡΟΜΩΝ*, 617. The chief method of deployment of "Greek fire" (an incendiary weapon used by the Byzantines) was its projection through a tube (*siphōn*) and a portable *cheirosiphōn*.

34 Pesiq. Rab Kah. 7:11; Exod. Rab. 15:27; Tanḥ. Bo 4; Tanḥ. B Bo 4; Tanḥ. Vayeira 14; Yalq. Shim. Torah 182; Midr. ha-Gadol, Exod 13.

35 Cf. Pirqe Mashiah, Bet ha-Midr., 3:68-78; Midreshe Ge'ullah, 332-44.

36 The English translations of Pesiqta Rabbati are based upon MS Parma 3122 (copied in 1270) and important variants in Ulmer, *Synoptic Edition*; see also Ulmer, *Bilingual Edition*, 533.

series of afflictions and destructions the punishment of Egypt is summarized. The Ten Plagues are described in terms of Byzantine battle techniques, a procedure that updates the past destruction of God's enemies and placed it in a situation that was more familiar to the reader or listener. The apocalyptic text is intended for a group in crisis with the purpose of exhortation and consolation, a phenomenon with broad cross-cultural parallels that stimulated individuals to follow the insights of the homilist(s). In its apocalyptic rhetoric of destruction and redemption Pesiqta Rabbati maps a progressive apocalypse that draws upon multiple textual sources from the context of wider religious phenomena in late antiquity.³⁷

4 The New Testament and Early Christianity

Due to its programmatic nature that included predictions concerning the eschaton, apocalyptic literature had a universal scope and appealed to diverse religious groups. As a text of antiquity, the New Testament contains apocalyptic material mainly in the Gospels;³⁸ the authors were familiar with 1 Enoch³⁹ and there are parallels between Paul and Matthew with 2 Baruch.⁴⁰ It is likely that both the New Testament and Pesiqta Rabbati drew materials from the same sources, for example, 1 Enoch. However, the apocalyptic sections in Pesiqta Rabbati do not resemble the New Testament, with the exception of Revelation. According to Yarbrow Collins, the apocalypse in Mark 13 is based

37 With regard to viewing apocalypticism as a religious phenomenon, see Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 1:217.

38 The major, well-known passages include Matt 24:1-2, in which Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple (Mark 13:1-2; Luke 21:5-6); Matt 24:3-14, the signs of the times and the end of the age (Mark 13:3-13; Luke 21:7-19); Matt 24:15-28, the great suffering (Mark 13:14-23; Luke 21:20-24); Matt 24:36-31, the coming of the son of man (Mark 13:24-27, 32; Luke 21:25-28); Matt 24:32-43, the parable of the fig tree—the end is close (Mark 13:28-31; Luke 21:29-33); Matt 24:37-44, no one knows the day (Luke 17:26-30, 34-36). See the overview in Yarbrow Collins, "Apocalypticism," 326-39. Yarbrow Collins concludes that the apocalyptic traditions "provide the framework and the rationale for the other elements" in the New Testament ("Apocalypticism," 338). John Collins cautions: "The Gospels lack many of the typical apocalyptic forms and motifs" (*Apocalyptic Imagination*, 325).

39 Stuckenbruck and Boccaccini, "Introduction: 1 Enoch"; Richter, *Enoch and the Gospel*, uses the Enochic watchers and the advent of evil in the world to explain Matthew's use of Enoch to bring about eschatological repair. Aune, "Apocalypse of John," lists chapters from the Book of Watchers in 1 Enoch in his textual comparisons to Matthew.

40 See the comparison of gospel passages and of the letters of Paul to 2 Baruch in Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 322-23.

upon a written apocalyptic source.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the “small apocalypse” in Mark and Matthew and its apocalyptic expressions are universal and may have been part of popular apocalyptic knowledge. However, Pesiqta Rabbati has suggestive parallels with Revelation such as certain characteristics of apocalyptic language, the progression of the apocalypse in three stages, the expectation of an apocalyptic messiah, the evil forces of Gog and Magog, hurling Satan into a pit or Gehinnom, a New Jerusalem, and the vision of a pearly gate.⁴² The tri-partite destruction of the world in Pesiq. Rab. 15 is comparable to the destruction of the world in three stages in Revelation.⁴³ The disasters listed in Revelation have been compared to the Ten Plagues of Egypt (Exod 7:17-12:36).⁴⁴ This model of the Egyptian plagues is partially applicable to the description of a battle in Pesiq. Rab. 17:19 (see above). Both Revelation and Pesiqta Rabbati use “hail” as referring to ammunition (arrows) and other aggressive tactics to hasten the end of time.

Early Christianity, broadly stated, experienced “the challenges of contemporary life in the church” and utilized apocalyptic responses.⁴⁵ The Church Fathers,⁴⁶ who wrote in locations that were in close proximity to Jewish centers, also continued the tropes of apocalypticism in their writings. However, as Daly emphasized, by the end of the second century CE, the Christian writers were interpreting Revelation as pointing to problems of contemporary life within Christianity.⁴⁷ Origen (185-254 CE) wrote in his *Commentary on Matthew*, 32-59, on the apocalyptic section in Matthew (24:3-44), about the prediction of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, the approach of difficult times, the coming of “the Son of Man” and the warnings concerning the end of days. A “revived” apocalyptic disposition in Christianity occurred in the fourth century when the Roman Empire was invaded by armies from the East.⁴⁸ Jerome (347-419 CE) showed an interest in the apocalypse in his *Commentary on Daniel* (2, 4). Since Origen, the critical issue in the interpretation of Revelation had been whether to take it literally. The focus of this controversy was Rev 20:1-6 and its prophecy. Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian⁴⁹ believed that this passage predicted an earthly kingdom of Christ that would follow his second coming

41 Yarbro Collins, “Mark 13.”

42 Ulmer, “Culture of Apocalypticism,” 37-70.

43 Cf. Isa 24:3-5.

44 See, for example, Richard, “Plagues”; Wold, “Revelation’s Plague.”

45 Daly, “Preface,” 13.

46 See Adler, “Apocalyptic Survey”; Schwarte, “Apokalyptik.”

47 Daly, “Preface,” 13.

48 Daley, “Apocalypticism.”

49 Yarbro Collins, “Book of Revelation,” 409.

and last for a thousand years. Origen rejected this literal interpretation (*Princ.* 2.11.2-5). Minor Jewish apocalyptic themes are also noticeable in Christian apocalyptic literature.⁵⁰ The Christian writer Appolinarius of Laodicea was thought to hold “Jewish” expectations that the Jerusalem temple would be restored; Daley suggests that “strong apocalyptic expectations in this period, however—as throughout the patristic era—were rare in the Greek East.”⁵¹

5 Apocalyptic Books Utilized in Pesiqta Rabbati

Which apocalyptic sources were utilized in Pesiqta Rabbati? Regarding citations of apocalyptic literature, it is not always possible to follow the exact trajectory of apocalyptic material and draw upon linear dependencies. Furthermore, Pesiqta Rabbati utilized citations from apocalyptic literature in written or popular form. Apocalyptic citations affirm that Pesiqta Rabbati is mainly a product of the late antique religious world that was arguably a major cradle for apocalypticism. If a group wanted to gain knowledge about their future while experiencing an ever-changing contemporary situation, their visionaries had to interpret the signs of the past.⁵² In this exegetical process, Israel’s place in history, and the urgent question of how the fate of the nations would influence Israel’s destiny, often became the focus of inquiry. Substitutions, citations from shared sources, and re-employment of related material rendered apocalyptic texts intertextual. The trajectory of apocalyptic material often included fluctuations between Jewish and Christian texts. The final redaction of many Jewish apocalypses was often accomplished by Christian hands (e.g., 2 Baruch and Ascension of Isaiah).

Apocalyptic texts available to the homilist(s) of Pesiqta Rabbati included Daniel⁵³ and 1 Enoch (the Similitudes).⁵⁴ First Enoch was popular;⁵⁵ it was read at Qumran⁵⁶ and by other Jews, as well as by the followers of Jesus in

50 Bucur, “Divine Face.”

51 Daley, “Apocalypticism,” 22.

52 Aune, “Idealized Past.”

53 For example, Pesiq. Rab. 35:6: “Another interpretation: ‘The appearance of the fourth [man is like a son of god]’ (Dan 3:25). When Nebuchadnezzar saw Gabriel, he recognized him and said: This is the one I saw in the war of Sennacherib, the one who consumed in fire the hosts of Assyria.”

54 Collins, “Afterlife,” 127.

55 In Pesiqta Rabbati there are additional tropes that seem to have been borrowed from 1 Enoch, which was also utilized in Revelation; for example, 1 En. 9:4; 27:3 in Rev 15.

56 However, 1 En. 37-71, the Similitudes, was not found at Qumran (Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 220).

antiquity.⁵⁷ The list of apocalypses that cited 1 Enoch includes, but is not limited to, Assumption of Moses, 2 Baruch, and 4 Ezra. In addition to Josephus's *Jewish War* and the gospel of Matthew, the only other sources originating in the immediate wake of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 CE are the apocalypses 2 Baruch,⁵⁸ 3 Baruch, 4 Ezra,⁵⁹ and the Apocalypse of Abraham; however, none of these latter documents have survived in their original languages, and all of them experienced a complicated transmission process. The extant apocalyptic works are composite texts, which consist of merged language, ideas, and narratives found in previous texts, as well as events transpiring at the time of the apocalyptic writer. Due to the immense intertextuality within the apocalyptic corpus, it may be assumed that Pesiqtà Rabbati also utilized some of the topoi found in this "cross-cultural" corpus of shared apocalyptic literature.

6 Paralipomena of Jeremiah, Second Baruch, Fourth Ezra and Ascension of Isaiah

Jewish and Christian apocalyptic texts from late antiquity are similar,⁶⁰ because they share the same sources and frequently address the same catastrophic event, the destruction of Jerusalem.⁶¹ Pesiqtà Rabbati recapitulates the events of the destruction of the temple by the Romans with a specific focus. Gry⁶² noted that Josephus provides us with the Roman perspective, namely viewing the destruction of the temple from the vantage point of their Near Eastern troops,⁶³ which includes the comment that a Roman soldier threw a torch that set fire to the temple. Pesiq. Rab. 26 provides us with the Jewish counter-version, namely, that God set fire to the temple and initiated the methodological destruction of the superstructure of the temple precinct. This counter-version is couched and redacted in apocalyptic language.

Pesiq. Rab. 26 is a midrashic interpretation of "and it happened when the sheep rebelled and would not listen to the master's words, because they

57 Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene*, 27.

58 Gurtner, Miller, and Scott, "2 Baruch."

59 See Lichtenberger, "Zion." Henze mentions the late first or early second century CE as the date of composition ("4 Ezra and 2 Baruch," 181). Furthermore, parallels between 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch have their origins in the earliest phase of composition.

60 Oegema, *Zwischen Hoffnung*, 18.

61 See, for example, Rowland, "Apocalyptic."

62 Gry, "Ruine."

63 Josephus, *B.J.* 6.4.5. (LCL 252).

hated their shepherds who were their good leaders and departed from them,”⁶⁴ which, according to the text, was spoken through the Holy Spirit by Jeremiah. In the liturgical cycle of *Pesiqta Rabbati* this homily is probably based upon Jer 1, the reading for the first Sabbath of the three Sabbaths of Admonition preceding the Ninth of Av, the traditional date of the destructions of the successive Jerusalem temples, which calls for apocalyptic interpretations and predictions. The narrative broadly engages with the life of Jeremiah. The travail of Israel is staged by Jeremiah's body, who suffers during the march into exile together with Israel. In detailing the life of Jeremiah, the text in *Pesiq. Rab. 26* is similar to *Paralipomena* of Jeremiah and to hagiographic literature in general.

In apocalyptic literature the holy city of Jerusalem⁶⁵ and its temple are under attack. The Syriac apocalypse of 2 Baruch⁶⁶ laments the fall of Jerusalem.⁶⁷ The book is a literary response by a Jewish author to the defeat and destruction the Romans inflicted upon the Jews in 70 CE. The interpretation of the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem and the response of 2 Baruch may have influenced *Pesiqta Rabbati*, since 2 Baruch attempted to make sense of the destruction of Jerusalem and to exhort Israel to remain faithful to its God and to follow the divine commandments in hope of restoration, which is also a major concern of *Pesiqta Rabbati*. The apocalypses of 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra are inter-related; both use material that is similar to 1 Enoch, and both apocalypses are reflected in several passages in *Pesiq. Rab. 26*. Fourth Ezra is a definitive source of *Pesiq. Rab. 26*;⁶⁸ this apocalyptic work was written under the pseudonym of Ezra, a leader during the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem after the First Temple had been destroyed in 586 BCE. 4 Ezra may have influenced the homily in *Pesiq. Rab. 37*, which predicts the reconstruction of Jerusalem after the predetermined apocalyptic destruction has run its course. The role of God in the destruction of Jerusalem, which is mainly carried out by the “nations,” is

64 This passage does not exist in the Masoretic text. Concerning the entire homily, see Prijs, *Jeremia-Homilie*. Prijs suggested that this text represents a combined reading of several verses from Jeremiah.

65 Grossman, “Jerusalem.”

66 Bogaert, *Apocalypse de Baruch*.

67 2 Baruch was originally composed in Jewish circles, and the contention that it is instead a purely Christian composition has not found much support. Nonetheless, according to Nir, 2 Baruch is a Christian work in the sense that it was adopted and preserved within Christian circles for much of its transmission history (Nir, *Destruction of Jerusalem*, 83-100 and passim). Henze argues for a Jewish origin of 2 Baruch and disagrees with Nir (*Jewish Apocalypticism*, 69-70, 76-78).

68 See Lévi, “*Pesikta Rabbati*”; Longenecker, “Locating 4 Ezra”; Gry, “Ruine”; Stone, *Fourth Ezra*.

set forth in unambiguous terms. Additionally, the involvement of angels in the destruction of the city is part of a narrative in *Pesiq. Rab.* 26.

The abrupt cessation of the temple service, as a result of the destruction of the temple, was a traumatic event in the history of Jewish worship.⁶⁹ The trope of this event permeates *Pesiqta Rabbati*; it provides the liturgical occasion for many homilies and is a focal point of several apocalyptic homilies. In apocalyptic reviews of history, the devastation of the First Temple by the Babylonians is presented in an almost concurrent perspective with the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans.⁷⁰ The memory of the first destruction of Jerusalem, the exile, and the return from the Babylonian exile generally provided a frame of reference for apocalypses. Nevertheless, rabbinic texts chose to remember the destructions of Jerusalem as conflated events.⁷¹

The presentation of the destruction of God's city in *Pesiq. Rab.* 26 focuses upon critical events.⁷² The temple was burnt down on the Ninth of Av (*Pesiq. Rab.* 26:17). It is argued that Nebuchadnezzar fulfilled the zodiac sign for the month of Av, the lion, because he was called "the lion" based upon *Jer* 4:7, "The lion has come up from his thicket and the destroyer of nations is on his way."⁷³ This destructive "lion" (*Pesiq. Rab.* 26:17, 33:65, and often)⁷⁴ may have been mentioned because utilizing animals to symbolize kingdoms is a typical device employed by apocalyptic accounts of history and predictions concerning the future (e.g., *Dan* 7:4); this apocalyptic strategy may have been implemented by the homilist(s) in *Pesiqta Rabbati*. According to the midrash, the prophet Jeremiah was reluctant to prophesy the destruction, but he had been chosen by God since "the days of creation" for this task (*Pesiq. Rab.* 26:3).⁷⁵ Furthermore, an angel of the Lord set his feet against the walls of Jerusalem and breached them, permitting the Chaldeans—a chifre for the Romans—to enter the city on the seventeenth of Tammuz. Then, on the Ninth of Av, four angels placed four flaming torches at the four corners of the temple and set it on fire. The destruction of Jerusalem is reconsidered in a subsequent homily,

69 See Ulmer, "Construction."

70 E.g., *b. Yom.* 9b.

71 With regard to the interrelationship between history and memory in apocalyptic visions, see Rappaport, "Apocalyptic Vision," 218.

72 *Pesiq. Rab.* 26 has long been recognized as an exceptional text in *Pesiqta Rabbati*; see Prijs, *Jeremia-Homilie*; Goldberg, "Pesiqtā Rabbati 26." Heinemann classified this homily as "rewritten bible"; however, there are no references to apocalyptic or pseudepigraphic sources in Heinemann's article ("Homily on Jeremiah," 41, n. 41). Novick, "First-Century Apocalyptic," summarizes Prijs and Bogaert and refers to *Pesiqta Rabbati*.

73 Cf. 4 *Ezra* 11:37-12:3.

74 See *Exod. Rab.* 29:9; *Pesiq. Rab. Kah.* 13:15; cf. 'Ag. Ber. 56.

75 Compare *Pesiq. Rab. Kah.* 13; *Tanḥ. Shemini* 5.

Pesiq. Rab. 27/28. Based upon an interpretation of Jer 37:1-2, the midrash (Pesiq. Rab. 27/28:4-5) stated that the angels implored God to spare the city and the temple by referring to the merits of the fathers, the tribes, the prophets, the rabbinic disciples, and the name of God. Although the destruction had been revealed to the fathers of Israel,⁷⁶ it was delayed by their merits and because of Moses. This homily ends with the prayer “May it be your will, O Lord our God and God of our fathers, that you rebuild your sanctuary soon, in our days”⁷⁷ (Pesiq. Rab. 27/28:8), which displays a close relationship of the homily to liturgy. Pesiq. Rab. 28 contains a lengthy lament, deploring the destruction of the temple and the Babylonian exile.

Inspired by Gry’s publication,⁷⁸ extensive synoptic comparisons of 2 Baruch, Pesiqta Rabbati and Paralipomena of Jeremiah were published by Bogaert, who concluded that Pesiq. Rab. 26 was based upon Paralipomena of Jeremiah and 2 Baruch.⁷⁹ This argument was expanded upon by Herzer.⁸⁰ Nickelsburg had raised the plausible idea that a “frame source” existed for 2 Baruch, Paralipomena of Jeremiah, and Pesiq. Rab. 26.⁸¹ Nir also noted parallels between Pesiqta Rabbati and 2 Baruch, namely, the events surrounding the destruction of the (Second) Temple, although Pesiqta Rabbati actually purports to speak about the First Temple from the time of Jeremiah.⁸² The parallels include: the breaching of the walls by an angel, the burning of the sanctuary by four angels with torches,⁸³ the abandonment of the temple by God, the casting of the keys of the temple gates toward heaven, and the virgins weaving in the temple. It is significant that Nir views Pesiq. Rab. 26 as presenting a parallel tradition to 2 Baruch,⁸⁴ which would imply that Pesiq. Rab. 26 in several instances did not copy from the extant versions of 2 Baruch. In 2 Baruch, the virgins throw the woven cloth into the fire, whereas in Pesiq. Rab. 26:20 the

76 Gen. Rab. 44:21.

77 Gen. Rab. 13:2 indicates that there were prayers for the rebuilding of the temple. Novick sought to find evidence for the subsequent development of the traditions underlying 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch in “para-rabbinic texts”; namely, the laments by the seventh-century Byzantine poet Qallir (“First-Century Apocalyptic”). One may add the following references: Stemberger, “Reaktionen,” 235; Ben Menahem, “Two Songs”; Habermann, “Piyyutim”; Bogaert, *Apocalypse de Baruch*, 154; Flusser, *Judaism*, 281, 284; and Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 321.

78 Gry, “Ruine.”

79 Bogaert, *Apocalypse de Baruch*, 234-36. See also b. Ta’an. 29a; y. Šeqal. 6:2, 50a; Lev. Rab. 19:16.

80 Herzer, *4 Baruch*, xxiii-xxiv.

81 Nickelsburg, “Narrative Traditions.”

82 Nir, *Destruction of Jerusalem*.

83 Pesiq. Rab. 26:18-19; cf. 2 Bar. 6-8; 2 Bar. 2:1-2; 2 Bar. 8:1-2.

84 Nir, *Destruction of Jerusalem*, 115.

virgins throw themselves into the fire.⁸⁵ Furthermore, the keys of the temple in both texts are thrown toward heaven.⁸⁶

the enemies came and set up their platform on the Temple Mount. Then they went up to this platform, which was centrally located at the location where King Solomon used to sit when he took counsel with the elders {*editio princeps*: there the enemies sat and took counsel with the elders as how to burn the temple}. There the embellishments of the temple had been planned. As they were deliberating, they lifted their eyes, and behold, four angels were descending, in their hands four flaming torches, which they placed at the four corners of the temple, and set it on fire. When the High Priest saw that the temple was on fire, he took the keys and cast them toward heaven. He said: Here are the keys of your house; I have been an unworthy custodian of it ... When the priests and the Levites saw that the temple was on fire, they took the harps and trumpets and threw themselves together with these into the flames.⁸⁷

PESIQTĀ RAB. 26:18-19

The narrative of the keys⁸⁸ is comparable to 2 Bar. 10:18 and Par. Jer. 4:3-4, although in these versions the visionary appeals to the priests to throw the keys toward heaven. The detailed description of the act of throwing the keys of the temple presents the visualization of components of the event in an almost theatrical fashion. Furthermore, the images create a semiotic nexus, which is a meaningful arrangement accompanied by a density of textually embedded images. The text states that an angel breached the walls of Jerusalem and that the angel delivered God's message: "And he announced that the enemies would come and enter the house, the Master of which would not be present" (Pesiqt. Rab. 26:18). Following this, the temple was set aflame by angels, not by "enemies," which emphasizes that God elected to abandon his house, the temple. Pesiqt. Rab. 26 recapitulates the events of the destruction with a specific religious focus: the righteous suffer, they are slaughtered, but there is a divine reason behind their deaths, namely, the majority of Israel did not follow God's commandments. In my view, the entire homily was not transformed into

85 Cf. Josephus, *BJ*. 6.5.1.

86 Comp. b. Ta'an. 29a; Lev. Rab. 19:6; ARN a, 12b.

87 See Yalq. Shim. Jer 20 concerning four angels, and Yalq. Shim. Isa 22 concerning the key incident, as well as the virgins jumping into the fire.

88 See b. Ta'an. 29a; Lev. Rab. 19:16; y. Šeqal. 4:2, 50a; Kirschner, "Apocalyptic and Rabbinic," 35-36.

an apocalypse, only certain apocalyptic topoi are strategically employed by the homilist to depict the destruction of Jerusalem as an apocalyptic event.

Ascension of Isaiah, an apocalypse that depicts the life and martyrdom of another prophet, Isaiah, is also cited in *Pesiqta Rabbati* (4:11). The passage follows a midrashic interpretation of Isa 66:1 and a rhetorical question by God. The following interpretation is attached to this midrash by the hermeneutic operation of “actualization,” which is typically indicated by the word “immediately” to create continuity in midrash.

Immediately, Manasseh grew angry at [Isaiah] and said to them: Seize him! They ran after him to arrest him. He fled from them. A carob tree opened itself up and swallowed him. R. Ḥanina bar Yitsh̄aq said: [So the king] brought carpenters and he sawed the carob tree and the blood dripped down.⁸⁹ This is what is written: “Moreover, Manasseh shed innocent blood in great quantity, until he had filled Jerusalem” (2 Kgs 21:16).

PESIQ. RAB. 4:11

Pesiq. Rab. 4 is a homily dedicated to the festival of Hanukkah; it is based upon a lemma from 1 Kgs 18:30-32, indicating that Elijah took stones to build an altar. It includes lengthy comparisons of Elijah to Moses. *Pesiq. Rab.* 4:10 mentions the building of an altar and the temple. This leads to the prophecy of Isaiah who prophesizes that the temple will be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, which the midrash calls the end of Isaiah’s prophecy. At this juncture, the quotation from *Ascension of Isaiah* is employed to demonstrate the death of Isaiah and the expected destruction of the temple.

7 The Ascension of Moses in *Pesiq. Rab.* 20 and *Hekhalot* Literature

The homily in *Pesiq. Rab.* 20 *matan torah* (the giving of the torah) is dedicated to the festival of Shavu’ot that celebrates the revelation of the torah and the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. Beyond midrashic apocalypticism the homily displays strong affinities with other text types that contain the ascension of Moses. The ascent of Moses to Mount Sinai and beyond the mountain to the firmaments and seven heavens shows some overlap with apocalyptic literature and *hekhalot* literature.⁹⁰ Both *hekhalot* and apocalyptic

89 Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah.

90 See, for example, Orlov, “Enoch Tradition,” 110-11, who presents an important conclusion that 2 (Slavic) Enoch in many instances parallels *Sefer Hekhalot*.

literature contain heavenly ascents,⁹¹ but in *Pesiq. Rab. 20* the ascent is framed as homiletic midrash and contains scriptural interpretations.⁹² Textual traditions are continuously reused in new contexts; however, I wish to note that the features and objectives of *hekhalot* literature differ from those of homiletic midrash. *Hekhalot* literature has visionaries who pass through the seven throne rooms (or “palaces”) of heaven; usually the visionaries are rabbinic figures, only 3 Enoch refers to the biblical Enoch. In *Pesiq. Rab. 20* the visionary is the biblical figure of Moses.⁹³ The ascent or descent of the *hekhalot* visionaries describes angels on seven levels, the throne of God, and angelic liturgies. Furthermore, the texts mention numerous rituals to adjure or summon angels, e.g., seals and passwords. The prospective visionary is usually fearful. Sometimes a visionary is not summoned, but rather he attempts to ascend on his own.

The ascent in *Pesiq. Rab. 20* displays a few commonalities with *hekhalot* literature such as ascending to God, engaging with hostile angels, and exhibiting fear. Moses is called to ascend and enters several levels of the firmament while being confronted by hostile angels. God assists Moses until he perceives the divine throne on the chariot on which God appeared to Ezekiel. Underneath the chariot are the faces of the living beings, and the chariot is surrounded by angelic hosts. God receives a crown and also Israel is crowned by angels at God’s command while every Israelite is held steady by angels. In the biblical account of revelation Moses is denied the vision of God’s face (Exod 33:18-33). In 2 En. 39:3-4 Enoch saw the face of God, but in *Pesiq. Rab. 20:20* not only the visionary, Moses, but all of Israel see God face to face.

Only after including other midrashic interpretations relating to creation and the holiness of God, the homily leads to its focal point, the ascension:

91 Himmelfarb, “Heavenly Ascent” views *Hekhalot Rabbati* and *Ma’aseh Merkavah* and their respective songs of ascent as part of the liturgy in the heavenly temple.

92 Grözinger, *Ich bin der Herr*, in his edition of *Pesiq. Rab. 20*, included texts relating to the ascent of Moses in mysticism, e.g. MS Bodl Or 135; Maclud Vitry, 323ff; *Sefer Arugat ha-Bosem*, 2, 183; *Sefer Ktav Tammim*, MS Paris Hebr. 711. Gruenwald, *Apocalypticism*, 71, 74, 219, treats *Pesiq. Rab. 20* as a parallel to *hekhalot* literature. Chernus, *Mysticism in Rabbinic*, combines the analysis of revelation and “esoteric” traditions in merkavah mysticism. Boustán, “Rabbinization,” argues for literary permeability of “rabbinic” literature and *hekhalot* literature.

93 *Midr. ha-Gadol*, Exod 24:18; *Midr. ‘Aseret ha-Dibrot 2*; *Bet ha-Midr.*, 1: 58-61, 115-29; 2: 71-78; 5:165-66; in different form and abbreviated in b. Šabb. 88a, and b. Yoma 4a; *Pirqe R. El.* 46; T-SK 21.95.A. See also *Sefer Arugat ha-Bosem*, 1:242, 3:74, and Yalqut Reuveni, esp. 1:6-10, *Midr. Ber. Rabb.* 10.

Our Rabbis taught: "I am the Lord your God" (Exod 20:2). At the time when Moses ascended to the higher [regions], they said: A cloud came and lay down in front of him. Moses did not know whether he was to mount it or to take hold of it. Instantly the mouth of the cloud opened and he entered it, as it is said: "And Moses entered into the midst of the cloud" (Exod 24:18), "and the cloud covered him"⁹⁴ (Exod 24:16). And the cloud covered Moses and carried him up. And as Moses was walking on the firmament, Kemuel confronted him, the angel who is in charge of twelve thousand destroyer angels that are seated at the gates of the firmament.⁹⁵

PESIQ. RAB. 20:11

Moses defends himself against Kemuel and announces that he "has come to receive the torah for Israel." Since Moses is not able to convince this angel, he physically attacks him and destroys him. In Pesiq. Rab. 20:12 "Moses was walking on the firmament like a man walking on the earth, until he reached the place of Hadarniel." The midrash states that Moses was frightened, he wept and he almost fell from the cloud. God intervenes on behalf of Moses. The angels oppose the giving of the torah to Israel and God argues with them (20:13). Pesiq. Rab. 20:14 addresses the reader or listener of the homily: "Come and see how beloved Israel is to the Holy One" and mentions that God "came down from his throne, and positioned himself in front of Sandalphon until Moses passed by. Concerning that moment Moses said: 'And the Lord passed {before him}' (Exod 34:6)."

Pesiq. Rab. 20:14 contains short references to the liturgy: "Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place" (Ezek 3:12), as well as the trishagion. Pesiq. Rab. 20:15 describes the effects that the crown has upon God's throne and includes the heavenly liturgy:

All the creatures of the chariot, {and the seraphim}, the ophanim [angels], the wheels of the chariot, and the throne of glory say in unison: "\The Lord will reign forever and ever" (Exod 15:18)\ "The Lord will reign forever, your God, O Zion, unto all generations. \Hallelujah\" (Ps 146:10).⁹⁶

94 In Exod 24, the cloud covered the mountain.

95 Ulmer, *Bilingual Edition*, 579.

96 The homily contains songs (or *piyyutim*), e.g., Pesiq. Rab. 20:1: "Do not be afraid, O kings of the earth! And do not be terrified, O princes of the world! He who in his glory dwells in the skies is revealing himself in mercy to his children; And appears to give to his people the torah, and wisdom and instruction to his beloved." There are numerous intertextual

The reference to the chariot is apparently related to merkavah mysticism.⁹⁷ In Pesiq. Rab. 20:17, God protects Moses with his splendor from the destroyer angels. This is followed by an explanation in the name of Rabbi Naḥum. God requests that Moses defend himself with words; in Pesiq. Rab. 20:18 Moses quotes from the torah. In Pesiq. Rab. 20:19 God opens

the seven firmaments and showed him the heavenly temple. He showed him also the four colors, which he used for the tabernacle, as it is said: 'Then you shall erect the tabernacle [according to the plan for it that you were shown on the mountain]' (Exod 26:30).

The homily ends with the revelation of the torah; the angels are forced to assist the Israelites to view God at Sinai. A warning is mentioned in the homily that the punishment of Gehinnom will occur, if the Israelites do not worship their sovereign, God.

In sum, Pesiq. Rab. 20 has strong apocalyptic features, because it posits a supernatural revelation not normally accessible to humanity. The midrashic interpretation enables the insertion of mystical elements in the same manner as homilies insert a *maschal* (a parable), but the homilist is firmly positioning revelation within rabbinic dicta and scriptural interpretations.

8 Pesiqta Rabbati and Sefer Zerubavel

The wider Jewish literary contexts to which the apocalyptic passages in Pesiqta Rabbati could theoretically be compared to the explicit apocalypse, is Sefer Zerubavel.⁹⁸ Himmelfarb views Sefer Zerubavel as a book that presents Jewish messianism and that demonstrates revelation and rabbinization, but she writes that "the content is undeniably apocalyptic."⁹⁹ I maintain that Pesiqta Rabbati did not rely upon the text of Sefer Zerubavel, which underwent a complicated

relationships between Pesiqta Rabbati and liturgical poetry; after all, Pesiqta Rabbati presents itself as a text that was used in the synagogue.

97 Halperin states: "The description of Homily 1 on Ezekiel of the descent of the angels to the aid of the believers strongly resembles the presentation of the same theme in Pesiqta and the Talmud" ("Origen," 272).

98 Sefer Zerubavel was published in 1519 in Constantinople; it is included together with Sefer Malkiel in Reeves, *Trajectories*, 40-66.

99 Himmelfarb, *Jewish Messiahs*, 21. See also Yassif, *Sefer ha-zikhronot hu divre ha-yamim le-yerahme'el*, 427-35; Bet ha-Midr. 2:54-57; Midreshe Ge'ullah, 55-88, 40-60; Bate Midr. 2:495-505.

process of accretion.¹⁰⁰ There are very few commonalities between the two texts; all of the apocalyptic material in *Pesiqta Rabbati* is based upon earlier works or derives from a common stock of apocalyptic topoi. In *Sefer Zerubavel*, which is about return and reconstruction, the visionary is named, it is the biblical figure Zerubavel (e.g., *Ezra* 2:2), who in the Persian period returned from captivity under Cyrus. Zerubavel experiences an angelic revelation and the apocalyptic vision occurs in a dialogue and scriptural proof-texts merely confirm the statements. *Pesiqta Rabbati* does not mention any vision narratives that would be comparable to *Sefer Zerubavel*, since in midrashic texts rabbinic interpreters fill the role of revelators and predict the events of the apocalypse in their interpretations of scripture.

The temporal framing of the two texts is apparent in the sense of imminent eschatological expectation; *Sefer Zerubavel* reflects the conflict between Persia and the Byzantine Empire, which is also present in *Pesiqta Rabbati*. The threat continues into the 730s with the new power of the Arabs arriving. A miniscule similarity between *Pesiqta Rabbati* and *Sefer Zerubavel* extends to the king of Persia: *Pesiq. Rab.* 36 mentions a war of the king of Persia against the king of Arabia; *Sefer Zerubavel* states: "Then in the fifth year of Nehemiah and the gathering together of the holy ones, Shiroi, king of Persia will go up against Nehemiah son of Hushiel and Israel, and there will be great trouble for Israel."¹⁰¹ *Sefer Zerubavel* describes the battle between the "Antichrist," Armilus,¹⁰² the leader of Rome and Christianity, and the Jewish messiah ben Joseph, who is killed in battle, but prepares the way for the Davidic messiah. None of this appears in *Pesiqta Rabbati*, which leads me to conclude that *Pesiqta Rabbati* did not copy from *Sefer Zerubavel*.

There are some connections between apocalyptic passages in *Pesiqta Rabbati* and *Midreshe Ge'ullah* (*Pirque Mashiah*, *Aggadat ha-Mashiah*, *The Secrets of R. Shim'on b. Yoḥai*, *Sefer Elijah*, and *The Ten Signs of the Messiah*). These medieval texts were composed after *Pesiqta Rabbati* and may be considered trajectories of *Pesiqta Rabbati* material that had congealed and was cited in the eleventh century.¹⁰³ Alternatively, *Midreshe Ge'ullah* relied upon a stock of apocalyptic Jewish speculations of the late Byzantine-early medieval period.

100 Regarding shared Christian and Jewish icons in this book, see Speck, "Apocalypse of Zerubbabel," 183-90.

101 The translation follows Himmelfarb, "Sefer Zerubbabel," 74. See Lévi, "L'apocalypse," based upon Oxford Ms. 2797, the *Chronicles of Yerahme'el*.

102 See Dan, "Armilus," 75. Rowland wrote: "For both Judaism and Christianity a means of enunciating ... the culture of resistance that was at times required was facilitated by apocalypticism" ("Apocalyptic," 238).

103 See Ulmer, "*Pesiqta Rabbati*," 89.

9 The Sequence of Apocalyptic Events and Consolation Homilies

The goal of the Consolation Homilies in Pesiqta Rabbati was to console the personification of Jerusalem or Zion, as well as the Jewish people, concerning the destruction of the temples. The homilies often conclude with a passage from the prophets that promises redemption to Israel. The seven consolation homilies,¹⁰⁴ based upon the haftarah readings after the Ninth of Av, contain apocalyptic visions, in which the apocalypse develops in certain predetermined stages. The consolation homilies also present stages of consolation to those mourning the destruction of the temples. A deliberate sequence in the order of the haftarot was observed by R. Simḥah of Vitry (died 1105):¹⁰⁵

And the latter haftarot, all of which speak of consolation, are read from the Ninth of Av until Yom Kippur, in the way that one consoles in stages, for someone who offers consolation too close to the time of tragedy is like one who predicts the future: “Tomorrow you will be king,” which the bereaved cannot believe.

In Pesiq. Rab. 29/30, a “consolation” homily based upon Isa 40:1 “Comfort, comfort my people,” it is stated that God sent fire from heaven; this was established in rabbinic interpretations of Lam 1:13 (“The Lord has sent fire from above into my bones”) and Lam 4:11 (“The Lord ... has kindled a fire in Zion, which has devoured its foundations”).¹⁰⁶ Pesiqta Rabbati engages in the problematic theological argument that God was instrumental and culpable in igniting his sanctuary. In several homilies in Pesiqta Rabbati, the rabbinic assumption

104 Goldberg, *Erlösung*, 89, 203, 323; Barth, “Three of Rebuke”; Ulmer, *Tröstet*; Ulmer, “Pesiqta Rabbati Naḥamu.” The consolation homilies in Pesiqta Rabbati consist of the following: “Comfort, comfort my people” (Isa 40:1) is the first homily of consolation; however, there are two separate homilies in Pesiqta Rabbati—namely, 29/30 and 30 with respect to Isa 40:1, either of which could have served as the first consolation homily. “Zion says, the Lord has forsaken me” (Isa 49:14) in Pesiq. Rab. 31 is part of the second haftarah of the cycle. “O you afflicted, storm-tossed one” (Isa 54:11) in Pesiq. Rab. 32 relates to the third haftarah. “I, I am he” (Isa 51:12) in Pesiq. Rab. 33 are the beginning words of the fourth haftarah. “Shout, O barren one” (Isa 54:1) in Pesiq. Rab. 34 relates to the fifth haftarah. “Arise, shine” (Isa 60:1) in Pesiq. Rab. 36 relates to the sixth haftarah. The homily entitled “Rejoicing I will rejoice” (Isa 61:10) in Pesiq. Rab. 37 relates to the seventh haftarah. Pesiq. Rab. 35 “Sing and rejoice” (Zech 2:14) is not one of the seven consolation homilies; nevertheless, it serves to console (see Goldberg, *Ich komme*).

105 Maḥzor Vitry, 345, compare Siddur Rashi, 404. Maḥzor Vitry is important, because the author was familiar with Pesiqta Rabbati.

106 Kirschner, “Apocalyptic,” reviews Ekḥah Rabbati with regard to God’s involvement in the destruction.

of God's active role in the destructions of Jerusalem in 586 BCE and 70 CE raised problems of theodicy. The theodicy is presented in a distinctively rabbinic form, asking why God had abandoned his chosen people (Pesiq. Rab. 29/30:12).¹⁰⁷ However, the questions of theodicy are not resolved and God's actions are presented as part of the utter destruction inherent in the progression of the apocalypse.¹⁰⁸

In the mode of midrash, Pesiq. Rab. 29/30 expands the tropes of mourning over the destruction of the temple; it memorializes the temple, while offering consolation to the righteous of Israel. Jeremiah's mourning and lamentation in the book of Lamentations as personalized grief was transferred into apocalyptic visions.¹⁰⁹ Mourning will be replaced by divine solace for those who remain faithful and follow God's commandments. The consolation homilies in Pesiqta Rabbati bring hope and comfort to Jews after presenting graphic descriptions that aid in visualizing the horror to be experienced before the end of time will bring the final judgment and salvation. In the apocalypses of 1 Enoch, 2 Baruch, and 4 Ezra,¹¹⁰ there is an emphasis upon dialogues with angels or with God, an increasing destruction of the earth, especially Jerusalem, as well as the restoration and the appearance of an active savior figure, which all follow apocalyptic conventions.¹¹¹

The apocalyptic passages in Pesiqta Rabbati follow a temporal axis by describing history as evolving until the end of history, as well as a spatial axis in its descriptions leading from earth to heaven. Hanneken writes that apocalypses incorporate transcendence on the spatial axis and, moreover, that apocalypses explain the experience of evil and suffering in the world.¹¹² The homiletic strategies in Pesiqta Rabbati conform to Hanneken's reasoning. The apocalypse unfolds in predetermined stages in a temporal sequence: Affliction of the world, final battles, the destruction of Jerusalem, the appearance of the messiah, and salvation. One stage of suffering inflicted upon the world precedes the coming of the messiah.¹¹³ Pesiqta Rabbati also describes great afflictions during the septennate preceding the arrival of the messiah (Pesiq. Rab. 15:37-39). Pesiq.

107 This question is known from 4 Ezra (3:29-36; 4:23-25; 5:23-30) and 2 Baruch, which laments the unwarranted demise of the righteous people, who remained loyal to God even at the moment of their death (2 Bar. 14:12-13).

108 Cf. Nistarot R. Shim'on b. Yoḥai in Bet ha-Midr., 3:78-82; Midreshe Ge'ullah, 401-3.

109 2 Bar. 54:4.

110 God himself destroyed the temple in 2 Bar. 1:4; 20:2; 4 Ezra 3:27.

111 Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 11.

112 Hanneken, *Subversion*, 2.

113 See 2 Bar. 29:31; 1 En. 48:10; 52:4.

Rab. 15 maps the stages of the unfolding apocalypse, the signs of the messiah, and final battles.¹¹⁴

In apocalyptic manner, the period before the end of the world is characterized by natural catastrophes, famine, disease, and the increase of evil. Specific events during this time period have been described as “birth pangs” in *Pesiq. Rab.* 36:8, which describes the succession of afflictions.¹¹⁵ Similarly, *Pesiq. Rab.* 34:3 includes the description of harsh weather patterns that will destroy the crops and furthermore, it predicts the presence of evil before redemption will transpire. The afflictions will involve the partial destruction of the world, which will affect ten areas that will suffer earthquakes, political upheaval, and the death of their inhabitants. In the midrashic interpretation of *Pesiq. Rab.* 34 lemmata from *Zech* 9:9 (“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, your king comes to you; he is just, and victorious; humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt the foal of a donkey”) are interpreted in correlation with the description of the messiah. This verse and its subparts are used in both rabbinic and Christian understanding concerning the coming of the messiah.

But when [Israel] sees the afflictions decreed for the year immediately preceding the year in which the messiah will be revealed among them, and when the afflictions follow one upon the other without ceasing, then at last they will understand and they will say: In our lifetime there have not been such [afflictions]. During Nisan on the eve of the seven-year period [before the arrival of the messiah], a wind will come forth from the West, and snow will come down from heaven and destroy all the seed. And afterwards, month after month, evil will begin and the intensity of evil will be doubled. After this [the mockers] will understand and say: Surely, here is an indication of the king messiah. Even then their conviction will not be certain until the seven-year period, in which they will be punished until they will have faces as black as the rims of a pot. And with what will [Israel] be punished? With famine, since Israel’s stubbornness can only be broken through famine.

PESIQ. RAB. 34:3

114 Aggadat ha-Mashiah, an apocalyptic text in *Midrash Leqaḥ Tov (Pesiqtā Zutarta)* on *Num* 24:17-19, is a trajectory of *Pesiq. Rab.* 15. Another apocalyptic text, expressing similar ideas, is *Wars of the Messiah (Bet ha-Midr., 2:58-63)*.

115 *Mark* 13:8 mentions the “beginning of birth pangs.” Cf. *1 En.* 62:4.

The month of Nisan is significant in the apocalyptic drama, because Passover, the feast of freedom and redemption, is celebrated during Nisan. *Pesiq. Rab.* 34 is a consolation homily that provides hope for the future.

Pesiq. Rab. 36 is based upon the verse “Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. Since, see, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples; but upon her you the Lord will arise, and his glory shall be seen upon you” (Isa 60:1-2). This verse includes looming catastrophes (“darkness”) followed by the arrival of light; in the midrash the light is interpreted as the messiah. The entire homily relies upon the events provided in the biblical verse, but it inserts events that transpired at the cusp of the Islamic conquest of the Middle East.

R. Yitzḥaq said: In the year in which the king messiah is revealed, all the kings of the nations of the world will be at war with one another. The king of Persia will make war against the king of Arabia, and the king of Arabia will go to Edom to take counsel from Edom. The king of Persia will again devastate the whole world and all the nations of the world will be agitated and frightened, they will fall *{editio princeps: upon their faces}* and they will be seized with pains like birth pangs. And *{editio princeps: Israel, agitated and frightened,}* will say: Where shall we go, where shall we come? [God] will say: My children, do not be afraid; the day of your redemption has arrived. And this latter redemption will not be like your first redemption, you [suffered] torment and subjugation from the [foreign] kingdoms, but during the latter redemption, you will have no anguish or servitude from other kingdoms.

PESIQ. RAB. 36:8

In this consolation homily, the midrashic strategy is to employ an antithetical comparison between the redemption from Egypt and the future and final redemption from the yoke of foreign nations.¹¹⁶

In apocalyptic tradition, foreign invaders were expected to wage war against Jerusalem in an eschatological battle (Ezek 38-39; Sib. Or. 3.657-732; Rev 20:7-10; 4 Ez. 13:5-11). In *Pesiq. Rab.* 36 the foreign armies are depicted as war-mongering

116 Regarding apocalyptic battles fought by foreign kings, Pirque Mashiah (Bet ha-Midr., 3:68-78; Midreshe Ge'ullah, 332-44) mentions the same kings as *Pesiqta Rabbati* and *Sefer Zerubavel*, but it places the battles in the fifth year of the messianic age: “During the fifth year [the messiah] will come and reveal himself in all the kingdoms. All of those sovereigns will fight with one another: the king of Persia with the sovereign of the Arabs and destroy [him], for scripture says: ‘each will war with his brother and each with his neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom’ (Isa 19:2).”

forces in the final battles. In a vision of the end of time the figure of Gog, King of Magog, plays an important role in the apocalyptic drama awaiting Israel in its last combat with the combined forces of foreign nations. The eschatological drama staged in Ezekiel served as a paradigm, with minor variations, in subsequent apocalyptic texts.¹¹⁷

Pesiq. Rab. 37 interprets the haftarah for the seventh Sabbath of Consolation, “Rejoicing I will rejoice in the Lord” (Isa 61:10), as multiple occasions for joy. The final battles appear in Pesiq. Rab. 37:6, which states: “I will rejoice—about the downfall of evil Rome; my soul will rejoice in my God—this [refers] to the war against Gog and Magog.” In Pesiq. Rab. 37:4 the savior figure will be attacked by one hundred and forty kingdoms, which symbolize foreign nations attacking Jerusalem. Pesiqtā Rabbati portrays the messiah as victor¹¹⁸ in the apocalyptic war.¹¹⁹ The task of the future Messiah Ephraim (Pesiq. Rab. 36:6) is to redeem Israel. Ultimately, the messiah trumps Satan (Pesiq. Rab. 37:2).¹²⁰

In a substantial portion of the homilies in Pesiqtā Rabbati that concern mourning and consolation in respect to the destruction of the temple, the *Avele Tzion* are described as zealous mourners for the destroyed temple;¹²¹ from the perspective of apocalyptic theory they represent a group with an intense expectation of a Jewish messiah. They view the destruction of the temple as apocalyptic fulfillment and wait for the next stage in the apocalypse: the wars of the Lord. Pesiqtā Rabbati may reflect actual apocalyptic sectarianism; the group is seemingly preparing for an imminent eschaton and a new world that would appear, wiping out everything that stood before. From the perspective of salvation at the end of time, the group *Avele Tzion* represents the faithful followers of God.¹²² Due to their faithfulness, the *Avele Tzion* are not harmed when the angels of destruction assist God in the final battle; this is presented in the midrashic visualization of the spectacle before the end of time. This scenario may be based upon the concept of distributive justice and retribitional

117 With regard to rabbinic literature, see Milikowsky, “Trajectories”; Nikolsky, “Gog”; and Ulmer, “Culture of Apocalypticism,” 60.

118 Pesiqtā Rabbati seems to develop the concept of “catastrophic messianism,” a term coined by Scholem, *Messianic Idea*.

119 Gog and Magog are found in Pesiq. Rab. 13:2; 31:22; 51:26. The wars of Gog and Magog are also mentioned together with the messianic woes and the last judgment preceding the millennium in Lev. Rab. 9:6; Tanḥ. Va’era 16; b. Sanh. 94a.

120 See T. Jud. 25; T. Levi 18; 2 En. 10.

121 Goldberg, *Erlösung*, 131-33. Cf. Stemberger, “Reaktionen,” 253; Ulmer, “Contours.”

122 A major topic of the Similitudes of Enoch is the fate of the righteous, the chosen, and the wicked; the righteous will be in heaven (e.g., 1 En. 41:2) or live on earth. A group of faithful righteous people also plays a pivotal role in the Animal Apocalypse in 1 En. 85-90.

religious conviction¹²³ that is generally found in apocalyptic texts: the righteous followers and believers will be redeemed at the end of time, whereas the wicked will be destroyed. The world is in crisis because of transgressions, but God will break into history to rectify the unjust and evil state of affairs.

In the emerging plan of the apocalypse, the redactor of *Pesiqta Rabbati* maps a coherent vision of post-destruction events followed by the consolation of Israel. After the apocalyptic wars, the redemption will include the restoration of Jerusalem. The Jews will return to Jerusalem, the temple will be rebuilt and the righteous king (the messiah) will rule. Based upon prophetic visions (Isa 6:1; Jer 17:12; Ezek 40-48) of an ideal heavenly temple, midrashic interpretations further developed the idea of a heavenly Jerusalem,¹²⁴ as well as the existence of a temple “above” and “below.”¹²⁵ *Pesiq. Rab.* 20 contains a vision of the future temple, which is revealed to Moses after his ascent to heaven. By contrast, in a similar passage in *Tanḥ. Naso* 19, which is not apocalyptic, Moses is not shown the future temple. The heavenly temple “above” corresponds to the earthly temple “below” (*Pesiq. Rab.* 20:19).¹²⁶ This passage places the vision of the heavenly environment and the apocalypse within the revelation that Moses experienced. The visions of Moses and their eschatological relevance proceed by integrating previous texts into a textual construct of a new earthly temple that is related to the heavenly temple. In *Pesiq. Rab.* 1:21 the

¹²³ Towner, “Retributional Theology.”

¹²⁴ Cf. T. Levi 18:6; 1 En. 90:28-29, 2 Bar. 4:2-7; 4 Ezra 7:26, 10:54 envision that the heavenly Jerusalem will ultimately descend and replace the earthly one. In b. Sanh. 94b God declares that he would destroy his earthly dwelling before the celestial dwelling, and that he would not enter the heavenly Jerusalem until he would enter the earthly one (b. Ta’an. 5a). God will rebuild Jerusalem and never destroy it again (*Tanḥ. Noah* 11). Regarding the heavenly Jerusalem, see Urbach, “Jerusalem,” and Aptowitz, “Celestial Temple.”

¹²⁵ *Gen. Rab.* 69:7; *Tanḥ. Vayeqahel* 7; *Pequde* 2; *Mishpatim* 18.

¹²⁶ Cf. *Source of Wisdom* in *Bet ha-Midr.* 1:59; Stone and Strugnell, *Books of Elijah*. *Sefer Eliyahu* is similar to midrashic texts, since it supports propositions by deriving them from scriptural quotations: “Elijah (may his memory be for a blessing!) said: I saw a great city, beautiful and glorious, descending from heaven where it had been built, as scripture states: ‘The already built Jerusalem, like the city associated with it’ (Ps 122:3), perfectly built and with its people dwelling in it. It is surrounded by three thousand towers, with 20,000 *ris* [Persian miles] separating each tower. Within the span of every *ris* there are 25,000 cubits of emeralds, pearls, and jewels, as scripture says: ‘I will make your battlements of rubies’ (Isa 54:12). Elijah said: I saw the houses and the gates of the righteous with their thresholds and door-frames built of precious stones. The treasuries of the temple opened up to their doorways, and among them were torah and peace, as it is said: ‘all your children will be instructed by the Lord; [your children will have great peace]’ (Isa 54:13), and it says: ‘those who love your torah have great peace’ (Ps 119:165), and it says: ‘How great is your beneficence which you have stored up for those who revere you’ (Ps 31:20).” *Bet ha-Midr.* 3:65-68, see Himmelfarb, “*Sefer Eliyahu*.”

post-apocalyptic temple and the city of Jerusalem will be greatly expanded, surpassing the previous site that was built by mere human beings.¹²⁷ The restoration of the temple will be accomplished by God for the sake of the tribes of Israel and the torah (Pesiḳ. Rab. 4:3) in the time-to-come (Pesiḳ. Rab. 20:3; 28:1).

The construction of the new Jerusalem out of precious stones was prophesied by Isa 54:11-12;¹²⁸ Pesiḳta Rabbati mentions “emerald” (Pesiḳ. Rab. 37:5) and “sapphire” (Pesiḳ. Rab. 32:1). The future victory of God (Pesiḳ. Rab. 37:5) over the forces of evil will be followed by the construction of seven wedding canopies decorated with emeralds, jaspers, and carnelians; these divine structures are dedicated to Israel, God’s beloved bride. Pesiḳ. Rab. 32 “Afflicted city, lashed by storms” is based upon the haftarah reading for the third Sabbath of Consolation. In this homily, Isa 54:11 is interpreted in a vision relating to the restoration of the temple as the spiritual center of Judaism; this midrashic interpretation contains an extraordinary description of the temple turrets. This “pearly gate” (Pesiḳ. Rab. 32:10)¹²⁹ will be carved out of one pearl and Jerusalem and its gems will sparkle at the end of time.

The apocalyptic topic of the descent of the heavenly temple is based upon earlier visions in the prophets and possibly Rev. In Pesiḳta Rabbati the descent is revealed to all of Israel and it is decoded by the homilist(s). The future reconstruction of the temple is a key indicator of apocalyptic thought. Calculating the end of time is also an aspect of apocalyptic thought with an intense focus on salvation.

In order to determine the duration of the First Temple, the length of service of the eighteen high priests was calculated to be 410 years; this time length is followed by additional calculations that attempt to determine the date of the end of time. A passage attempts to provide a specific timetable for the reconstruction of the final temple (Pesiḳ. Rab. 47:24). Such calculations are presented in highly imaginative symbols.¹³⁰ Relying upon their symbolic referentiality in apocalyptic culture, certain numbers were repeatedly utilized, in particular the number “seven,” a number based on the biblical creation narrative.¹³¹ The apocalypse in Daniel, e.g., Dan 9:2 (seventy years) and Dan

127 Cf. Pesiḳ. Rab Kah. 20:7; Lev. Rab. 10:9; Cant. Rab. 7:5; Tanḥ. B Yitro 14.

128 Cf. Rev 21:1-15.

129 “The Holy One will hollow out the great gate of the temple, together with its two towers, from a gem, a pearl of the purest glow.” Cf. Rev 21:21. Compare Pesiḳ. Rab Kah. 18.

130 LaCocque, “Apocalyptic Symbolism,” contends that in order to study human reality properly, particularly in relation to the existence of evil in the apocalypse as expressed in symbols, one has to combine phenomenological description of the events with hermeneutic interpretation.

131 Berner, *Jahre, Jahrwochen und Jubiläen*.

9:24 (seventy weeks) provided the matrix for subsequent texts.¹³² The division of history into both seven and ten periods is well-attested in Jewish apocalyptic texts.¹³³ As mentioned above, there are seven-year periods of affliction before the advent of the messiah (Pesiq. Rab. 34:3; 36:6).¹³⁴ In the text version of the *editio princeps* of Pesiqta Rabbati, in a homily for *rosh ḥodesh* (the new moon), the homilist poses the crucial question: “When will the temple be restored?” The concerns regarding the rebuilding of the temple and the responses provided by the homilist include calculations based upon the number “seven.”¹³⁵

Master of the universe, when will you restore us to the glory of ascending [to Jerusalem] during the three pilgrimages and see the countenance of the *shekhinah* [Divine Presence]? When will you return us to that glory? See how long has the house of our life [the temple] been destroyed. It is already a jubilee [seven times seven years], seven hundred and seventy-seven years and now it is already one thousand one hundred and fifty-one [years].

PESIQ. RAB. 1:4 (*editio princeps*)

Since the above-cited passage is only extant in the *editio princeps* and subsequent printed editions, it is difficult to determine, when these calculations were added to Pesiqta Rabbati. The term “now” indicates a gloss in the text, referencing 1,151 years since the destruction of the temple; it is not clear, if this time period is from the date of the destruction of the First or the Second Temple. The question as to the length of time that the temple will be in ruins resurfaces in Pesiq. Rab. 33:3 in a “consolation” homily. God is bound by his own law (Exod 22:5) to “make restitution” for the fire that he kindled. Consequently, God is required to comfort Israel and to rebuild the temple. Additionally, the return of the exiles is implied.

Master of the world, until when [will the temple be in ruins]? Did you not write in your torah, “He that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution”

132 Adler, “Apocalyptic Survey.”

133 The Apocalypse of Weeks (1 En. 93:1-10; 91:11-17) presents a schematized overview of history, divided into ten weeks (i.e., years), e.g., 1 En. 93:2. The division into weeks is also found in 2 Baruch, see Roddy, “Two Parts.”

134 Cf. Isa 27:13.

135 Apocalyptic material explicitly reinterprets “seventy years” in Jer 25:11-12 as “seventy weeks of years” (Dan 9:2, 24-27).

(Exod 22:5)? It is you who kindled [the fire], since it is said: “From above he has sent fire into my bones” (Lam 1:13). And you must rebuild it and comfort us; not through an angel, but you with your glory. The Holy One said: By your lives! Thus I will do, as it is said: “The Lord does build up Jerusalem, he gathers the dispersed of Israel” (Ps 147:2).

PESIQ. RAB. 33:3

Interpretations of Isaiah, in particular of Isa 40:1-2, and the promise of a New Jerusalem, would bring comfort to Jews living among the ruins of the city, and it would fulfill God’s promise to rebuild the city and his temple. Furthermore, at the end of time, the ideal environment that existed in the garden of Eden will be reinstated; this is expressed in the concluding Sukkot homily (Pesiqt. Rab. 51), which depicts restoration, normalcy, and peace.

10 Conclusion

The concentration of apocalyptic topoi found in Pesiqtā Rabbati is absent in other rabbinic collections such as Midrash Rabbah, the Tanḥuma literature, and the Talmuds. As a midrash, Pesiqtā Rabbati cites scripture in the apocalyptic passages that anchor explanatory rabbinic statements in biblical lemmata. Rabbinic literature developed its own approach to the apocalypse in the form of midrashic apocalypticism, which is extensively present in Pesiqtā Rabbati. In midrash revelation of apocalyptic secrets is obtained in the Oral Torah, the expressly rabbinic interpretation of scripture. The combination of revelatory visions of wars, suffering, and salvation are characteristic of apocalyptic texts. In rabbinic literature, the homiletic, midrashic work Pesiqtā Rabbati presents the crystallization of apocalyptic thought on the trajectory of Jewish apocalypticism before the experience of the Islamic conquest influenced Jewish works. Pesiqtā Rabbati is located at the juncture between the older apocalypses such as Daniel, 1 Enoch, 2 Baruch, 4 Ezra and the renewed, intensified Jewish apocalypticism such as Sefer Zerubavel and the Midreshe Ge’ullah. Thus, Pesiqtā Rabbati has a unique chronological and literary position in rabbinic literature. Additionally, there are intersections with Jewish and Christian apocalypses such as 2 Baruch, 1 Enoch, Ascension of Isaiah, Paralipomena of Jeremiah, as well as Revelation. Pesiqtā Rabbati combines features of these apocalypses in creative ways with homiletic midrash. From the perspective of intertextuality, Pesiqtā Rabbati is a response to previous texts, and the redactor/homilist(s) of Pesiqtā Rabbati reframed the apocalypse for their audience.

The impulse behind midrashic apocalyptic sections seems twofold. First, the homilist reflected upon God's redemptive work in history, continuing the messages of the biblical prophets. Second, the homilist claims to have insights into God's acts as being decisive in a cosmic struggle against evil, symbolized by Satan and Gog and Magog, as well as the evil empires such as Babylon, Rome, and the Christian kingdoms. Through the use of violent images and esoteric symbols, God's immanent judgment is anticipated by the righteous, who long for vindication and salvation. The words of the homilist(s) predict apocalyptic events and exhort readers to remain faithful in the midst of suffering, which is viewed as a phase of the unfolding apocalypse leading to the end of time.

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