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Looking at the End from the Beginning: Studying Eschatological Concepts in the Pentateuch

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Eschatology, the study of last things,¹ has been mostly studied from two distinct viewpoints: either by doing a systematic study of the question—as can be seen in systematic theologies of all colors, which predominantly focus upon NT texts²—or by concentrating upon specific books relevant to eschatological teachings—predominantly the apocalyptic literature of the OT (including the book of Daniel) and the NT (as found in the book of Revelation).³

¹S. H. Travis, “Eschatology,” in: *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. S. B. Ferguson and D. F. Wright (Leicester/Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988), 228. S. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 780, suggests the doctrine of the last things has two main focal points, namely personal and individual eschatology and the corporate aspect of eschatology which is based upon the social nature of humankind and focuses God’s purpose and plan for humanity in general. W. Grudem, *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester/Grand Rapids: InterVarsity/Zondervan, 1994), 1091, calls the two aspects *personal* and *general eschatology*.

²See here, for example, Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1092ff. It is interesting to note that Grudem utilizes mainly NT references in his discussion of the visible return of Christ, the church’s waiting for this return, the time of the return, etc.

³To this list we can add some sections in Isaiah, Zechariah, and sections in the synoptic Gospels. Compare here Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 787. Concerning the two main lines of research see also the recently published articles in *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 8/1-2 (1997), which study eschatology mainly from the viewpoint of systematic theology (see here P. M. van Bemmelen, “The Millennium and the Judgment,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 8/1-2 [1997]: 150-160) or book-specific studies (such as B. Norman, “The Restoration of the Primordial World of Gen 1-3 in Rev 21-22,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 8/1-2 [1997]: 161-169).

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In this article I want to look at eschatology⁴ in the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch—a corpus of literature which has not been studied extensively from this perspective. The study of the biblical concept of eschatology in any given book can be undertaken from two different perspectives. Firstly, one could study the distinct *lexicon* (or vocabulary) of eschatological writings, taking one's cue from specific terms found in books or sections of the Bible which are undoubtedly eschatological in their perspective. An example for this category in the OT is the book of Daniel, with its frequent use of vocabulary related to the specific semantic domain denoting "end." Secondly, eschatological *concepts* in a given book or section of the OT/NT could be studied—an undertaking which is obviously much broader and provides less methodological control for the researcher.⁵ In this study I will focus predominantly upon the eschatological lexicon contained in the Pentateuch.

History, Eschatology and the Macro-structure of the Pentateuch

Looking at the nature of the Pentateuch—being primarily a body of narratives about the beginning, the first steps and missteps of humanity, the call and creation of a special nation, its liberation from slavery, and finally its experiences and wanderings in the desert prior to the conquest—the books are actually prone to contain some hint of eschatology in them. William Shea⁶ has recently pointed to the importance of the link between history and eschatology. Eschatology is not just a cold, systematic, and somehow mechanical focus upon the last things, but rather is always connected with real (future) history, real people, and a real God. Clearly this indicates a special understanding of history and one refreshingly different from the rationalistic, materialistic version of history

⁴I will not specifically focus upon apocalyptic eschatology, which G. Pfandl, *The Time of the End in the Book of Daniel*, Adventist Theological Society Dissertation Series 1 (Berrien Springs: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1992), 21, defines in the following way: "If eschatology describes a radical break in the course of history, apocalyptic or apocalyptic eschatology describes the end of history, the end of this world. It is the time when the cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil will finally be finished, when the final judgment will take place and salvation will be consummated, and when this present age will be followed by eternity. Thus, the apocalyptic event is the final eschatological event."

⁵W. C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 11-12, mentions six principles of doing OT theology, focusing upon specific theological concepts. These principles include (1) the critical placement of interpretive statements in the textual sequence; (2) the frequency of repetition of ideas; (3) the recurrence of phrases or terms that begin to take on a technical status; (4) the resumption of earlier themes; (5) the use of categories of assertions previously used that lend themselves to a description of a new stage in the program of history; and (6) the organizing standard by which people, place, and ideas were marked for approval, contrast, inclusion, and future and present significance. Kaiser has chosen one main theme, i.e. the promise-fulfillment axis, as the center of all OT theology. G. F. Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, 4th edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 52-54, 139-171, has questioned the validity of the *one* center of theology approach.

⁶W. H. Shea, "History and Eschatology in the Book of Daniel," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 8/1-2 (1997): 195-205.

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which we are all systematically being fed by modern mass media, science, and certain quarters of religious studies. The biblical view of history depicts a clear linear (and not cyclical as in ancient religion!) view of time which moves from the beginning (creation) to the final restoration of this world. It is evidently a theocentric (as opposed to human-centered) view of history and depicts God's intervention in favor of His world and—more specific—of His people.⁷

Closely related to the history-oriented nature of the Pentateuch is its focus upon creation. The creation theme of the Pentateuch involves eschatology, since creation in the OT “has a beginning, a history, and an end . . . [and] is part of a history characterized by figures and dates.”⁸

Thus it appears that the specific “history nature” of the Pentateuch in itself provides a clear indication of its “end-orientation”—an important concept in eschatological thought. Furthermore, as has been pointed out in an important study by John Sailhamer published in 1987,⁹ the narrative and poetic seams of the Pentateuch are predominantly connected to the important phrase *'ah^arît*, “end,” which is usually connected to a temporal marker (like “days” or “time”). One can find three major poetic sections in the Pentateuch (Gen 49; Num 24; and Deut 31)¹⁰ which are connected to the main narrative (or “story”) sections, thus displaying a clearly visible and coherent macro-structure. Sailhamer writes:

A close look at the material lying between and connecting the narrative and poetic sections reveals the presence of a homogeneous compositional stratum. It is most noticeably marked by the recurrence of the same terminology and narrative motifs. In each of the three segments, the central narrative figure (Jacob, Balaam,

⁷Compare here the insightful discussion of Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 789-797.

⁸R. L. Smith, *Old Testament Theology: Its Message, Method, and Message* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 404.

⁹J. H. Sailhamer, “The Canonical Approach to the OT: Its effect on understanding prophecy,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 30/3 (1987): 307-316. Compare also his later remarks in J. H. Sailhamer, “The Mosaic Law and the Theology of the Pentateuch,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 53/2 (1991): 241-261.

¹⁰There are indeed more poetic sections, such as Exod 15:1-18; Num 23:7-10, 18-24; 24:3-9, 15-24 and Deut 32-33. Although Exod 15:1-17 does not contain a specific lexical marker referring to time in an eschatological context, the concepts contained in the poem do exalt several aspects of eschatological thought: (1) God as judge executing his verdict (15:4, 6-7); (2) reference to the final destination—which in a historical context refers to the conquest of Canaan—but which suggests also a much broader context (15:13-17); (3) the reference to the eternal nature of God's reign (15:28). One of the main themes of the poem—namely the intervention of God in human affairs (as pointed out by A. Soviv, “The Song of the Sea—From Enslavement to Service in ‘Thy Holy Abode’,” *Beth Mikra* 25/81 [1980]: 125-131)—is also one of the main pillars of biblical eschatology. C. Houtman, *Exodus. Vol. 2. Chapters 7:14-19:25*, Historical Commentary on the Old Testament (Kampen: Kok, 1996), 292-293, suggests eschatological overtones in the final statement of YHWH's kingship and his everlasting nature. It is interesting to note that Targum Pseudo-Jonathan reads, “His is the kingship in the world to come . . .”—a clear indication that this section was understood in eschatological terms.

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Moses) calls an audience together (imperative: Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Deut 31:28) and proclaims (cohortative: Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Deut 31:28) what will happen (Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Deut 31:29) in the “end of days” (Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Deut 31:29).¹¹

It appears as if the author wants us—the ancient and also the modern readers—to receive a cue in order to read the passage “eschatologically,” that is, with a view towards the end.

In more generic terms, we can observe the sequence of narrative—poetry—epilogue as part of the literary technique used by Moses in order to unify the work. A good example can be found in the creation account in Gen 1-2, where a short poetic discourse of Adam in Gen 2:23 (“This *is* now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man”) concludes the narrative of the creation and is followed by the epilogue in Gen 2:24 (“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh”).¹²

It has been noted that both the narrative and historical form (and content) of the Pentateuch and its macro (and micro) structure point the reader toward a time beyond the present and thus invites a study of its eschatology. In the following section I will first define the lexicon of eschatology in the Pentateuch (thus focusing upon the semantic domain of “end, cessation”), and then provide a more detailed discussion of the Pentateuchal references to this lexicon.

A Definition and Discussion of the Lexicon of Eschatology in the Pentateuch

Gerhard Pfandl, in his important study of one of the key terms and markers of eschatological perspective (*et qēš*, “time of the end” in Dan 8:19), has provided us with a helpful discussion of two important phrases indicating eschatological concepts in the book of Daniel, namely *’ah^a’rît*, “end, outcome, after-part” and *qēš*, “end.” Other terms connected to eschatological concepts include the verb *sûf*, “to come to an end, cease,” which, however, does not occur in the Pentateuch.¹³ Another Hebrew root, *qsh*, “end,” (and etymologically related to

¹¹Sailhamer, “Canonical Approach to the OT,” 310.

¹²Similar patterns can be seen in Gen 3 and the narrative of the fall. Gen 3:14-19 contains a poetic discourse which is followed by an epilogue to the story in Gen 3:20-24. For a more in-depth discussion of the phenomenon, see J. H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 34-44.

¹³The verb occurs 7x in the OT in Est 9:28, Psa 73:19, Isa 66:17, Jer 8:13, Amos 3:15, Zeph 1:2-3. The verb is often found in a context of divine judgment (Isa 66:17).

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qēš), refers predominantly to physical or spatial dimensions¹⁴ and thus will not be of great help for the present discussion.¹⁵

In the book of Psalms the verb *gāmar*, “end, come to an end, complete” does seem to carry some eschatological overtones, as it can refer to God’s act of judging (in itself an eschatological concept—Psa 7:9) or to His intervention in favor of His people (the German Elberfelderübersetzung translates here very well “vollenden”—“make complete, to perfect”—Psa 57:3 and 138:8). However, the root appears only in poetic contexts in the book of Psalms and thus falls outside the limitations of this study.

After having provided a concise introduction to the semantic domain of “end, cessation” and after having established the two main nouns of reference, I will now discuss the references of both *’ah^arît* and *qēš* in the Pentateuch in more detail.¹⁶

’ah^arît in the Pentateuch

The following table will provide an overview of the occurrences of *’ah^arît* in the context of the Pentateuch and contains three main columns, including the reference, the immediate co-text¹⁷ and the larger context.

REFERENCE	CO-TEXT	CONTEXT
Gen 49:1	Found together with the noun (plus article), “the days,” which appears as well in Dan 2:28-29. ¹⁸	Blessings or Testament of Jacob in terms of a prophecy of future events related to the tribes of Israel.
Num 23:10	Together with the preposition and pronominal suffix, “like his.” This form occurs only in poetic contexts. ¹⁹	The first oracle of Balaam, where he blesses the descendents of Jacob instead of cursing them. The context does not appear to be eschatological, but limited to the descendents of Israel.
Num 24:14	Utilized together with the noun (plus article), “the days”—see above.	Functions as an introduction to the fourth (and obviously unpaid) oracle of Balaam, explaining what will happen in the “latter days” (NKJV), “end of days”

¹⁴ Compare A. Tomasino, “*qsh*” in: *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. W. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 3:956-959.

¹⁵ In Gen 8:3 *qāšeh* indicates the end of the time of the flood, but carries no eschatological connotations, although it could be argued that its inclusion in a story with universal repercussions points the reader to a much broader context and typology of the flood story.

¹⁶ Pfandl, *Time of the End*, 140-151, has provided a very useful discussion of the term *’ah^arît* in the Pentateuch.

¹⁷ Co-text describes the immediate connections in the same verse, while context describes the larger unit and structure.

¹⁸ Unfortunately, I did not have access to E. Lipinski, “*b^e’ah^arît hayyāmim* dans les textes préexiliques,” *Vetus Testamentum* 20 (1970): 445-450, and J. T. Willis, “The expression *be’acharith hayyamin* [sic] in the Old Testament,” *Restoration Quarterly* 22 (1979): 54-71.

¹⁹ See here B. K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winnona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 189, especially 11.1.2.d.

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		(revised German Elberfelderübersetzung)
Num 24:20	No direct connection. The form contains a pronominal suffix (“his”) which refers to Amalek.	Part of the final miscellaneous oracles of Balaam, referring to the future of Amalek. Does not appear to include eschatological overtones.
Deut 4:30	Utilized together with the noun (plus article), “the days”—see above.	Moses’ address in Transjordan, before the beginning of the conquest (Deut 1:1).
Deut 8:16	No specific direct time marker. Stands alone in this context.	Refers to the end of the desert wandering.
Deut 11:12	Term is used in connection with the noun “year.”	Refers to the year cycle—from its beginning to its end.
Deut 31:29	Utilized together with the noun (plus article), “the days”—see above.	Forms part of the seam to the poetical section known as the “song of Moses” (Deut 32) and as with the earlier seams it projects the future events towards the “end of the days” or “latter days.”
Deut 32:20	Includes the pronominal suffix “their end.” No additional time marker included.	Possible reference to the earlier golden calf episode (in Exo 32) or future experience of idolatry.
Deut 32:29	Includes the pronominal suffix “their end.” No additional time marker included. Same as in Deut 32:20.	See above.

Gen 49:1 utilizes the exact same phrase as Dan 2:28-29 and Dan 10:14 *b^e’ah^a’rît hayyāmîm*, which the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) translates as “in the final days.”²⁰ As has been observed above, the macro-structure of the narrative—poetry—epilogue sequence can also be observed in this context.²¹ The reference to a future point in time prepares the reader for the surprising turn of history as described in Exo 1, where the Israelites (or the sons of Jacob), living in Egypt but without the protection of the governor Joseph, are facing slavery and oppression. The main tenor of the “in the last days” perspective is God’s future deliverance of His chosen people. There is hope and a future—even beyond the distress and oppression the sons of Jacob are yet to experience! At the end of the discourse, there is the threefold use of the root *bārakh*, “to bless,” which the NKJV translates as “. . . and he blessed them; he blessed each one according to his own blessing.” It seems that by connecting one of the major themes of Genesis to its penultimate chapter, the author consciously seeks to relate this section to the first blessing found in Gen 1:28, where God blesses

²⁰The NKJV translates here “in the last days.”

²¹The narrative of the patriarchal stories (Gen 12-48) is followed by a poetic conclusion with an eschatological orientation (Gen 49:1), which itself is followed by an epilogue in Gen 50.

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Adam and Eve on the sixth day of creation.²² Thus the beginning and a future point in time are connected in the text. While the exact nature of this point in time is not clear, the possibility of a messianic fulfillment should not be discarded—especially in view of the reference to *šilōh*²³ in Gen 49:10 which—at least—refers to the house of David and—perhaps—looks even beyond that specific time, referring to the Messiah.²⁴

In Num 23:10 the phrase *'ah^arîṭ kāmōhû*, “my end like his [i.e. Jacob’s descendents, the singular form is utilized in a collective manner],” is part of the first oracle, which the pricey seer from Aram produced for Balak, the king of Moab. Balak is not very happy with the outcome because instead of the promised curse, Balaam blesses the descendents of Jacob²⁵—and is being paid for this dis-service! The final reference to “my end” appears to be a personal reflection of Balaam, where he concludes “his vision of Israel by wishing that, at the end his own life, he could be as blessed as Israel was.”²⁶ In view of his end at the swords of an Israelite army unit (Num 31:8), the “end” came rather suddenly and quickly upon Balaam and does not contain any eschatological connotations.

Num 24:14 contains the introduction to the final fourth oracle of Balaam. King Barak is furious, but Balaam defends himself by pointing to the fact that he can only speak what he has been shown. It appears that the connection with *kôkhāv miyy^aqōv*, “the star out of Jacob,” indicates a distant future fulfillment. This phrase has been interpreted in terms of a reference to David or to the Mes-

²²God also blesses the Sabbath day (Gen 2:3), Noah—after the flood (Gen 9:1), Abraham (Gen 12:2-3), etc. All in all the verb occurs 65x in the book of Genesis and constitutes a major theme. Compare also the discussion of G. V. Smith, “Structure and Purpose in Genesis 1-11,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 20/4 (1977): 307-319, who connects the blessing/curse dichotomy in Genesis to the overall structure of the book of Genesis. B. A. McKenzie, “Jacob’s blessing on Pharaoh: An Interpretation of Gen 46:31-47:26,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 45/2 (1983): 386-399, also has demonstrated the importance and function of the blessing theme for the Joseph cycle.

²³The translation of this term has been an enigma in Pentateuchal studies and is extremely difficult.

²⁴See here G. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, Word Biblical Commentary 2 (Dallas: Word, 1994), 476-478, and the references provided there. See also V. P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis. Chapters 18-50*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 658-661. For a discussion of the history of interpretation of Gen 49 as a whole, see J. D. Heck, “A History of Interpretation of Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 147/585 (1990): 16-31.

²⁵In the OT outside the Jacob cycle in Genesis 25-36, Jacob is often a collective reference for Israel—a fact which can be demonstrated with the frequent parallel usage of Jacob together with Israel (compare here, Deut 32:9; Jer 10:25; 30:7; Isa 10:21, etc.). See also the remarks of S. D. Walters, “Jacob Narrative,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:607-608.

²⁶See here T. R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 472.

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siah himself (connecting Rev 22:16, the “Morning Star,” to Num 24:17).²⁷ The evidence of the Aramaic translations (or Targumim) suggests that Judaism interpreted the reference to the star as an indication of the Messiah.²⁸ The Jews living in Qumran from the second century B.C. to the first century A.D. interpreted this reference in terms of their messianic expectations in the context of the final universal war between the sons of light and the sons of darkness as found in the famous war scroll (1QM, column 11:6-7).²⁹ Looking at the history of interpretation of this verse and at its wider prophetic context, it seems appropriate to suggest an eschatological perspective focusing possibly first upon David and then—in a more inclusive perspective—upon the Messiah.³⁰

In Num 24:20 the term refers to the end of the Amalekites³¹—a tribe often mentioned during the early history of Israel in connection with the Edomites.³² The context does not indicate any eschatological connection and includes references to other tribes connected to the history of Israel.³³

Deut 4:30 contains the complete formula *b'ah'rit hayyamim*, “at the end of days,” which also appears in Dan 2:28-29. Moses admonishes his people to stay clear from idolatry and describes the inevitable results of their actions—if they allow idolatry to take control of their hearts. In the form of a typical ancient Near Eastern vassal treaty³⁴ Moses depicts not only the results of idolatry—namely exile, destruction and more idolatry—but also points toward the

²⁷See R. K. Harrison, *Numbers: An Exegetical Commentary*, Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 321-324. Compare also Ashley, *Numbers*, 500, and R. B. Allen, “Numbers,” in: *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. F. E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 2:909-910.

²⁸Compare Pfandl, *Time of the End*, 144-145 and the references to Targum Onkelos and Targum Jonathan included there. It is interesting to note that the prominent first century AD Rabbi Akiba, called Simon Bar Kosiba, who briefly conquered Jerusalem in 132 AD and led the Second Jewish Revolt against the Romans, Bar Kokhba, “the son of the star.” This is undoubtedly an allusion to the messianic prophecy of Num 24:17 and illustrates the Jewish understanding of this passage in the second century AD. Compare here also J. J. Scott Jr., *Customs and Controversies: Intertestamental Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 103.

²⁹See F. García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, 2nd edition (Leiden/Grand Rapids: Brill/Eerdmans, 1996), 104. Concerning the imminent eschatological expectations of the Qumran community and their (often curious) method of interpretation see L. H. Schiffman, *The Eschatological Community of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series 38 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989).

³⁰This dual fulfillment perspective has also been suggested by Pfandl, *Time of the End*, 147.

³¹For a discussion of the second part of the oracle, where the MT reads *'dê 'ōvêd* “to the one who destroys” see Ashley, *Numbers*, 504. Based upon the Samaritan Pentateuch, Albright divided the phrase differently and thus translated *'d y'vd*, “to perish forever,” but the longer prepositional form suggests an early preposition, possibly connected to Akkadian.

³²See the discussion in G. L. Mattingly, “Amalek,” in: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:169-171.

³³Such as the Kenites (Num 24:21) and the Kittim (possibly Sea people and connected to the Philistines, Num 24:24).

³⁴Compare the comments in Pfandl, *Time of the End*, 148, and also D. R. Hillers, *Covenant. The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1969), 128-134.

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future redemption of Israel. “When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the LORD your God and obey His voice.” Thus the future (and not specified) redemptive event will occur *after* the suffering and the change of heart necessary for a new beginning. Christopher Wright comments here very poignantly:

Moses turns the dynamic of the covenant into a theology of history. No place would be too far and no time too distant for Israel to come back to God. Beyond sin and judgment there was always hope—as their recent past history had already proved.³⁵

The precise historical context of this future repentance cannot be ascertained from the context of the passage³⁶ and has been connected with the exile of the northern tribes and the final destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC by the Babylonians.³⁷ However, the temporal marker “at the end of days” has also been interpreted as stretching all the way from OT times to the end of the Age³⁸—especially in view of the fact that the sequence fall—judgment—repentance is part of a specific pattern, which will be operative until the final judgment.

In Deut 8:16 the “end” appears without any explicit temporal marker and refers in this specific context to the end of the wandering in the desert, emphasizing God’s goodness towards His people. Goodness—in this context—includes testing by hardship for the sake of a better future.³⁹ The text does not seem to indicate eschatological connotations. This also appears to be the case with Deut 11:12, where the focus is upon the land. Moses distinguishes in his sermon between the land of Egypt with its proliferate fertility and the promised land whose primary caregiver is YHWH. Year-in and year-out, God will be the one responsible for rain, growth, harvest, and well-being—a theme which is later on perverted by the typical Canaanite fertility cults where Ba’al (or any other god for that matter) usurps YHWH’s life-sustaining power.⁴⁰ The reference to the term “end” is clearly connected to the year and cannot be understood eschatologically.

Deut 31:29 again is part of the introduction or seam to a major poetic section in the Pentateuch, namely the Song of Moses in Deut 32, including the leader’s farewell address. The immediate context suggests a period of apostasy

³⁵C. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, New International Biblical Commentary 4 (Peabody: Hendrickson/Paternoster, 1996), 54.

³⁶M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible 5 (New York/London: Doubleday, 1991), 210, suggests that the phrase denotes a “future period, the distance of which varies with the context.”

³⁷Compare P. C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 141.

³⁸See Pfandl, *Time of the End*, 149-150.

³⁹This phrase was taken from Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, 395.

⁴⁰See Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 210. It is interesting to note the connection of the conflict between YHWH and other fertility deities such as Baal in an eschatological context.

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after the death of Moses and does not include direct eschatological connotations.⁴¹ It appears that “the latter days” would indicate a time in the relatively near future; for example, during the time of the judges where the prophetic description of Moses became a sad reality (Jdg 2:11-16). The final two references in Deut 32:20 and 32:39 to *’aḥ^arītām*, “their end,” refer most probably to the golden calf episode in Exo 32⁴² or future events involving idolatry and connect “end” with the people. Deut 32:21 reads, “They have provoked Me to jealousy by *what* is not God; they have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols. But I will provoke them to jealousy by *those who are* not a nation; I will move them to anger by a foolish nation” (NKJV). “End” should be interpreted in terms of destiny or future and does not carry eschatological overtones, but connects directly to a past and possibly future experience of Israel.

qēš in the Pentateuch

In the following section I will look at all the occurrences of the time marker *qēš*, “end,” in the Pentateuch and will try to determine whether the term occurs in an eschatological context or not.

REFERENCE	CO-TEXT	CONTEXT
Gen 4:3	<i>meqqēš yāmîm</i> , literally “at the end of days,” occurs together with preposition “from.”	Describes the passing of time and the end of a specific encompassing the time after the fall, birth of the first so Adam and Eve, and their growing up. No eschatological notations.
Gen 6:13	No specific additional time marker is included. The noun appears without preposition.	The introduction of the flood story. God communicates Noah that the “end of all the flesh” is immanent. The nature of the event provides a typological equivalent for time events, but does not indicate specifically eschatological future realities.
Gen 8:6	“At the end of forty days.”	Indicates the time period before which the ark had settled on mount Ararat and where Noah opened the window and released a raven. No eschatological connotations.
Gen 16:3	“At the end of 10 years.”	After ten years in Canaan without any children, Sarai proposes the solution of giving her slave maid Hagar to Abram. No eschatological connotations.
Gen 41:1	“At the end of 2 years.”	Two year period that Joseph spent in prison before he interpreted Pharaoh’s dream. No eschatological connotation.
Exo 12:41	“At the end of 430 years.”	Period of sojourn of Israel in Egypt. The time marker is an important event in salvation history, namely the beginning of the Exodus. No eschatological connotations.
Num 13:25	“At the end of forty days.”	Period that the spies spent in Canaan. No eschatological notations.

⁴¹M. Fishbane, “Varia Deuteronomica,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 84/3 (1972): 349-352, argues that the phrase indicates the immediate future.

⁴²See here E. H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, New American Commentary 4 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 417, who connects the description with the historical incident found in Exod 32.

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Deut 9:11	“At the end of 40 days and 40 nights.”	Period that Moses spent upon Mount Sinai after having received the 2 stone tablets inscribed with the 10 commandments. No eschatological connotations.
Deut 15:1	“At the end of seven years.”	Laws concerning the Sabbatical year, where remission of debts is granted. No clear eschatological connotations. ⁴³
Deut 31:10	“At the end of seven years.”	As part of Moses’ final discourse Israel is challenged to obey the law of God every seven years. No eschatological connotations.

Several observations can be made while considering the data of the usage of *qēṣ* in the Pentateuch.

First, with the exception of only one reference (Gen 6:13), all references connect the preposition *min*, “from, at” to the noun *qēṣ*, “end.” This usage seems to go hand in hand with possible eschatological (or at least typological) connotations of the term. With the exception of Gen 6:13 all references utilizing the preposition indicate a specific and limited time period.

Second, it appears that *qēṣ* is often utilized in crucial moments in salvation history. In Gen 4:3 the description of the first homicide on our planet and the repercussions of the fall are described. The time marker in Gen 8:6 indicates a period prior to the opening of the ark—and with that—the new beginning of humanity. Gen 16:3 describes the crucial “man-made” solution to the problem of Sarai’s sterility, following the current customs of its day. The point of reference in the mind of the author is clearly Gen 12:1-3 and God’s promise of a future, descendants, and a name. Exod 12:31 marks the end of an era (i.e., the time in Egypt of the people of Israel) and the beginning of a new one, because now Israel is a people (and not just a bigger clan) on its way to the promised land. Finally, Deut 9:11 refers back to the time Moses spent on Mount Sinai, receiving the law of God—clearly an important event in salvation history. Taking into account all the mentioned references, it appears that the allusion to the “end” of a specific period/era always supposes the beginning of something new—a principle also often found in eschatological literature, although it is not explicitly eschatological in its nature.

Third, a closer look at Gen 6:13 indicates a distinct usage of the term—without the preposition *min*. God speaks to Noah and provides a rationale for the destruction, or better, “the end of all the flesh,” which is an indication of all living beings (including both mankind and animals).⁴⁴ Gordon Wen-

⁴³Although the context (and co-text) of the verse under consideration does not indicate eschatological connotations, attempts have been made to establish a typology of sabbatical years in terms of messianism in Judaism. See here S. Bacchiocchi, “Sabbatical Typologies of Messianic Redemption,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 17/2 (1987): 153-176. For a modern application of these institutions see T. K. Hui, “The Purpose of Israel’s Annual Feasts,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 147/586 (1990): 143-154.

⁴⁴See here H.-J. Stipp, “‘Alles Fleisch hatte seinen Wandel auf der Erde verdorben’ (Gen 6,12). Die Mitverantwortung der Tierwelt an der Sintflut nach der Priesterschrift,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 111/2 (1999): 167-186.

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ham has correctly recognized a similar terminology in the description of the destruction of Jerusalem as found in Eze 7, including key words such as “end,” “violence,” “coming,” “is full”⁴⁵—an event with similar repercussions in salvation history. Inasmuch as judgment is always part and parcel of “final things,”⁴⁶ Gen 6:13 definitely carries eschatological overtones—even more so in view of the fact that it utilizes a distinct grammatical construction when compared to the other occurrences of *qēš* in the Pentateuch (i.e., without the preposition *min*). However, it is clear that the eschatological overtones concern typology and have no distinct eschatological program or route.

Conclusion—Eschatology in the Pentateuch

The present study has demonstrated that eschatological thinking is not a late development in OT theology, but an integral part of theological thought which can be traced from the first to the last book of the Old Testament canon. This stands in clear contrast to modern evolutionary concepts of theology and religion—especially regarding its eschatology. David Peterson expresses the current critical majority position concerning the historical development of the modern (and critical) eschatological theological perspective in the following words:

OT eschatology should be discussed within the context of historical development. Old Testament eschatology is best understood as a complex of traditions evolving out of earlier and discrete Israelite traditions. Old Testament eschatology is not essentially a systematic theological term, and therefore it is difficult to discuss eschatology as if one were describing one basic concept.⁴⁷

Several typical (at least for modern scholarship) concepts can be gleaned from Peterson’s statement. Clearly, it subscribes to an evolutionary concept of theology and religion—especially concerning eschatology. Furthermore, Peterson suggests that eschatology is the result of different strands of traditions which in specific historical periods contributed to our present understanding. It is clear that Seventh-day Adventist theology cannot agree with Peterson’s presuppositions. The eschatology of the OT is not a late development—as alleged by most liberal theologians—but rather an integral part of theological perspec-

⁴⁵Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 172.

⁴⁶See here the comments of C. A. Evans and P. W. Flint, “Introduction,” in *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. C. A. Evans and P. W. Flint, *Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature* 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 5, who suggest that the diversity of eschatological thought in the DSS does not preclude the existence of central ideas or a common core. One of the central ideas indicated by Evans and Flint concerns the imminent arrival of the day of judgment and restoration.

⁴⁷D. L. Peterson, “Eschatology (OT),” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:578.

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tives which can be found in most texts of the OT canon⁴⁸—including the Pentateuch. Although its eschatology does not have “banner quality,” but rather “footnote quality,” it nevertheless is present. As has been demonstrated in this article, the eschatological lexicon provides the modern reader with specific terms and contexts which indicate eschatological thought. Perhaps, we can even go further in our conclusions. As has been suggested by John Sailhamer, the Pentateuch as a whole (and not as the result of four or more distinct sources, as alleged by traditional historical criticism) is a work built around prophetic hope and eschatological perspective,⁴⁹ a fact which can be seen in the literary macrostructure of the Pentateuch, which is always introduced by verses including the phrase *bʿahʿrît hayyāmîm*, “at the end of the days.” While it is often difficult to pinpoint the exact nature and time of this “end of the days,” it is nevertheless a clear indication of the inclusion of this important theological concept in early books.

A curious footnote to the recent discussion concerning the date and provenance of the Pentateuch⁵⁰ can be added to the present study. Traditional historical criticism asserts that originally the Pentateuch represents an evolutionary development whereby four sources (J-E-D-P) were edited together—a task accomplished around the fifth century B.C. According to the proponents of this traditional critical model—which is, in many ways, superseded by most current research but still awaits a comprehensive revision in the textbooks—the final source P (or priestly source) originated in the fifth century B.C. Knowing this, one would expect a tremendous amount of eschatological concepts in these texts, because—according to Peterson⁵¹—the theology of eschatology developed decisively during the Persian period (which corresponds to the fifth century B.C.). However, this is not the case. At least concerning the eschatological lexicon, our present research has not uncovered this phenomenon. It appears that either the traditional theological evolutionary perspective or the traditional source critical analysis of the Pentateuch is faulty—or (most probably) both.

In a world where we hear confusing voices about the things to come, we need God’s sure Word even more. As the Seventh-day Adventist Church we have studied eschatological concepts for more than a hundred and forty years, but still there is much more to discover in the riches of God’s Word. Future studies should focus not only on the eschatological lexicon, but also develop a sound methodology to understand eschatological concepts and eschatological

⁴⁸One should note the two different concepts of “progressive revelation.” Progressive revelation in a conservative context refers to a clearer and deeper understanding of eternal truths by subsequent generations. See here the insightful remarks by G. Pfandl, “Revelación progresiva,” *Theologika* 11/1 (1996): 124-136.

⁴⁹Sailhamer, “Mosaic Law,” 241.

⁵⁰See here G. A. Klingbeil, *A Comparative Study of the Ritual of Ordination as found in Leviticus 8 and Emar 369* (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: Mellen, 1998), 33-34, 87-89, and the references provided there.

⁵¹Peterson, “Eschatology (OT), 579.

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typology. The interpretive road stretches before us, lined with precious truths and surrounded by refreshing vistas. It is well worth our while to walk that way.

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