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“The End of the World and the World to Come”: What Apocalyptic Literature Says about the Time After the End-Time

Dereck Daschke

*Olam ha-ba* originated as a term designating the messianic age, the time after the end of time, but eventually it became more closely associated with one’s personal disposition in the afterlife. While the term is likely first recorded in the early apocalyptic book of *1 Enoch*, later the rabbinic sages would highlight the meanings for personal eschatology that were originally bound up with biblical conceptualizations of cosmic eschatology, especially as found in the anticipation for the Day of the Lord and the messianic age. This tension and confusion between the two meanings of the concept is in large part at the heart of apocalyptic literature’s presentation of the events of the end-time.¹

Without a doubt, the eschatological framework within which Jewish apocalypse works derives directly from the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures, in particular some of the passages that Paul Hansen termed “proto-apocalyptic” in his classic study *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*.² Taken as a whole, the picture of the time after the end of time is the quintessential dream of restoration, healing, and rebirth in the individual, social, and even global realms. The individual experience of the restoration at the end of days is where personal and cosmic eschatologies intertwine, and this study will address this complex subject shortly. First, though, it is important to sketch the key ways in which the biblical sources anticipate the restoration of the people of Israel, individually and collectively, and even of the planet itself.

**THE TIME AFTER THE END IN THE HEBREW BIBLE**

The concept of the Day of the Lord in Hebrew prophecy, the anticipated end of history and time of judgment, establishes an apocalyptic scenario that foregrounds essentially all of the events prophesied for God’s people.³ God may chastise and pour out his wrath upon his beloved chosen (against Israel: virtually all of Amos and Hosea; against Judah: Isa 1:1–20, Mic 3:12, Jer 5:14–17) but there will come a day when He will turn his anger to the enemies of Israel (Zech 12:9, Isa 60:12). Once their foes are vanquished, the Jews shall be gathered back to the Land of Israel ( Isa 11:11–12, Jer 23:8). Isaiah 4:2–4 describes
how perfected the survivors already in Israel and Jerusalem will be: “In that day, the radiance of the Lord will lend beauty and glory, and the splendor of the land will give dignity and majesty, to the survivors in Israel. And those who remain in Zion and are left in Jerusalem—all who are inscribed for life in Jerusalem—shall be called holy.” The Lord will wash away “the filth of the daughters of Zion, and from Jerusalem’s midst [will rinse] out her infamy—in a spirit of judgment and in a spirit of purging.”

While the prophets Amos, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Joel, and Malachi anticipated God returning the people to the land without reference to a human figure to do so, the expectation of “an ideal human leader possessed of lofty spiritual and ethical qualities” who will restore sovereignty to Israel and righteousness to the office of the king, as depicted by the prophets Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah, certainly became emblematic of Jewish hopes for the triumph of the future over the past, “based in part on visions of a past Golden Age.” The period that follows the return of the Davidic king concomitant with the restoration of the people to the land is known, of course, as the messianic age.

To say that a full exploration of the roots and impact of the ancient Jewish belief in a messiah could—and do—fill volumes of critical study and theological exegesis is, even so, naught but an understatement. The meaning of “the messiah” is, perhaps, the question upon which Western history of the last two millennia hinges. That said, in order to anchor the appearance of this figure in association with olam ha-ba in the Jewish apocalyptic literature, it is worth very briefly establishing the biblical roots of this expectation. The prophets Isaiah (ch. 11) and Jeremiah (ch. 23) establish that he will be a devout and reverent king from the line of David who will reign wisely by the spirit of the Lord and will embody righteousness in his judgments. Therefore, Jeremiah says, “In his days Judah shall be delivered and Israel shall dwell secure. And this is the name by which he shall be called: The Lord is our Vindicator” (Jer 23:6).

The ingathering of the Jews under the divine leadership of the Messiah culminates in the reuniting of Israel and Judah as one nation. This is depicted in Ezekiel’s famous prophecy of Ephraim’s hand and Judah’s stick: “I am going to take the Israelite people from among the nations they have gone to, and gather them from every quarter, and bring them to their own land. I will make them a single nation in the land, on the hills of Israel, and one king shall be king of them all. Never again shall they be two nations, and never again shall they be divided into two kingdoms” (Ezek 37:21–22, see also Zech 11:12–14). This expectation is elaborated in Hosea 3:4–5: “For the Israelites shall go a
long time without king and without officials, without sacrifice and without cult pillars, and without ephod or teraphim. Afterward, the Israelites will turn back and will seek the Lord their God and David their king—and they will thrill over the Lord and over His bounty in the days to come.”

With the return of the people and their king to their land, the resumption of traditional Yahwistic worship must necessarily follow, which means the restoration of one essential thing: the Temple. The book of Isaiah throughout promotes the image of Jerusalem and its Temple “in days to come” as the cosmic center of the world, through which both Jew and Gentile will be enlightened and transformed. It will be so glorious, it will become a beacon for the other nations: “In the days to come, the Mount of the Lord’s house shall stand firm above the mountains. . . . [A]ll the nations shall gaze on it with joy. . . . For instruction shall come forth from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isa 2:2–3). The promise of the new Temple is most fully realized in the final chapters of the book of Ezekiel, which is detailed not only in its construction plans but also in its reestablishment of the roles and duties of individuals and tribes (Ezek 47:13).

Furthermore, this being an ideal “golden age,” moral conditions that had not existed since the height of the United Kingdom, if ever, would remake the Jewish people: “My servant David shall be king, they shall faithfully obey my laws,” promises Ezekiel 37:24. And Zephaniah 3:13 states that “[t]he remnant of Israel shall do no wrong and speak no falsehood; a deceitful tongue shall not be in their mouths,” implying that finally all Israel will achieve the ideal state of religious practice and personal ethics that God has expected from them all along. The transformation will not be limited to Israel, either. As the passage above from Isaiah indicates, all nations and peoples will recognize the true God and the religion of the Jews as the true religion—and this realization will bring about peace not only with Israel, but among the other nations as well (Isa 2:3–4, 17; 11:10; Mic 4:2–3; Zech 14:9, Zeph 3:18–20).

Even the very nature of the earth itself will be remade in the image of peace and prosperity (Isa 51:3: “He has made her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the Garden of the Lord”; see also Isa 6–8, Ezek 36:29–30, and Amos 9:13–15); and ultimately God will even end the threat of death once and for all: “He will destroy on this mount the shroud that is drawn over the faces of all the peoples and the covering that is spread over all the nations: He will destroy death forever. My Lord God will wipe the tears away from all faces and will put an end to the reproach of His people over all the earth” (Isa 25:7–8).
RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD
AND FINAL JUDGMENT IN THE BIBLE

At this point, two major concepts associated with the biblical understanding of the messianic age and the end of days need to be addressed, but they are also the root source of the confusion between personal and cosmic eschatology in the apocalyptic literature (and indeed in the later rabbinic and even Christian traditions): the bodily resurrection of the dead and the final judgment. Simcha Paull Raphael writes in *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*:

The notion of a divine postmortem judgment, which is central in rabbinc Judaism’s teachings on life after death, has its roots in the collective eschatology of the biblical period. . . . In early prophetic literature, divine judgment is spoken of in national-political terms. . . . There is no sense of individual judgment; all the people of the nation [whether Israelite or Gentile] merit the punishment or reward collectively. [But an] important development . . . takes place in the Book of Zephaniah (1:2, 9) . . . [where] YHVH’s judgment is universal.” 10

But the book of Ezekiel is where the eschatological picture gets really interesting—and complicated. Raphael writes:

In Ezekiel, judgment is conceived of in a dual sense. . . . For the nations, judgment will be collective (Ezek 25:8ff). For Israel, however, judgment will be based on the merit of each individual. The sinful wicked will be annihilated by God’s wrathful vengeance. The righteous Israelite will be saved, and thereby selected to participate in the coming kingdom of YHVH. (Ezek 11:17–21; 36:25–32 [the “new heart” passage]). With Ezekiel, an important and subtle philosophical transformation takes place: individual and collective conceptions of divine judgment merge for the first time. . . . The righteous individual Israelite will be awarded a share in YHVH’s messianic collective. . . . Judgment takes place in the human realm and through the unfolding of history, not in an afterworld.11

Furthermore, the very next chapter in Ezekiel provides one of the most powerful images of bodily resurrection in the prophecy of the valley of dry bones, though in the context it is clearly a spiritual metaphor for the restoration of the political collective of the people of Israel. Yet the image itself seems deliberately intended to blur the line between the personal and the political, especially following from the “new heart” rhetoric of personal renewal and
restoration—all but resurrection. Still, what can a new heart mean but a new life? It lies between the symbolic and the literal, between the prophetic (in the national-moral sense) and the apocalyptic (in the sense of future cosmic transformation).

However, it is in the next chapters, from 38 to 48, that Ezekiel is firmly in apocalyptic territory, and it is in these that readers get the first strong glimpse of the postapocalyptic *olam ha-ba*. Chapters 40–48 refer to the blueprint for the new temple-city, named “YWVH is there.” But 38 and 39 depict the great eschatological war, which we might today call by its Judean place name: Armageddon. The aftermath of the defeat of the nations, represented by Magog, is depicted with relish: “Then the inhabitants of the cities of Israel will go out and make fires and feed them with the weapons—shields and bucklers, bows and arrows, clubs and spears; they shall use them as fuel for seven years. . . . They will despoil those who despoiled them and plunder those who plundered them” (Ezek 39:9–10). The chapter continues on in stark, bloody detail, leaving no doubt about how the fortunes of the people of Israel and the nations who oppressed them have turned.

**THE TIME AFTER THE END IN THE APOCALYPTES**

This theme of eschatological war is picked up in the one true canonical apocalypse of the Hebrew Scriptures, the book of Daniel. As it happens, Daniel is better known not for its depiction of the lives of those who prevail in this conflict but rather for those faithful who have died, in it and previously—namely, in the introduction of the idea of the resurrection of the dead at the end of times in chapter 12. Daniel is also very explicit that this resurrection is part and parcel of the final judgment: “At that time, the great prince, Michael, who stands beside the sons of your people, will appear. It will be a time of trouble, the like of which has never since the nation came into being. At that time, your people will be rescued, all who are found inscribed in the book [of life]. Many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to eternal life, others to reproaches, to everlasting abhorrence” (Dan 12:1–2).12 This passage, as short as it is, is foundational for the understandings of *olam ha-ba* in Judaism—and Christianity—that will emerge in the centuries thereafter, and even until today.

Scholarly consensus holds that “the many” who awake from the dust does not refer to a universal resurrection, but only of the faithful Jews, likely specifically those who died in the second century B.C.E. resisting the forces of
Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes, which gave rise to the book and the ex eventu prophecies of chapters 7–11. These multitudes of the dead will arise from their graves and face judgment on an individual basis, presumably due to their moral disposition toward or away from righteousness during their lives, and those who find favor with God will enjoy a new life without end. Those who do not apparently face eternal shame and contempt.

There is no specific indication what the moral measure that divides the one group from the other is. However, the overall presentation of resurrection in Daniel asserts a divine, cosmic morality by underscoring God’s justice: “Resurrection becomes the means whereby God’s justice will ultimately triumph. A new, revisionist, individualized eschatology is introduced to resolve the challenge of theodicy, the attempt to vindicate God’s justice. The new doctrine of resurrection vindicates God.”

In the centuries that followed the exile, resurrection rapidly became part of mainstream Jewish thought and distinguished Pharisees from Sadducees, who rejected it for its lack of Torah support. (In fact, the idea may originate in Persian Zoroastrianism, imported in the wake of the Persians’ reign in the region after the exile.) And it plays a particularly prominent role in 1 Enoch, perhaps the most important extracanonical apocalypse and a text that reflected a great deal of theological speculation and creativity of the Second Temple period. Leila Leah Bronner states, “As a work of eschatology, [1 Enoch] ties together the notions of the soul’s journey after death with an end-point in time, a day of judgment, and a spiritual messiah who presides over human destiny.”

As noted from the outset, 1 Enoch, which R. H. Charles dates to between 105 and 64 b.c.e., appears to be the earliest textual source of the term olam ha-ba. Genesis 5 tells us that Enoch was the great-grandfather of Noah and is one of two figures in the Hebrew Scriptures who do not die, the other being the messianic predecessor Elijah. Genesis 5:22–24 reports, “After the birth of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years. . . . All the days of Enoch came to 365 years. Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, for God took him.” It is in this span of sixty-five years when Enoch “walks with God” that the accounts of the book of 1 Enoch take place. These include a stunning variety of revelations of the nature of the heavens, history, the origin of sin, and, most significant for the purposes of this study, the final dispositions of the good and the wicked after the judgment. It is in one of these tours of heaven that the phrase meaning “eschatological world of the messianic age,” equivalent to the Hebrew olam ha-ba, is first encountered in a Jewish text:
With them is the Antecedent of Time: His head is white and pure like wool and his garment is indescribable. . . . Then an Angel came to me and greeted me and said to me, “You, the Son of Man, who art born in righteousness and upon whom righteousness has dwelt, and the righteousness of the Antecedent of Time will not forsake you.” He added and said to me: “He shall proclaim peace to you in the name of the world that is to become. For from here proceeds peace since the creation of the world, and so it shall be unto you forever and ever and ever” (1 En 71:10, 14–15).

The Son of Man here is the Messiah, elsewhere called “the Elect One” in the translation from the Ge’ez language of the Ethiopic Church, which preserved the book and consider it canonical. In clear contrast with the biblical Messiah, this one represents a supernatural, eternally anointed figure of perfect righteousness (1 En 48:2–7) who “would remove the kings and the mighty ones from their comfortable seats and the strong ones from their thrones” (1 En 46:4). Thereupon he will render judgment upon all mortals at the end of time: “Thenceforth nothing corruptible shall be found; for that Son of Man has appeared and has seated himself on the throne of his glory; and all evil shall disappear from before his face” (1 En 69:28–29).

Thus 1 Enoch is clearly a critical source for the idea that the messianic age culminates a divine plan set into motion at the time of creation (as well as one source for the understanding of messianism that Christians would come to attribute to Jesus of Nazareth). This plan will rid the world of evil and restore the realm of perfect peace lost with the fall in the Garden of Eden. Yet Enoch’s tours of the heavens also reveal a complex system of personal eschatology at work, one that appears to elaborate on the postjudgment fates described in Daniel, wherein the souls of the dead are collected into hollow places in a heavenly mountain, with separate places for the righteous and the sinners, until the time of judgment. The angel Raphael tells Enoch, “[U]ntil the great day of judgment . . . to those who curse [there will be] plague and pain forever, and the retribution of their spirits. They will bind them there forever—even if from the beginning of the world” (1 En 22:11).

But regarding the righteous and elect among humanity, at the time of the great judgment:

In those days, Sheol will return all the deposits which she had received and hell will give back all that which it owes. And he shall choose the righteous and the holy ones from among (the risen dead), for the day when they shall be selected and saved has arrived. In
those days, [the Elect One] shall sit on my throne, and from the conscience of his mouth shall come out all the secrets of wisdom, for the Lord of the Spirits has given them to him and glorified him. In those days, mountains shall dance like rams; and the hills shall leap like kids satiated with milk. And the faces of all the angels in heaven shall glow with joy, because on that day the Elect One has arisen. And the earth shall rejoice; and the righteous ones shall dwell upon her and the elect ones shall walk upon her. (1 En 51)

In both of these accounts of the fates of the righteous and the wicked, their personal dispositions are also rendered as part and parcel of the events of the end-times, and the righteous anticipate as part of their reward continued existence on earth but in a time of perfect peace and cosmic joy.\(^{23}\)

Of course, the national sovereignty and security—let alone perfect peace and cosmic joy—of the messianic age continued to elude the Jewish people even during the Second Temple period, and the destruction of that temple by the Romans in 70 C.E. underscored for many Jews both how far off the promise of the messianic age was in the current era and, at the same time, how necessary divine intervention would be to put things right. Two apocalypses, 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, written in the wake of the Temple’s destruction and the Jewish Diaspora, capture the mingling of dread of history and hope for cosmic redemption in the future that the messianic promise in the aftermath of another such disaster surely evoked.

With an apparent reference in chapter 12 to the Flavian emperors of Rome, scholars generally believe that 4 Ezra (2 Esdras 3–14 in the Apocrypha) reflects the situation in Palestine circa 100 C.E.\(^{24}\) However, the narrative is set in the aftermath of the Babylonian destruction of the first Temple, some seven centuries earlier, and consists mainly of the figure of Ezra, that great hero of the restoration of Jewish society after the exile, interrogating a divine interlocutor regarding the meaning of the devastation to which he was now witness. The tension in this line of questioning is broken by a spectacular vision of a woman in mourning who becomes the New Jerusalem on Earth. Unlike Ezekiel’s vision, however, the reader is not permitted to tour the divine city with the seer. Still, following this revelatory encounter, the focus of the dialogues with the angel shifts from past and present to future, and there are extensive presentations of what the surviving Jews may expect of the end-times and thereafter.

4 Ezra 6 contains this spooky glimpse of the time just before the judgment:
Infants a year old shall speak with their voices, and women with child shall give birth to premature children at three and four months, and these shall live and dance. . . . At that time friends shall make war on friends like enemies, and the earth and those who inhabit it shall be terrified, and the springs of the fountains shall stand still, so that for three hours they shall not flow. (6:21, 24)

Those who are alive to witness these events will also bear witness to God’s salvation and the return of “those who did not die,” presumably Enoch and Elijah but possibly including other apocalyptic seers such as Baruch and Ezra himself. As a result, their hearts will be fundamentally transformed away from evil (6:25–28).

4 Ezra 7:26–44 lays out a timeline of the world to come; the length of the messianic age, after which the return to primeval creation both mirrors and presages the final judgment (the common apocalyptic trope of Urzeit wird Endzeit, “the beginning time becomes the end-time”). Specifically, the Messiah will be revealed, and he will live for four hundred years, bringing joy to those who live among him. Then the Messiah will die, as will all humanity. The world will be returned to primeval silence, as at the time prior to creation; and after seven days will be reawakened, and “that which is corruptible shall perish” (7:31). The dust shall yield the dead, God will then begin His judgment without mercy, and the places of reward and torment will appear. And God will speak to the nations on the day of judgment, and his determination of their fates “will last for about a week of years” (v. 43). 4 Ezra 13:39–50 also indicates that in the last days, the lost tribes of Israel shall return from the land of Arzareth, where they had hidden themselves since the Assyrian conquest. In all, 4 Ezra gives the most complete account of the events, timeframe, and disposition of the events of olam ha-ba of any apocalypse, and it appears equally focused on the personal and collective eschatology of the Jews.

The final major Jewish apocalyptic text to address the nature of the end-times is 2 Baruch. Also known as the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch, its seer is the faithful scribe of the prophet Jeremiah. It is likely of Palestinian provenance from the early second century, roughly contemporaneous with 4 Ezra. Like Ezra in 4 Ezra, Baruch begins the narrative amid the ruins of the first Temple, lamenting all that has beset his people. And while a dialogue ensues with an angelus interpres [interpreting angel] that echoes that of 4 Ezra, the emotional tenor is not as palpable. In fact, relatively quickly, a very clear idea emerges of what a future without a Temple looks like for the Jews: in a word, the law. Bronner states, “The author of the book appears to be an expert on
both apocalyptic imagery and rabbinic law, someone who could find a way to continue studying the Law after the catastrophe of national destruction in 70 C.E., and therefore someone who could help the Jewish people face the challenges of the post-Temple era.” Baruch, more insistently than the other apocalypticians, envisions the future not just as a time of great difficulties to be overcome before an ideal age, but also as one with qualities that will define the Jews who enter into it as the “true Israel.” The Temple and its restoration is of secondary importance to the revitalization of the law in people’s lives and the establishing of moral fortitude among his followers to survive the transition between the ages.27

2 Baruch 43–44 addresses the consolation of both Baruch the seer and of Zion in idealized or eschatological contexts. Baruch will understand his revelations as a result of many “consolations which will last forever” (43:1–2), while in the future, “the time again will take a turn for the better” for those who persevere in the law, and they will participate in the consolation of Zion (44:7).28 “For that which is now is nothing. But that which is in the future will be very great. For everything will pass away which is corruptible, and everything that dies will go away” (2 Bar 44:9). As with Daniel 12:2–3 and Ezekiel 37, part of the culmination of these utopian fantasies of the future includes a highly idealized notion of the recovery of the body from death. Three verses in particular address the disposition of the resurrected and the heights that their new lives will endow to them:

2 Baruch 50:2: For the earth will surely give back the dead at that time; it receives them now in order to keep them, not changing anything in their form.

2 Baruch 51:3: Also, as for the glory of those who proved to be righteous on account of my law, those who possessed intelligence in their life, and those who planted the root of wisdom in their heart—their splendor will then be glorified by transformations and the shape of their face will be changed into the light of their beauty so that they may acquire and receive the undying world which is promised to them.

2 Baruch 51:10: For they will live in the heights of that world and they will be like the angels and be equal to the stars.29

This is to say, in death the earth will preserve the righteous as they were, but they will be transformed in olam ha-ba, first into a radiantly beautiful countenance and ultimately into beings equal to the angels and the
stars—“while those who were evil will be changed into ‘startling visions and horrible shapes.’” Finally, as with so many apocalyptic visions, the ultimate hope of olam ha-ba pictures an end to illness and death. 2 Baruch 73:2–3 thus fuses the perfection of personal eschatology with its cosmic counterpart: “And then health will descend in dew, and illness will vanish, and fear and tribulation and lamentation will pass away from among men, and joy will encompass the earth. And nobody will again die untimely, nor will any adversity take place suddenly.”

THE JEWISH END-TIME IN CHRISTIANITY

This exact theme of the end of bodily frailty and death is evident in another apocalyptic text, the Christian book of Revelation, which in many ways is a quintessentially Jewish apocalypse, being informed by several of the traditions described thus far. But besides the statement in Revelation 21:4 about the end of death and mourning, it is relatively curt on the picture of the world after the judgment. Of the New Jerusalem, it states, “And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it” (Rev 22:23–24 nrsv). But these are about the only clues it offers concerning life on the new earth.

The development of the Christian notion of the world to come would be the subject of an entirely different study. Still, one particularly apocalyptic strand of Christianity is worth examining for the centrality of the Jewish view of olam ha-ba to its extremely rich and detailed rendering of the messianic age: the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses are the product of Charles Taze Russell’s struggles with the legitimacy of religious and governmental institutions in the latter half of the nineteenth century. As a result, he sought a form of Christianity that reflected “true” and original biblical traditions and authority. By necessity, then, much of his theology reflected the original Jewish sources as articulated by the prophets of the Christian Old Testament. What Russell was most concerned with was alerting the world to the coming judgment by Jesus Christ and the subsequent supplanting of the current order with God’s Kingdom. He predicted this event first for 1914, then 1918. His successors later set the date at 1925, and lastly at 1975, before abandoning date-setting in favor of a generalized, but diffused, anticipation of the coming of the “New World Society.”
If we look at how the Witnesses actually represent this New World Society, we see all of the themes that had been developed in the biblical prophets, which they quote (that is, “proof-text”) extensively. But we also find much of the same subsequent elaboration and refinement as on display in the Jewish apocalypses examined in the present study. For example, the tract titled “A Peaceful New World—Will It Come?” features an idyllic scene that depicts people and animals—predators and prey—joyously comingling in an abundant, green landscape. The tract asks:

When you look at the scene in this tract, what feelings do you have? Does not your heart yearn for the peace, happiness, and prosperity seen here? Surely it does. But is it just a dream, or fantasy, to believe these conditions will ever exist on Earth?

Most people probably think so. Today’s realities are war, crime, hunger, sickness, aging—to mention just a few. Yet there is reason for hope. The Hebrew Scriptures foretell that God will create a “new heavens and a new earth” and that “the former things will not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart.”

—Isaiah 65:17

It then proceeds to check off the essential promises of the Jewish messianic age: a “righteous society of people living on earth,” a “perfect heavenly kingdom, or government, that will rule over this earthly society of people,” “earthly benefits beyond compare,” “[h]atreds and prejudices will cease to exist, and eventually everyone on earth will be a true friend of everyone else.” The renewal of the earth, as in the time of Eden, is referenced, and never again “will people feel hunger because the ‘earth itself will certainly give its produce.’” Even sickness and death will end. The tract cites Psalms, Isaiah, and Hosea as evidence, putting into practice Russell’s principle that an authentic form of Christianity must adhere as closely as possible to its original Jewish roots in Scripture. Perhaps because the traditional Jewish resistance to producing divine imagery is absent, this Christian sect has been able to imagine and illustrate this Jewish view in a lush and vibrant way.

CONCLUSION: THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT

This overview of the Jewish expectations regarding what the world will look like after its end and divine judgment reveals, if nothing else, that while there was no shortage of ideas and beliefs on this matter in circulation in the centuries prior to the era of the talmudic sages, nothing resembling a cohesive,
systematic, or consensus doctrine ever existed. In fairness, expressing anything concrete about what will replace everything that currently exists is understandably a tricky affair. It is a paradox, the ultimate end that is not the ultimate end, and paradoxes are notoriously hard to reduce to direct language. At best, these texts articulate deeply held hopes that somehow the next world will compensate for the flaws and failures of this world. But as always, the devil is in the details, and who is rewarded and punished, why, and in what ways, are worked out differently in different texts under different cultural and historical circumstances.

With the decline of apocalyptic speculation in the centuries following the destruction of the second Temple and the emergence of rabbinic Judaism in the Diaspora, Jews more or less definitively put to rest the cosmic, world-historical speculation of apocalypticism. The term *olam ha-ba*, in this new context, shed its original roots in cosmic eschatology and brought to the fore the other half of the tradition that emphasized morality and one's personal postmortem state, the signification it has more or less retained through the millennia to this day.

Still, the former meaning is never that far removed. Death is always the end of the world for somebody.

NOTES

1. Simcha Paull Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife* (2nd ed.; Lanham: Roman & Littlefield, 2009), 68–69, 125–28. The Enochic provenance of the phrase from the equivalent construction in Ethiopic Ge’ez was first suggested by R. H. Charles, *The Ethiopic Version of the Book of Enoch: Edited from Twenty–Three MSS. together with the Fragmentary Greek and Latin Versions* (Anecdota Oxoniensia, Semitic Series 11; Oxford: Clarendon, 1906), 145; see also George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. Vanderkam, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch Chapters 37–82* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 329 n24. While scholarly consensus supports this origin, Leila Leah Bronner cautions that the actual connection to the Enoch literature may be far more complicated and less clear: “Olam ha-ba, ‘the World to Come,’ was a favorite expression of the rabbis, but it is unclear where the term comes from. Although there is a similar expression in 1 Enoch 71:15 (‘He will proclaim peace to you in the name of the world that is to become’), the rabbis . . . apparently did not approve of the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha, so they may not have found the term in Enoch. It may never be known for certain whether the term was borrowed and, if so, by whom.” Leila Leah Browner, *Journey to Heaven: Exploring Jewish Views of the Afterlife* (Brooklyn: Urim, 2011), 70–71.

3. It is in the book of the prophet Amos that this phrase most clearly takes on its signification as a harbinger of doom for the Jewish people. Oracles against other nations were certainly a standard component of many prophets, including Jeremiah and Isaiah, but the complacency of the Israelites is directly skewered in Amos 5:18–20, for they of all people should know what consequences await those who neglect God.

4. All English citations of the Hebrew Scriptures are from JPS85.

5. Bronner, Journey to Heaven, 166.


7. It is important to note Roberts’s conclusion that “[n]owhere in the Old Testament has the term [messiah] acquired its later technical sense as an eschatological title. . . . [E]xpectations of a new David are probably to be understood in terms of a continuing Davidic line. There is little indication that any of these prophets envisioned a final Davidic ruler who would actually rule for all time to come” (Roberts, “Messianic Expectations,” 51).


9. Some may take this verse to imagine an “eschatological state of sinlessness,” but Johannes Vlaardingerbroek argues that it is consistent with the calls in Isaiah, Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel to repent of specific sins and thus lead an “irreproachable life” within a sinful existence. See his Zephaniah (Historical Commentary on the Old Testament; Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 205.


11. Ibid., 67.

12. With the development of the concept of resurrection in Daniel 12, for the first time a biblical text asserts that both the righteous and the wicked will be resurrected from Sheol in order to face separate judgments according to the reward or punishment they have merited. “Thus, within the Book of Daniel, Jewish postmortem teachings become apocalyptic and dualistic in nature [and] is a seed for the notion of heaven and hell that characterizes later Jewish and Christian afterlife teachings.” Raphael, Jewish Views, 72–73.

13. John Collins, Daniel (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 392. He also notes, “Everyone who is found written in the book’ includes the righteous who have not died and so are not resurrected in 12:2, but they too are surely destined for eternal life.” (391).


15. Ibid., 115–27.


17. Bronner, Journey to Heaven, 49.


21. Ibid., 167.

22. George Nickelsburg notes that this verse references both a local/spatial and a temporal shift in the sequence of judgment, making the picture all the more complex and difficult to pin down definitively. See his *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36, 81–108* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress: 2001), 308.


24. Referring specifically to Daniel’s four kingdom structure, *4 Ezra* 12:11 states categorically, “The eagle that you saw coming up from the sea is the fourth kingdom that appeared in a vision to your brother Daniel.” The twelve kings of the interpretation are invariably understood to be Roman emperors, and the three heads, it is generally agreed, are the Flavians (69–96 C.E.). *4 Ezra* was likely composed under the reign of the last, Domitian, in the early 90s C.E. See Michael Stone, *Fourth Ezra* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 365. All English citations of *4 Ezra* are from B. M. Metzger, tr., “The Fourth Book of Ezra,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha Volume 1: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; New York: Doubleday, 1983), 525–79.


27. Dereck Daschke, *City of Ruins: Mourning Jerusalem through Jewish Apocalypse* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 144–46. See also F. J. Murphy, *The Structure and Meaning of Second Baruch* (SBLDS 78; Atlanta: Scholars, 1985), 37–70; 106–7, on the central role of the theology of the two ages in all aspects of *2 Baruch*’s message.


