

Fall 9-14-2016

The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ezra: Syriac Edition, English Translation, and Introduction

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ABSTRACT

The text that this thesis examines is most commonly referred to by modern scholars as the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ezra* (*Ps.-Ezra*). It is a historical apocalyptic text that claims authorship by the biblical character Ezra, but there is no question that it is the pseudonymous product of a much later Syriac-speaking Christian author who writes in response to the Arab conquests and subsequent consolidation of Arab political and religious dominance under the caliphate. *Ps.-Ezra* is a brief work, but an enigmatic one, and has received only scant scholarly attention. Although nineteenth-century translations based on three individual manuscripts were made into German, French, and English respectively, no critical edition or full-scale study based on multiple manuscripts has yet appeared.

The primary goal of this project, then, is to produce an edition of the Syriac *Ps.-Ezra* with a critical apparatus noting variants in the manuscript tradition. The edition is accompanied by an English translation in order to make *Ps.-Ezra* accessible to a wider range of scholars and students. To orient readers to the text, an introduction to and analysis of *Ps.-Ezra* is provided. In my approach, I am most interested in studying *Ps.-Ezra* as an example of the ways that Syriac-speaking Christians used the genre of apocalypse to reconcile their deeply held theological and historical expectations with their often different lived realities. In particular, the thesis highlights the ways Pseudo-Ezra used, reused, and reimagined sacred texts in order to respond to the theological challenges presented by Arab rule.

The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ezra
Syriac Edition, English Translation, and Introduction

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate School of Theology

Abilene Christian University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

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August 2016

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION TO THE APOCALYPSE OF PSEUDO-EZRA.....	1
	Outline, Plot, and Characters.....	2
	Scribal Title.....	3
	Ezra's Prayer and God's Answer.....	3
	The Serpent.....	4
	The Viper, Its Chicks, and The Ravens.....	6
	The Lion's Whelp and the Bull.....	7
	The Man of the South.....	12
	Elaborations on the End Times.....	13
	Ezra's Thanks and Scribal Superscription.....	15
	Review of the Secondary Literature.....	15
	Witnesses.....	19
	Manuscripts Used in the Edition.....	19
	Manuscripts Not Used in the Edition.....	23
	Provenance and Date.....	28
II.	SYRIAC EDITION.....	38
	Editorial Policy.....	38
	Edition.....	40
III.	ENGLISH TRANSLATION.....	51
	Translation Policy.....	51
	Philosophy.....	51
	Translation of Proper and Place Names.....	53
	Gendered Language.....	53

	Cross References.....	54
	Translation.....	54
IV.	PSEUDO-EZRA'S USE OF BIBLICAL TEXT.....	64
	Taking Up the Mantle of Ezra.....	65
	Interpreting Daniel Through the Lens of 4 Ezra.....	67
	Interpreting Genesis in the Context of the Arab Conquests.....	70
	Quoting Jesus' "Little Apocalypse" from the Synoptic Gospels.....	71
	Engaging the Images of the Book of Revelation.....	75
	Revelation as a Source.....	75
	Four Figures Bound on the Euphrates.....	77
	Conclusion.....	81
V.	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	83

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE APOCALYPSE OF PSEUDO-EZRA

Syriac-speaking Christians were among the first communities to experience the effects of early Arab expansion into the Roman and Persian territories surrounding Arabia. These Christians' earliest literary responses to Arab rule attempted to make sense of the military conquest and subsequent occupation through the genre of historical apocalypse. One such text is the little-studied Syriac Christian work known to modern scholars as the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ezra*.¹

The author of *Ps.-Ezra*, as the work's title implies, writes pseudonymously, taking up the mantle of the biblical Ezra. Capitalizing on Ezra's reputation for prophetic authority, Pseudo-Ezra seeks to assure his audience that Arab rule, which he calls "the kingdom of the Ishmaelites," will not last indefinitely, but that its end will be marked by a series of observable events that were revealed beforetime by God to Ezra. In relaying these events to his Christian readers, Pseudo-Ezra hopes to encourage them to remain faithful and hopeful despite warfare and persecution. He does so by structuring his audience's own historical experience within a divinely-

1. In the manuscripts the text is accompanied by titles that have some variation on the following: "The question that Ezra asked when he was in the desert with his disciple." Brief overviews of the text are available in Muriel Debié, "The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ezra," in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History. Volume 1 (600–900)*, ed. David Thomas and Barbara Rogemma (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009), 239–41, and Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*, Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 13 (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1997). Richard Gottheil translates into English an Arabic recension of this apocalypse in "An Arabic Version of the 'Revelation of Ezra,'" *Hebraica* 4 (1887): 14–17. This paper considers only the Syriac witnesses in its edition and translation, though the Arabic recension could be useful for analysis of the evolution of the text.

centered historical narrative in which the rise of Arab rule, as well as its eventual fall, is according to God's will and eschatological plan.

The primary goal of this study is fulfill a *desideratum* in the study of Syriac apocalyptic texts: the production of an edition of *Ps.-Ezra* with a critical apparatus noting variants in the manuscript tradition. The edition comprises chapter 2 of this thesis, and is preceded in chapter 1 by an introduction and analysis intended to orient the reader to the text. In order to make *Ps.-Ezra* accessible to scholars and students who might not be familiar with Syriac, an English translation of the edition, along with annotations noting parallels in other Christian literature, is provided in chapter 3. In my approach, I am most interested in studying *Ps.-Ezra* as an example of the ways that Syriac-speaking Christians used the genre of apocalypse to reconcile their deeply held theological and historical expectations with their often different lived realities. In particular, the thesis highlights the ways Pseudo-Ezra used, reused, and reimagined sacred texts in order to respond to the theological challenges presented by Arab rule, a topic that is explored in particular in chapter 4.

OUTLINE, PLOT, AND CHARACTERS

The following section is intended to orient the modern reader within the apocalyptic world of *Ps.-Ezra* by offering a summary of its plot and movement. Careful attention is paid to the possible historical identity of the apocalyptic figures that populate the vision. *Ps.-Ezra* may be organized according to the following outline, each section of which is described in depth below:

- I. Scribal Title (§1)
- II. Ezra's Prayer and God's Answer (§2)
- III. The Serpent (§3–4)
- IV. The Viper, Its Chicks, and the Ravens (§5–7)
- V. The Lion's Whelp and the Bull (§7–9)

VI. The Man of the South (§10–11)

VII. Elaborations on the End Times (§12–13)

VIII. Ezra's Thanks and Scribal Superscription

Scribal Title (§1)

The most basic of the attested scribal titles refers to this text as "The question that Ezra asked when he was in the desert with his disciple." To this, some witnesses add that Ezra is "the scribe" and offer the name of his disciple as "Carpos."

Interestingly, the words "apocalypse" or "vision" do not appear in the scribal titles, though the message that follows is clearly apocalyptic and visionary in content and form. Although the Syriac witness unanimously attributes the vision to Ezra, who then relays it to Carpos, Richard Gottheil has identified a shorter Arabic recension of *Ps.-Ezra* that contains just the vision of the serpent with twelve horns on its head and nine on its tail; in this recension the vision is attributed to Daniel, who then relays it to his disciple, Ezra.²

Ezra's Prayer and God's Answer (§2)

The apocalypse proper opens with Ezra asking God "to reveal to him the things that are going to happen in the end times." Conveniently for the modern reader, Ezra later clarifies to his disciple Carpos that he "asked God to explain the end times of the Ishmaelites," thus, the subject of the apocalypse can be determined without any doubt as concerning the rise and fall of the power of the Arab caliphates. As is common in apocalypses, God's answer is mediated to Ezra through a young man dressed in white (later explicitly named an angel) who bears a scroll that contains the answer to Ezra's question, a revelation that he says "has been concealed from many."

2. Gottheil, "An Arabic Version," 16.

The Serpent (§4–5)

Upon opening the scroll, Ezra is deeply troubled by the vision of terror that he receives. First, Ezra sees a serpent from the desert that devours creation. The serpent has twelve horns on its head and nine small horns on its tail that oppress the people of God. Another angel, this one clothed in a flame of fire, descends from heaven and rips the twelve horns from the serpent's head. Upon seeing this, Ezra declares that "today the prophecy of Moses is fulfilled," presumably referring to the well-known biblical prophecy concerning the rise of twelve princes of Ishmael (Gen 17:20) and popularly interpreted as a foretelling of the rise of Islam and Arab hegemony.³ The angel who delivered the scroll goes on to say that Daniel likewise received a revelation about the nine small horns; this seems to be a reference to the vision of the fourth beast of Daniel 7–8, perhaps as has been filtered through the interpretive lens of 2 Esdras's elaborations on the book of Daniel. One great horn then springs up on the serpent's tail, and two small ones on its head. An eagle appears from the south, breaking the great horn and devouring the two small horns. A whirlwind then strikes the eagle, tearing out its two talons, at which time a voice from heaven declares, "The eagle will be recompensed according to its reward."

I consider the section concerning the serpent and the eagle to be a single apocalyptic unit within *Ps.-Ezra*. Not only do these two characters make no further appearances within the apocalypse, but Gottheil's translation of the Arabic recension of *Ps.-Ezra*, along with other texts that pair twelve and nine great and little rulers,

3. For example, a white beast with twelve horns is said to represent the "Sons of Ishmael" in the apocalyptic section of the Bahira Legend, see Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Bahīrā: Eastern Christian Apologetics and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 66. See also the discussion in chapter 4 for an elaboration on how Pseudo-Ezra makes use of biblical text and reinterprets its prophecies.

offers evidence that at one time this pericope circulated independently.⁴ The visions that follow may be considered elaborations on or retellings of this first, more generic vision.

Since Pseudo-Ezra has identified this vision of the serpent as referring to the "kingdom of the Ishmaelites," the identification of at least one character must be an Arab leader or caliphate. Indeed, I suspect that the characters are meant to be taken, collectively, to refer to the entire history of Arab rule. By this interpretation, the twelve and nine horns might be taken to represent two different dynasties of Arab rule, perhaps that of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates, the "eagle from the south" as a rebellion or civil war among the Arabs, and the whirlwind as God's ultimate judgment of Arabs. Without further details that might be correlated to specific historical circumstances, it is difficult to ascertain with any certainty precisely which Arab rulers Pseudo-Ezra hopes to invoke. If the nine little horns represent specific rulers of the Abbasid caliphate, however, it is possible that *Ps.-Ezra* was written in the context of the reign of al-Mutawakkil (847–51 CE), the tenth caliph of the Abbasid dynasty who developed a reputation for suppressing the *dhimmi* populations, including Christians. As the tenth caliph, he might be represented by the rise of the one great horn after the nine little horns. The two little horns that appear alongside the great horn might represent two of his sons, though which two is uncertain, since at least four of his sons survived to adulthood, with three ascending to the caliphate.

4. Gottheil, "An Arabic Version," 17 describes a serpent with twelve horns on its head and nine bones on its tail; the *Kitāb al-majāll/Apocalypse of Peter* in Alphonse Mingana, *Woodbrooke Studies: Christian Documents in Syriac, Arabic, and Garshūni, Edited and Translated with a Critical Apparatus. Vol. 3: Vision of Theophilus; Apocalypse of Peter* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1933), 231 mentions twelve kings of Abus followed by nine little kings. On the similarities between *Ps.-Ezra* and the *Kitāb al-majāll/Apocalypse of Peter*, see the discussion in the section in this chapter on "Provenance and Date."

The Viper, Its Chicks, and the Ravens (§5–7)

The second apocalyptic unit should be read as an elaboration upon or retelling of the first. It opens with the appearance of a viper from the east, who "poured poison on all flesh and went up to the border of the Promise." If the "Promise" is the "Land of Promise" or "Promised Land," a phrase that occurs in full in §8, 9 and 10, this is likely a reference to the initial conquest of Palestine, including Jerusalem in 637 CE, by Arab forces. The viper's appearance is followed by an earthquake, thunder, and a voice from heaven that calls for the release of four kings who had been bound on the Euphrates river so that they can destroy one out of three people.⁵ If, as has been previously proposed, *Ps.-Ezra* was composed in the context of the Abbasid caliphate, the image of kings being released from the Euphrates could have been interpreted by the ancient audience as referring to the Abbasid rulers, many of whom ruled from Baghdad, a city located between the Tigris and Euphrates river. This connection is, admittedly, somewhat tenuous, since Baghdad is located much closer to and associated much more closely with the Tigris than the Euphrates. If the specific context of composition of the text is the reign of al-Mutawakkil, who ruled from Samarra rather than Baghdad, the image is further problematized, since Samarra lies just east of the Tigris river rather than between the Tigris and Euphrates. One might wonder also why there are precisely four kings (rather than nine to correspond with the previously mentioned nine horns) who are released from the Euphrates river; there might be no reason other than that this reflects the number of angels bound on the Euphrates river in the source of the image, Revelation 9:13–15, and that Pseudo-Ezra chose not to make changes to the number he found there.

5. See the full discussion of *Ps.-Ezra's* allusion to Rev 9:13–15 in chapter 4.

The connection of this apocalypse to the Abbasid caliphate is strengthened by the appearance of ravens from the east, who pierce the viper and cause it to flee to the borders of Egypt. Since the Abbasids were associated with the color black, the ravens (the term is a generic one used for black birds, and could also mean "magpies" or "crows") are likely meant to represent the Abbasids, who launched a revolution against the reigning Umayyad dynasty, represented by the viper, in 746–50 CE.⁶ The viper, who fled to Egypt with its two chicks, disappears from the apocalyptic narrative. The younger or smaller of the two chicks, who is still being pursued by the ravens after the viper's flight, seeks refuge with the lion's whelp, who receives him gladly. The historical identity of the two chicks is rather opaque, and will be discussed in the discussion of vision of lion's whelp, wherein the younger chick reappears, found below.

The Lion's Whelp and the Bull (§7–9)

The pericope concerning the conflict between the lion's whelp and the three-horned bull, the king of the ravens, comprises the bulk of *Ps.-Ezra's* apocalypse. The lion's whelp is associated with the west, and his land is troubled by the bull's incursions, so he seeks an alliance with the leopard of the south. The bull is described as amassing much wealth, afflicting all who come under his power, and being arrogant and not glorifying God. One of his horns makes war against the lion's whelp, and he launches an unsuccessful siege against the city of Constantinople. The viper's younger chick then brings an army from Thrace and the upper ranks of the west, and the chick's father gathers a nation from Cush to attack Egypt. The chick then descends to the Promised Land, ravages its inhabitants on account of their great

6. For example, the Abbasid caliphate is represented by a black beast from the north in the Bahira Legend, see Roggema, *Legend of Sergius Bahīrā* (Leiden: Brill, 2009): 69–71.

wickeness, and afterwards destroys Damascus. The lion's whelp becomes angry and drives the ravens out of the land, from Syrian Antioch unto the borders of the land of the east. He is then joined by the leopard of the north, and the two go up to the Euphrates river and into the land of Persia, where the lion's whelp breaks both of the bull's horns. The ravens flee, but are pursued by the lion's whelp, who plunders their land and makes it uninhabitable. He then goes up to the Promised Land and submits it to tribute; a great tribulation follows. He builds walls around Phoenicia, destroys Damascus (a second time?), then goes up to Jerusalem in great pomp before returning to his capital city.

As is typical for this apocalypse, the characters in this section are difficult to correlate with specific historical figures. Bousset, following Dillman, proposed that the pericope is drawn from a source that originally referred to the conflict between the Byzantine emperor Heraclius (the lion's whelp) and his Persian counterpart, Khusrau II (the bull) in the early decades of the 7th century.⁷ According to this interpretation, the leopard of the north represents Heraclius' Turkish allies, and the lion's whelp's descent into Jerusalem with great pomp recalls the restoration of the True Cross to Jerusalem (629 CE). The identity of the younger chick is less clear; he perhaps represents a Persian who defected to the Byzantines, or perhaps he is a later interpolation by Pseudo-Ezra or another author.⁸ That the younger chick is a later addition drawn from a different apocalyptic source is supported by the fact that two different destructions of Damascus are mentioned in the text of *Ps.-Ezra*, the first by the chick (§8) and the second by the lion's whelp (§9).

7. Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend*, 47–49.

8. The *Kitāb al-majāll* also portrays this character as a defector or convert, describing the conversion to Christianity of a "young scion of the mighty Kings of the Children of Ishmael" who goes to the lion's whelp for military aid. See Mingana, *Apocalypse of Peter*, 278–79.

In the context of Pseudo-Ezra's reworking of this earlier apocalypse, the exploits of the lion's whelp are an excellent example of what Paul Alexander termed the "Last Roman Emperor Theme."⁹ A popular image in late antique apocalypses across Christian confessional boundaries, the Last Emperor motif imagines the rise of a Christian Roman/Byzantine Emperor who, in somewhat messianic fashion, would overthrow the Arabs, reclaim Jerusalem, and establish a worldwide Christian kingdom. Once the entire world was under the banner of Christ, there would be no more need for temporal rulers, and so the Last Emperor would cede his power and crown to God at the foot of the cross. This would signal the beginning of the final tribulation and end of time.

The lion's whelp's defeat of the bull and his armies, his reclamation of Jerusalem, and his establishment of a temporary peace identify him with the messianic Last Emperor. Because the Last Emperor is a symbolic figure representing eschatological expectations, the lion's whelp might not be identifiable as a particular Christian Byzantine ruler, but rather might represent generalized Christian hopes for such a ruler. It is, however, possible that Pseudo-Ezra was inspired by the moderate successes of an individual Byzantine ruler or general during his own time, and that he believed those successes might snowball into a total overthrow of the caliphate, represented by bull, the adversary of the lion's whelp. The bull, like the lion's whelp, might be an archetypal symbol of Arab wickedness rather than a precise representation of a particular caliph.

That the lion's whelp is described as subjecting the Promised Land to tribute and instituting a great tribulation has been interpreted by Hoyland as a hint that the

9. On this and other popular apocalyptic themes in Byzantine (and Syriac) Christianity, see Paul J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, ed. Dorothy Abrahamse (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); see also András Kraft, "The Last Roman Emperor Topos in the Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition," *Byzantion* 82 (2012): 213–57.

author of *Ps.-Ezra* harbors anti-Byzantine sentiments.¹⁰ It is possible, however, that Pseudo-Ezra does not intend to imply that the lion's whelp is oppressing non-Chalcedonian Christians, rather, his subjection of the land and institution of tribute and tribulation could be actions taken against Arabs living in the Promised Land. If, however, this negative characterization should be interpreted as anti-Byzantine, the lion's whelp/Last Emperor, would still serve as an eschatological symbol whose appearance marks the beginning of the end of time, without necessarily serving as pro-Byzantine propaganda.

The younger chick and his father emerge as intriguing and enigmatic figures in this section. Like the lion's whelp, their characterization seems mixed, at times revealing them to be positive figures, and perhaps other times as negative. The younger chick allies with lion's whelp, but his forces later ravage the city of Damascus, an action that inflames the lion's whelp's anger. This phrase could be interpreted in such a way, however, that the lion's whelp is not angered at the younger chick's actions against Damascus, but that those actions incite or encourage him to join the chick in attacking the Arabs.

Another dilemma is the identification of the ethnic or religious affiliation of the chick and his father. Although the chick is presumably the offspring of the viper (a symbol of the Umayyad dynasty), since it is referred to as the viper's chick, his father is associated in some way with the nation of Cush (Ethiopia).¹¹ This seems to indicate that in Pseudo-Ezra's adaptation, the younger chick has experienced an

10. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 277.

11. Mingana, *Apocalypse of Peter*, 278–79 identifies a similar character as a convert from Islam to Christianity, which could account for the chick seeming at times to be a Arab and at other times, a Christian. Interestingly, the scribes of BL 28,875 and UTS 23 omit the possessive suffix, recording that the viper took "the two chicks" rather than "its two chicks." This is perhaps an indication that these scribes, noting the later identification of the chick's father as a Cushite and champion of Christianity, intentionally edited their text to eliminate the later and seemingly contradictory mention of the chick's Arab parentage.

accretion of characteristics typically associated with the Last Roman Emperor as elaborated upon in texts like the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*. According to *Ps.-Methodius's* interpretation, Psalm 68:31, which prophesies that "Cush shall stretch out her hands to God," will be fulfilled in the Last Roman Emperor's cession of his temporal power to Christ at the foot of the cross, because the Last Emperor is also a descendant of the nation of Cush.¹² In order to account for this unconventional ancestry for a Roman/Byzantine ruler, Pseudo-Methodius weaves a curious tale in which Alexander the Great's mother is the daughter of the King of Cush, and that one of her children by her husband Byz (eponymous of Byzantium) married Romulus, the mythic founder of Rome. The net effect of this geneology is to declare that the Roman/Byzantine emperors have ancestral roots in Cush, and therefore the Cushite nation will be involved in some way in the eschatological events of the Last Roman Emperor.

Upon reflection, it seems most likely that the younger chick is a composite figure, cobbled together from multiple apocalyptic sources, and therefore to recognize that at times the description of him within the text is internally inconsistent. His function within the apocalyptic narrative, if not his description, however, is clear: as an ally of the lion's whelp he serves Pseudo-Ezra as a means by which to explain how the prophecy of Psalm 68:31 will be fulfilled by or in association with the Last Roman Emperor.

12. See Francisco Javier Martinez, "The King of the Rum and the King of Ethiopia in Medieval Apocalyptic Texts from Egypt," in *Coptic Studies. Acts of the Third International Congress of Coptic Studies*, ed. Włodzimierz Godlewski (Warsaw: PWN-Éditions scientifiques de Pologne, 1990): 247–59; Glen W. Bowersock, "Helena's Bridle, Ethiopian Christianity, and Syriac Apocalyptic," *Studia Patristica* 45 (2010): 211–20.

The Man of the South (§10–11)

The lion's whelp's exit from Jerusalem is followed after three and a half weeks by the rise of the man of the south, who establishes a great peace and does good deeds in the Promised Land for three years and seven months, after which the four winds are stirred up and the nations rise up against each other. The appearance of the man of the south marks the beginning of the shift from historical to eschatological apocalypse. The chronology associated with his reign is symbolic: the "three and a half" motif recalls the "time, times, and half a time" of Daniel 7:25; 12:7, and "three and a half days" of Revelation 11:9; 11, and the "three years and seven months" corresponds to the "1,290 days" of Daniel 12:11.¹³ That the man of the south is a positive figure is initially surprising; one might expect a figure from the south to be associated with Arabia, and thus, the enemy. No explanation for his positive reign can be drawn from the book of Daniel, whose "king of the south" is portrayed in negative terms.¹⁴

Upon hearing about the violence that will ensue at the end of the man of the south's reign, Ezra begins to weep. The angel reassures him that these events will not occur until utter wickedness—particularly drunkenness and sexual immorality—has filled the earth. At that time God's justice will become provoked and he will deliver the "rebellious seed" to destruction at the hands of their enemies; this is a sign of the impending final end. The rebellious seed is presumably the Ishmaelites, and thus Arabs, though the sins attributed to the rebellious seed are rather general, and are the sort of stock denunciation that could be leveled at any religious foe, including rival Christian groups.

13. This assumes a prophetic calendar in which each month contains 30 days.

14. See Dan 11.

Elaborations on the End Times (§12–14)

Still fearful, Ezra wonders who could live amid the tribulation and violence that his vision has foretold. The angel then reassures Ezra that God is able to save those in whom he is pleased, and goes on to elaborate on events that will occur just prior to the End. The faithful will be oppressed, but God will hear their groaning and send an angel who will destroy the rebellious seed. Pseudo-Ezra then recalls the words of Jesus in declaring woe to women who are pregnant or nursing during the last days,¹⁵ because an unprecedented tribulation will occur: the opening of the mountains and the release of the children of north from the house of Gog and Magog. Here, *Ps.-Ezra* again shows evidence of the influence of the Alexander Romance, likely as mediated through *Ps.-Methodius*: according to the story, Alexander the Great imprisoned a number of unclean nations, including Gog and Magog, behind a gate in the mountains of the north; at the end of time these nations would be released and terrorize humankind.¹⁶ In *Ps.-Ezra*, two tribes from the seed of Ishmael, along with those who have become sooty at the base of the mountain of the South, join Gog and Magog.¹⁷ They go as far as Jerusalem, where God intervenes and sends the angel Michael to destroy these evildoers.

The false messiah (or antichrist) then appears and kills Enoch and Elijah. Here, *Ps.-Ezra* shows knowledge of an early Christian apocalyptic tradition that named the two witnesses of Revelation 11:3–8 as Enoch and Elijah, despite the fact that the descriptions of the two witnesses' miracles within Revelation most closely correspond

15. Mark 13:17, 19; Matt 24:19; 20; Luke 21:23; see the discussion of this quotation in chapter 4.

16. Martinez, "Pseudo-Methodius and Pseudo-Athanasius," 133–34.

17. This section of the apocalypse contains a number of difficult readings and grammatical oddities, especially as preserved by Mingana 11. Apparently, the scribes who copied *Ps.-Ezra* also found this passage puzzling, because a number of clarifying variants also occur in the manuscript tradition.

to the canonical descriptions of the miracles performed by Elijah and Moses. Richard Bauckham has identified 24 texts that name the witnesses as Enoch and Elijah.¹⁸ Some of these texts, including *The Apocalypse of Peter* (2:11–13) and Tertullian's *De anima* (50), are quite ancient, dating to the second century CE, and indicate that this tradition shaped the very earliest Christian interpretation of the Book of Revelation. Perhaps even more relevant for our discussion are the Syriac Christian texts, such as Ephrem's "Sermon on the End Times," *The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, and the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ephrem*¹⁹, that name Enoch and Elijah as the witnesses, demonstrating that this tradition was popular among Syriac-speaking Christians as well. It is likely that the pairing of Enoch and Elijah became popular since the two men are the only biblical characters who were reported as being taken up to heaven without dying; their deaths were thought to have been delayed by God so that they later could die as martyrs at the hands of the antichrist.²⁰ Angels are then sent to cast the Son of Perdition, who is presumably, though not explicitly, also the antichrist, into Gehenna. This final act of judgment marks the End. Ezra is then commanded to "keep these words until their time."

With the exception of the explicitly named "two tribes from the seed of Ishmael," who join Gog and Magog, the characters in this section of the text are stock eschatological figures in Christian apocalypse, and are likely not meant to be identified as Arabs. Rather, their appearances serve to "wrap up" Pseudo-Ezra's

18. Richard Bauckham, "The Martyrdom of Enoch and Elijah: Jewish or Christian?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95, no. 3 (1976): 447–58.

19. *The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ephraem* is preserved in four Latin manuscripts, but Alexander demonstrates that the original was composed in Syriac in *Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 142–44.

20. This is the explanation offered by Tertullian, *De anima* 50; Holmes, *ANF* 3:227. "Enoch no doubt was translated, and so was Elijah; nor did they experience death: it was postponed (and only postponed,) most certainly they are reserved for the suffering of death, that by their blood they may extinguish the Antichrist."

apocalypse by placing the end of the kingdom of the Ishmaelites within a broader eschatological plot that already would be familiar to his audience. In this way, the end of the kingdom of the Ishmaelites becomes another in a series of signs of the impending end of time.

Ezra's Thanks and Scribal Superscription (§15–16)

The narration then return to Ezra, who, in typical apocalyptic fashion, closes by worshipping and offering a prayer of thanks and blessing to God for deeming him worthy to see this vision. The scribes then conclude the text with a superscription that reiterates that this is the vision seen by Ezra the scribe; most add that the vision concerned the kingdom of the Ishmaelites.

REVIEW OF THE SECONDARY LITERATURE

With this outline and introduction to the plot and characters of *Ps.-Ezra* concluded, discussion now turns to a review of the secondary literature concerning the text. The first scholarly mention of *Ps.-Ezra* is found in Assemani's *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana*.²¹ His note is brief, emphasizing only that the text's mention of the city of Constantinople (called by that name only after 324 CE) precludes it from being a truly ancient work, and he groups it with other pseudonymous works such as the apocalypses of Peter and Paul and the gospels of Thomas and Bartholomew.

The American scholar Isaac Hall appears to have been the first to translate *Ps.-Ezra* into a modern European language. In 1886, he published an English translation of *Ps.-Ezra* based on UTS 23, a manuscript copied in 1884 from a now-lost exemplar

21. See Joseph Simonius Assemani, ed., *Bibliotheca orientalis Clementino-Vaticana, in qua manuscriptos codices syriacos, arabicos, persicos, turcicos, hebraicos, samaritanos, armenicos, aethiopicos, Graecos, aegyptiacos, ibericos & malabaricos* (Roma: Typis Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, 1719–1728), vol. 2, 498; vol. 3, pt. 2, 282.

dated to 1756 at Rabban Hormizd monastery near Alqosh, Iraq.²² Hall's translation seems to have gone unnoticed by most European scholars.²³ Perhaps his work was overshadowed by that of Friedrich Baethgen, which was published in the same year: as a result of his study of Sachau 131, Baethgen published an edition and German translation of *Ps.-Ezra* with little introduction and no commentary.²⁴ Although Baethgen expressed interest in returning to the project in his article, he does not appear to have done so in any other published work.

On the basis of Baethgen's edition and translation, Ludwig Iselin produced in 1887 a study of *Ps.-Ezra* in which he proposed that the text was a Christian revision of (an) earlier Jewish apocalypse(s).²⁵ In support of his claim, Iselin pointed to what he termed the text's "predominantly Jewish character," namely, its emphasis on Jewish figures and places such as Moses, Daniel, the Promised Land, and Jerusalem, which he thought to be evidence of Pseudo-Ezra's use of Jewish apocalyptic sources. Iselin's interpretation of *Ps.-Ezra*, however, is heavily colored by his desire to demonstrate that the biblical Revelation of John was also a reworked Jewish apocalypse originally composed in Aramaic. More specifically, Iselin asserted that in those places where Revelation and *Ps. Ezra's* imagery overlapped, the latter was not simply borrowing from or quoting the former, but rather, both were drawing from an older Jewish Aramaic source. In particular, Iselin believed that Pseudo-Ezra's description of four

22. Isaac Hall, "The Vision of Ezra the Scribe Concerning the Latter Times of the Ishmaelites," *Presbyterian Review* 7 (1886): 537–41.

23. Fellow American Richard Gottheil does mention Hall's work in his translation of an Arabic apocalypse that bears great similarity to *Ps.-Ezra*, and proposes that it represents an Arabic recension of the same text. See Gottheil, "An Arabic Version," 14.

24. Friedrich Baethgen, "Beschreibung der syrischen Handschrift 'Sachau 131' aus der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 6 (1886): 193–211.

25. Ludwig Emil Iselin, "Apokalyptische Studien (Die Apocalypse des Esra in syrischer Sprache von Prof. Baethgen veröffentlicht)," *Theologische Zeitschrift aus der Schweiz* 4 (1887): 60–64

kings (malke) who had been bound on the Euphrates river represented the original reading of the Jewish source, which the author of Revelation misread as four angels (malake). Such confusion between the two terms would be impossible in Greek, but could be quite easily made in Aramaic/Syriac.²⁶

While cataloguing Syriac manuscripts held in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Jean-Baptiste Chabot produced in 1894 his own French translation of *Ps.-Ezra* based on BnF 326.²⁷ Chabot's translation notes instances where BnF 326 diverges from Baethgen's edition. In his commentary on the text, Chabot dismissed Iselin's claims about *Ps.-Ezra's* Jewish origins and its supposed support for the Aramaic primacy of Revelation as unconvincing. In particular, Chabot found Iselin's reasoning about the four malke/malake specious—he thought it more likely that the author of *Ps.-Ezra* simply misread the Syriac version of Revelation's reference to four angels as kings, rather than that both *Ps.-Ezra* and Revelation drew independently from an earlier Aramaic Jewish apocalypse.²⁸ Chabot instead proposed that *Ps.-Ezra* is not a revision of an earlier Jewish apocalypse, but rather entirely the work of a seventh- or eighth-century Christian author who drew rather freely and loosely from his knowledge of common biblical apocalyptic imagery when composing his work. In addition to proposing this date, Chabot suggested that the author's purpose in writing was to convince his contemporaries that recent events (i.e.: the Arab conquests and siege of Constantinople) were the consequence of Christians' own sin, and to call them to repentance.²⁹

26. See also the discussion of this image in chapter 4 of this thesis.

27. Jean-Baptiste Chabot, "L'Apocalypse d'Esdras touchant le royaume des Arabes," *Revue sémitique d'épigraphie et d'histoire ancienne* 2 (1894): 242–50, 333–46.

28. *Ibid.*, 341–45.

29. *Ibid.*, 345–46.

Since the late nineteenth century, no new edition or full translation of *Ps.-Ezra* has appeared, though brief mention of it has been made in survey texts covering topics such as apocalyptic literature, Syriac Christianity, and Christian-Muslim interaction. Wilhelm Bousset, in his survey of the figure of the antichrist in Christian and Jewish literature, was the first to offer an interpretation of the identity of the various figures in Pseudo-Ezra's apocalypse.³⁰ He identifies the serpent as the Umayyads, the eagle as the Abbasids, the viper as the Fatimids, the four kings on the Euphrates and ravens as the Turks, and the lion's whelp as one of the first Christian crusaders.³¹ In his anthology of texts on early Islam, Robert Hoyland draws on Bousset's interpretation and focuses on the section of the apocalypse that describes the conflict between the lion's whelp and the bull. He translates selected lines from this pericope into English, arguing that they are dependent on a source that originally depicted "the struggle between Khusrau II (bull) and Heraclius (lion cub) allied with the Turks (leopard)."³² He, like Bousset, believes *Ps.-Ezra* to be the product of a redactor living during the conflict "between the Fatimids and Seljuk or Mamluk Turks in the late eleventh and late twelfth centuries respectively."³³ Muriel Debié's bibliographical overview offers no interpretation of the apocalypse's figures, but assigns *Ps.-Ezra* to "the genre of historical apocalypses that were written in Syriac at the very beginning of the Arab era"³⁴ and proposes a date in the eighth-century.

30. Wilhelm Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend: A Chapter in Christian and Jewish Folklore*, trans. by A. H. Keane (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1896), 75–76.

31. See the discussion in the section on "Provenance and Date."

32. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 276–78. Hoyland's translation is based on the editions published by Baethgen and Chabot.

33. *Ibid.*, 278.

34. Debié, "The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ezra," 239–41.

WITNESSES

Although most survey texts name just four witnesses to *Ps.-Ezra*, further study has revealed that at least fifteen manuscripts are known to contain the Syriac *Ps.-Ezra*. Of these, seven are held (or were last known to be held) in Seert, Kirkuk, or Alqosh, Iraq; the other eight manuscripts are held in European or American institutions. The content and character of each of these manuscripts are discussed below. Manuscripts available for use in the edition and translation are listed first, ordered from oldest to youngest, followed by a listing of other known but unavailable manuscripts. For ease of recognition and reference, *Ps.-Ezra* has been underlined in the list of each manuscript's ordered contents. The lists of contents of the manuscripts are reproduced as recorded in the catalogues, which are footnoted after each of the manuscripts' names. Bolded names appearing in parentheses represent alternative names for the manuscript in the catalogues and scholarly literature; unbolded names appearing in parentheses represent the abbreviation for the manuscript that is used throughout the thesis.

*Manuscripts Used in the Edition***MS Mingana Syriac 11**³⁵ (Mingana 11)

1702; unknown provenance; eastern script

Mingana 11 is the oldest dated manuscript known to contain *Ps.-Ezra*. It was copied on January 16, 1702 by a Hoshabo, son of Daniel, son of Joseph the priest, son of Hoshabo. It includes a number of canonical, deuterocanonical, and extracanonical

35. See Alphonse Mingana, *Syriac and Garshuni Manuscripts*, vol. 1, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts* (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, 1933), 43–45. My thanks go to the Institute of Textual Scholarship and Electronic Editing (ITSEE) at the University of Birmingham, who have digitized and made available Mingana 11 for public viewing at no cost through their Virtual Manuscript Room (VMR): http://vmr.bham.ac.uk/Collections/Mingana/Syriac_11/table/. Note that when viewing Mingana 11 through the VMR, folios 104v–105r are mislabeled, out of order, and placed incorrectly in the middle of *Ps.-Ezra* though they belong to another text preserved in the manuscript; see also the introductory notes in chapter 2.

texts that are linked by a shared interest in theocentric historiography. Mingana 11 serves as the base text in the diplomatic edition of *Ps.-Ezra* presented in chapter 2 of this thesis.

1. I/II Chronicles (together as one book)
2. Susanna (in a recension shorter than is typical)
3. Judith (in a recension shorter than is typical)
4. blank folio³⁶
5. Cave of Treasures
6. Questions of Simon Peter on the Sacraments
7. Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ezra
8. Treatise on the Number of Years from Adam to Christ and Christ to the Arabs
9. History of the Indian Mission to the Nestorian Patriarch in Jazriat b. Umar

MS British Library Add. 25,875 (MS Wright 922)³⁷ (BL 25,875)

1709; Alqosh, Iraq; eastern script

BL 25,875 was copied in Alqosh by the priest Homo bar-Daniel at the commission of the priest Joseph for the church of Mart Maryam, Hordepneh, Shemkan district, Amadiya region. It contains four distinct colophons, and might have been copied from several different exemplars. The first colophon after *Ps.-Ezra* is dated June 22, 1709. Note that the first five texts are the same as those found in Vat 164.

36. Although it is impossible to know with certainty the scribe's reason for leaving this folio blank, one might propose that the scribe was aware that the *Lives of the Prophets* typically would have normally been recorded here alongside the *Cave of Treasures* and *Ps.-Ezra*, since that combination of texts is attested in several of the other extant witnesses.

37. See William Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum Acquired Since the Year 1838*, vol. 3 (London, British Museum: 1870-1872), 1064–69. My thanks to Michael Penn and the British Library for their assistance in providing digital images of BL 25,875 for my study.

1. Cave of Treasures
2. Questions of Simon Peter on the Sacraments
3. Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ezra
4. Testament of Adam
5. Testimonies about Our Lord's Dispensation
6. Names of the Nations That Arose after the Confusion of Tongues
7. an extract about Nebuchadnezzar from a discourse on Daniel by Chrysostom (followed by first colophon)
8. Book of the Bee (followed by second colophon)
9. Chronicle of Simeon Shankelawi (followed by third colophon)
10. History of Shalita, the Martyrdom of Mamas
11. History of Alexander the Great (followed by fourth colophon).

MS Sachau 131 (MS Berlin Staatsbibliothek 73)³⁸ (Sachau 131)

1862; Tel Keppe, Iraq; eastern script

Sachau 131 was copied in 1862 in Tel Keppe, Iraq by Simeon, the son of a deacon. Like Mingana 11, it contains several deuterocanonical works, which are then followed by the same four texts that are also attested in Mingana 567 and Alqosh 38–42.

1. Judith
2. Esther
3. Susannah
4. Tobit
5. Lives of the Prophets (Syriac version attributed to Epiphanius of Cyprus)

38. Eduard Sachau, ed., *Die Handschriften-Verzeichnisse der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin*, 23. Band: *Verzeichniss der syrischen Handschriften*, vol. 1 (Berlin: A. Asher & Co., 1899), 277–81. See Baethgen's edition and German translation in "Sachau 131," 193–211. My thanks to the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, which provided digital images of Sachau 131 for my study.

6. Cave of Treasures
7. Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ezra
8. Letter of Sunday

MS Union Theological Seminary Syriac 23 (MS Clemons 307)³⁹ (UTS 23)

1884; Alqosh, Iraq (Rabban Hormizd Monastery); eastern script

UTS 23 was copied from an exemplar dated 1756 at Rabban Hormizd Monastery in 1884 by David Qeryat of Amadi for the use of an American missionary who later sold the manuscript to his alma mater, Union Theological Seminary.

Although UTS 23 itself contains only the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ezra*, Hall reports that the exemplar from which it was copied had contents similar to those of BL 28,875, including the *Cave of Treasures*, the *Syriac Lives of the Prophets* (attributed to Epiphanius of Cyprus), and a version of the Nicene Creed he judged to have a distinctly "Nestorian" flavor.⁴⁰

1. Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ezra

MS Bibliothèque nationale de France—Paris 326⁴¹ (BnF 326)

nineteenth century; unknown provenance; eastern script

The scribe of this manuscript gave it the title "Collection of the Lives of the Holy Saints." *Ps.-Ezra* is the first of eight texts, the last of which is incomplete, suggesting that the collection might have once included additional hagiographic texts.

39. Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, *Syriac Manuscripts in the Harvard College Library: A Catalogue* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979), 137. Isaac Hall reports the circumstances of the copying of UTS 23 in "On Some Syriac Manuscripts Recently Acquired by the Union Theological Seminary, New York," *Journal of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis* 5, no. 1/2 (June-Dec. 1885): 95. See his English translation in "The Vision of Ezra the Scribe," 537–41. My thanks to the Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, which provided digital images of UTS 23 for my study.

40. Hall, "On Some Syriac Manuscripts," 95.

41. Chabot, "Notice sur les manuscrits syriaques de la Bibliothèque nationale acquis depuis 1874", *Journal asiatique* IX, 8 (1896): 234–290. See also Chabot's edition and French translation in "L'Apocalypse d'Esdras," 242–250, 333–346. My thanks to the Bibliothèque nationale de France, which provided digital images of BnF 326 for my study.

If BnF 326 had a colophon, it too has been lost; Chabot proposes dating it to the nineteenth century. The collection shows a particular interest in Syriac saints and martyrs.

1. Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ezra
2. Life of John Bar-Malke
3. Life of Mar Kardag
4. First through Third Findings of the True Cross
5. Life of Mar Behnam
6. Eight Sleepers of Ephesus
7. Life of Mar Cyriacus and his mother Julian
8. Life of Abraham Quidounaye (incomplete)

Manuscripts Not Used in the Edition

MS Vatican Syriac 597⁴² (Vat 597)

late seventeenth century, unknown provenance; eastern script

Vat 597 is a rather fragmentary manuscript that is perhaps best described as a large collection of saints' lives. It lacks its colophon, and is therefore of uncertain date and provenance, though Arnold Van Lantschoot suggests a date in the late seventeenth century. If correct, this would make Vat 597 the earliest witness to *Ps.-Ezra*. Because of the highly fragmentary nature of the manuscript, the following order of texts has been reconstructed by Van Lantschoot, who expressed some uncertainty about the placement of items 5–15 (including *Ps.-Ezra*). Additional texts once represented in the manuscript might have been lost.

1. Acts of Thomas (fragment)

42. See Arnold Van Lantschoot, *Inventaire des manuscrits Syriaques des fonds Vatican (460–631), Barberini Oriental et Neofiti*, Studi e testi 243 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1965), 128–31.

2. Arts of Mar Mari (fragment)
3. History of the Blessed Virgin (fragment)
4. History of the Likeness of Christ (fragment)
5. Syriac Apocalypse of Paul (fragment)
6. Acts of Peter (fragment)
7. History of Mika
8. History of Paul the Bishop and the priest John
9. end of the Passion of Gabadiaha and Qazo
10. Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ezra
11. Acts of Paul (fragment)
12. unknown narrative (11 line fragment; mentions Catholicos Dadisho and Metropolitan Osee I of Nisbis)
13. Tale Full of Hope for Sinners
14. Acts of John (fragment)
15. On the Resurrection
16. Life of Mar Aba
17. History of Simeon bar Sabbae
18. Passion of Palqidios
19. Passion of Mar Saba
20. Acts of Mar Qaradag
21. Dialogue between God and Moses
22. Passion of Julian
23. Acts of Thecla
24. Life of Jacob of Amid
25. short prayer by the anonymous scribe

Vatican Syriac 164 (MS Assemani 17)⁴³ (Vat 164)

1702; Mosul, Iraq; eastern script

Vat 164 was copied on February 14, 1702 near Mosul by the Deacon of Hormizd, son of Quriaqos, son of Askar, a smith. Just a month younger than Mingana 11, it is the second-oldest dated witness containing *Ps.-Ezra*. It contains five texts in an order identical to the first five texts of BL 25,875:

1. Cave of Treasures
2. Questions of Simon Peter on the Sacraments
3. Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ezra
4. Testament of Adam
5. Testimonies about Our Lord's Dispensation

MS Mingana Syriac 567 (MS Mosul 27)⁴⁴ (Mingana 567)

1744; Zawita, Iraq; eastern script

Mingana 567 was copied in Zawita, Iraq on April 13, 1744 by a deacon named Thomas, son of a priest Abdisho, son of Hoshaba, son of a priest Israel of Alqosh. Mingana 567 contains six texts, the first four of which are also attested to in identical order in Sachau 131 and Alqosh 38-40, and also in Alqosh 41-42 in a slightly different order.

1. Lives of the Prophets (Syriac version attributed to Epiphanius of Cyprus)
2. Cave of Treasures
3. Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ezra
4. Letter of Sunday
5. Treatise on impediments to marriage

43. See Assemani, *BO* vol 2, 498; vol 3, pt. 1: 282.

44. Mingana, *Syriac and Garshuni Manuscripts*, 1076–79.

6. Long Hymn of the Virgin

MS Voste Kirkuk 9⁴⁵ (Kerkuk 9)

1791; Alqosh, Iraq; eastern script

Kirkuk 9 was copied near Alqosh by the deacon Abdisho, son of the priest Iaunan of Alqosh in April 1791. It contains the same first four texts in the same order as Mingana 567 and Alqosh 38–40. Kirkuk 9 was last known to be held in the library of the Chaldean Catholic Archbishop of Kirkuk.

1. Lives of the Prophets (Syriac version attributed to Epiphanius of Cyprus)
2. Cave of Treasures
3. Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ezra
4. Letter of Sunday

MS Seert 113⁴⁶ (Seert 113)

eighteenth century; unknown provenance; eastern script

Seert 113 is an incomplete manuscript lacking its colophon. Since it contains the same first three texts as Vat 164 and BL 25,875, it is possible that it once contained other texts similar to those preserved in those mss. Addai Scher has dated it to the 18th century. It was last known to be held in the Chaldean Catholic Bishop of Seert's library. The portion preserved contains:

1. Cave of Treasures
2. Questions of Simon Peter on the Sacraments
3. Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ezra

45. Jacques-M. Vosté, "Catalogue des manuscrits syro-chaldéens conservés dans la bibliothèque de l'archevêché chaldéen de Kerkouk (Iraq)," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 5 (1939): 79–80.

46. See Addai Scher, *Catalogue des manuscrits syriaques et arabes, conservés dans la Bibliothèque épiscopale de Séert (Kurdistan) avec notes bibliographiques* (Mosul: Imprimerie des pères dominicains, 1905), 82–83.

MSS Alqosh 38–40⁴⁷ (MSS Voste Notre Dame des Semences 38–40) (Alqosh 38–40)

1880–87; Alqosh, Iraq (Notre Dame des Semences); eastern script

Because of the identical contents of these three manuscripts, along with their shared provenance and similar date, they likely derive from the same exemplar and are thus treated together. The manuscripts were copied in Alqosh at Notre Dame des Semences by Étienne Rais (1884), a monk Damian (1880), and a monk Kaushabai of Tel Keppe (August 23, 1887) respectively. Much of the collection formerly held at Notre Dame des Semences is now held by the Chaldean Monastery in Baghdad.⁴⁸

Because of their shared contents (only the order in which they appear differs slightly), date, and provenance, these mss. were likely copied from the same exemplar as Alqosh 41–42. They also contain the same initial texts found in Mingana 567 and Kerkuk 9 in the same order:

1. Lives of the Prophets (Syriac version attributed to Epiphanius of Cyprus)
2. Cave of Treasures
3. Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ezra
4. Letter of Sunday

MSS Alqosh 41–42⁴⁹ (MSS Voste Notre Dame des Semences 41–42) (Alqosh 41–42)

1887–88; Alqosh, Iraq (Notre Dame des Semences); eastern script

Because of the identical contents of these two manuscripts, along with their shared provenance and similar date, they are likely to derive from the same exemplar

47. Vosté, *Catalogue de la bibliothèque syro-chaldéenne du Couvent de Notre-Dame des Semences près d'Alqoš (Iraq)* (Rome: Bureaux de l'angelicum, 1929), 17–18.

48. The collection of the Chaldean Monastery in Baghdad was catalogued by Butrus Haddad and Jak Ishaq, *Syriac and Arabic Manuscripts in the Library of the Chaldean Monastery, Baghdad. Volume 1. Catalogues of the Syriac Manuscripts in Iraq* (Baghdad: Iraqi Academy Press, 1988).

49. Vosté, *Notre-Dame des Semences*, 18.

and are thus treated together. Both were copied in Alqosh at Notre Dame des Semences, by a monk Thomas (September 29, 1887), and a monk Abraham Abou Behnam of Saqiawa (1888) respectively. Much of the collection formerly held at Notre Dame des Semences is now held by the Chaldean Monastery in Baghdad.⁵⁰ They contain the same initial texts as are found in Mingana 567, Kerkuk 9, and Alqosh 38–40, but with the *Lives of the Prophets* in the final rather than the first position. Because of their shared contents (only the order in which they appear differs slightly), date, and provenance, these mss. were likely copied from the same exemplar as Alqosh 38–40.

1. Cave of Treasures
2. Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ezra
3. Letter of Sunday
4. Lives of the Prophets (Syriac version attributed to Epiphanius of Cyprus)

PROVENANCE AND DATE

Study of these manuscripts reveals several similarities among them. First, all are of relatively late date, ranging from the late seventeenth- to the late nineteenth-century. Regardless of whether one accepts an early (eighth-century) or late (eleventh- or twelfth-century) date for the composition of *Ps.-Ezra* (see the discussion of proposed dates below), it is certain that each of the extant witnesses is separated from the autograph by several centuries. Another commonality among the witnesses is that each manuscript is written in East Syrian script, and those whose provenances were recorded were copied within a 60-km geographic stretch between Zawita and Mosul, Iraq. This suggests that *Ps.-Ezra* was copied and preserved (if not also composed) within an East Syrian context, though *Ps.-Ezra* does not contain any clear

50. See note 48 on the movement of the Notre Dames des Semences collection to the Chaldean Monastery in Baghdad above.

christological or other doctrinal polemic that requires an East Syrian provenance.⁵¹

The text's focus on the lion's whelp, who represents a messianic Byzantine Christian emperor, might suggest a pro-Byzantine Chalcedonian/Melkite author; though Hoyland points to the text's mention of Egypt and Cush as evidence for a Miaphysite/West Syrian context of composition.⁵²

The late date and geographic proximity of these witnesses also suggests a close genealogical relationship among them. In addition, four of the five manuscripts represented in the edition—BL 25,875, BnF 326, Sachau 131, and UTS 23—display the same example of a variant caused by homoteleuton.⁵³ It is likely, therefore, that these four manuscripts all derive from a common ancestor that they do not share with Mingana 11.

Ten of the fifteen known manuscripts containing *Ps.-Ezra* are linked in some way to the Rabban Hormizd Monastery, a center of scribal activity for the Church of the East, and later, Chaldean Catholic churches.⁵⁴ I would tentatively propose that the flurry of copying of *Ps.-Ezra* that occurred in the mid- to late-nineteenth century might

51. Both the Syrian Orthodox Church (variously called "West Syrian," "Jacobite," "monophysite," or "miaphysite") and Church of the East (variously called "East Syrian" or "Nestorian") are what would be termed "non-Chalcedonian" churches, meaning they either explicitly reject or simply never formally accepted the Council of Chalcedon. The two represent two poles of the christological spectrum, wherein the Syrian Orthodox emphasize the unity of Christ's nature (miaphysitism), whereas the Church of the East emphasizes the distinction between his divine and human natures (dyophysitism). Further complicating matters, in modern times other Syriac-speaking churches, including the Chaldean Catholic Church, have affirmed Chalcedon and come into communion with other Chalcedonian churches. For the historical and theological context surrounding these fifth-century christological divides, see William H. C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) and Wilhelm Baum and Dietmar W. Winkler, *The Church of the East: A Concise History* (New York: Routledge, 2003). In addition, the appendix to Brock, *An Introduction to Syriac Studies* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006): 67–78 provides a quick and accessible breakdown of the various Syriac-speaking churches and their lineages.

52. Hoyland also believes the lion's whelp is painted in unfavorable terms; this, along with the text's mentions of Egypt and Cush leads him to suggest this is "perhaps an indication of Jacobite [Miaphysite] authorship." See Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 277. See also the section on "Plot and Characters" in this chapter.

53. For this variant, see note 76 in the Syriac edition of chapter 2.

54. For more on Rabban Hormizd, see Heleen Murre-van den Berg, "Monastery of Rabban Hormizd," in *GEDSH*, ed. Sebastian P. Brock, et al (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), 202–05.

be linked to the construction of Notre Dame des Semences completed during the same period, and the subsequent transfer of significant portions of the monastery's manuscript holdings to this newer and more secure site.

Ps.-Ezra is almost always transmitted alongside the *Cave of Treasures*, an extremely popular Syriac text that is essentially a retelling of world history which interprets and organizes the entire course of human activity through a theocentric, particularly Christian, lens.⁵⁵ With this in mind, *Ps.-Ezra* might have been meant, or at least might have been interpreted by its audience to have meant, to provide a new installment or epilogue to the world chronicle that the *Cave of Treasures* outlines in order to update its chronology to the author's own timeframe. At the very least, its shared concern with the *Cave of Treasures* for attributing the rise and fall of nations to God's direct involvement in the events of world history would have made the two texts a logical pairing to later compilers.

The two manuscripts that do not contain the *Cave of Treasures* alongside *Ps.-Ezra* might broadly be described as collections of saints' lives.⁵⁶ Although at first glance *Ps.-Ezra* might seem an outlier in such a collection since it does not narrate a particular martyr or saint's acts or passion, it serves a similar function as texts that do: to encourage Christians to persevere and remain faithful despite persecution or minority status. For this reason, the compilers of these collections seem to have thought it appropriate to include *Ps.-Ezra* alongside other exhortatory tales.

55. UTS 23 contains only *Ps.-Ezra*, however, we know that it was copied at the request of a visiting American missionary, and that the exemplar from which it was copied did contain the *Cave of Treasures*. On the *Cave of Treasures*, see Brock, "Cave of Treasures," in *GEDSH*, ed. Sebastian P. Brock, et al (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), 90–91. The only full English translation remains E. A. W. Budge, *The Book of the Cave of Treasures* (London: The Religious Tract Society: 1927), based on the text of BL Add. 25,875.

56. These are BnF 326 and Vat 597. Interestingly, although both are collections of saints' lives, the two manuscripts do not share any texts other than *Ps.-Ezra* in common.

There is little scholarly consensus on the date or historical context of *Ps.-Ezra's* composition. The oldest extant manuscripts containing the apocalypse are relatively young (Mingana 11 and Vat 164 are dated by their colophons to 1702; Van Lantschoot places Vat 597 in the late seventeenth century) and do not provide much in the way of a *terminus ante quem*.⁵⁷ Dating proposals range from as early as the eighth-century (Chabot, Debié)⁵⁸ to the eleventh or twelfth centuries (Bousset, Hoyland),⁵⁹ to as late as sometime after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 (Assemani).⁶⁰

The question of date is intrinsically tied to how one identifies and interprets events within the text that might be considered historical markers or *vaticinium ex eventu*. Unfortunately, clear historical references are few. It is generally agreed by commentators that the mention of the bull's "evil plan against Constantinople" is meant to refer to one or both of the early unsuccessful sieges of Constantinople by Arabs (674–78 and 717–18 CE, respectively), which gives the text a *terminus post quem* of 674 CE.⁶¹ Beyond this event, however, little attempt at identification of the apocalypse's historical figures and events has been made. The fullest scheme is offered by Bousset, who identifies the horned serpent as the Umayyads, the eagle as the Abbasids, the viper as the Fatimids, the four kings on the Euphrates and ravens as the Turks, and the lion's whelp as a Christian crusader.⁶² Hoyland builds on Bousset's

57. Van Lantschoot, *Inventaire des Manuscrits Syriaques*, 128.

58. Chabot, "L'Apocalypse d'Esdras," 345; Debié, "The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ezra," 239.

59. Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend*, 47–48; Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 278.

60. Assemani, *BO* vol 2, 498; vol 3, pt. 1: 282.

61. Only Assemani interprets the siege to have been a successful one, and thus believes it refers to the fall of Constantinople to Turkish forces in 1453 CE. See Assemani, *BO* vol 2, 498; vol 3, pt. 1: 282.

62. Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend*, 47–49.

identifications and proposes that the apocalypse's emphasis on Egypt and mention of the conflict between the bull and the lion's whelp echoes the eleventh- or twelfth-century conflicts between the Fatimids and Seljuk or Mamluk Turks.⁶³

Identification of the text's date is made more complex by its composite nature and use of apocalyptic sources that date to wide range of time periods. Although the author has woven his sources together into one narrative, traces of multiple earlier apocalyptic sources can be identified. In particular, Hoyland, following Bousset, proposes that the episode concerning the war between the lion's whelp and bull has its roots in an earlier seventh-century apocalypse describing the war between Heraclius and Khusrau II.⁶⁴ This apocalypse was later reworked to reflect the author of *Ps.-Ezra's* own context of conflict between Christian and Arab forces. Unfortunately, Hoyland and Bousset do not trace the transmission history of this apocalyptic narrative, so it is unclear whether they imagine Pseudo-Ezra have adapted the narrative directly from its original seventh-century source, or if he might have encountered the narrative through another later work that had already reinterpreted the original narrative to apply to the rise of the caliphate.

Another method for attempting to determine *Ps.-Ezra's* date is to examine which apocalyptic sources its author drew upon in constructing his own work. *Ps.-Ezra* has been influenced by the perennially popular *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, or at least by other apocalyptic works that themselves drew from *Ps.-Methodius*.⁶⁵ For example, *Ps.-Ezra* shares *Ps.-Methodius's* vision of a messianic

63. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 278.

64. *Ibid.*

65. See Brock, "Methodius, Apocalypse of Pseudo-," in *GEDSH*, ed. Sebastian P. Brock, et al (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), 287, and Lutz Greisiger, "The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius (Syriac)," in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History. Volume 1 (600–900)*, ed. David Richard Thomas and Alex Mallett (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 163–71.

Christian Roman Emperor (called the lion's whelp in *Ps.-Ezra*), and relates an understanding of *Ps.-Methodius's* conflation of the Alexander Legend with the Gog and Magog stories.⁶⁶ Since *Ps.-Methodius* is a relatively early Syriac Christian apocalypse, dated to the late seventh century CE, that was enormously influential on most later Syriac apocalypses, its relationship to *Ps.-Ezra* is not of much value in determining *Ps.-Ezra's* date of composition.

Based in part on Pseudo-Ezra's ample use of the book of Revelation, Hoyland dates the text to the twelfth century or beyond.⁶⁷ According to his reasoning, Revelation would not have been available to Pseudo-Ezra in Syriac until a rather late date. It is true that, along with the books of 2 Peter, 2–3 John, and Jude, Revelation does not, strictly speaking, have canonical status within Syriac churches.⁶⁸ It made its way into the Syriac tradition sometime after the rest of the New Testament, is not part of the churches' lectionary reading cycle, and is not found in ancient manuscripts containing the Peshitta version of the Bible. As a result, far fewer ancient manuscripts of Revelation are extant than other books we might consider to be "biblical."⁶⁹ Nonetheless, Revelation did come to be highly regarded by at least some authors in the Syriac tradition, even it did not gain canonical esteem: Dionysius Bar Salibi composed a commentary in Syriac on Revelation in the twelfth century, and it has been argued that other early Syriac apocalypses, such as the Syriac Apocalypse of

66. See the editions of Gerrit J. Reinink, *Die syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius*, CSCO 540–41 (Leuven, 1993), and Francisco Javier Martinez, "Eastern Christian Apocalyptic in the Early Arab Period: Pseudo-Methodius and Pseudo-Athanasius," PhD diss. (The Catholic University of America, 1985).

67. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 278.

68. See Brock, *The Bible in the Syriac Tradition* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006): 34–36; 106–07.

69. See James Clemons, *An Index of Syriac Manuscripts Containing the Epistles and the Apocalypse*, Studies and Documents 33 (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1968) for a listing of all Syriac manuscripts containing Revelation.

Daniel (c. early seventh century), rely heavily on Revelation.⁷⁰ John Gwynn, followed by Arthur Vööbus, argued that the Syriac version of Revelation ultimately stems from the version made under Philoxenus, bishop of Mabbug, in 507/08 CE; if this is the case, Revelation certainly would have been available in Syriac translation before the time of the Arab conquests.⁷¹ Sebastian Brock questions whether Philoxenus would have commissioned the translation of Revelation, since he "never seems to quote from these books," but notes that Revelation is present in the Harklean version of the Syriac New Testament, completed in 616.⁷² Furthermore, even if Pseudo-Ezra did not have access to a copy of Revelation proper, this does not preclude the possibility that he encountered its images and vocabulary as filtered through (a) secondary apocalyptic source(s), perhaps translated from Greek, that did utilize Revelation.

In addition to a broad affinity with the apocalyptic themes popularized by *Ps.-Methodius*, *Ps.-Ezra* more specifically bears remarkable similarity to another Christian apocalypse that is variously called the Arabic Apocalypse of Peter or *Kitāb al-majāll* (Book of the Rolls).⁷³ The Book of the Rolls is an extremely long (100 or

70. For Dionysius Bar Salibi's commentary, see Stan Larson, "The Earliest Syriac Commentary on the Apocalypse: Transcription, Translation and Importance of Brit. Lib. Ms. Add. 17,127," PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 1984, and Jaroslav Sedláček, ed. *Dionysii bar Salibi commentarii in Apocalypsim, Actus et Epistulas catholicas*, CSCO 53, 60; *Scriptores Syrii* II, 18–20 (Paris: Typographeo Reipublicae, 1909–1910). For the *Apocalypse of Daniel*, see Matthias Henze, *The Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel: Introduction, Text and Commentary*. Studies and Texts in Antiquity and Christianity 11 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001).

71. John Gwynn, *The Apocalypse of St. John in a Syriac Version Hitherto Unknown* (Dublin: Hodges Figgis and Co., 1897); Arthur Vööbus, "Syrische Bibelübersetzungen," *Lexicon für Theologie und Kirche* 2 (Freiburg: Herder-Verlag, 1958), 389.

72. Brock, *The Bible in the Syriac Tradition*, 36; 19.

73. See Emmanouela Grypeou, "Kitāb al-majāll," in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History. Volume 5 (1350–1500)*, ed. David Richard Thomas and Alex Mallett (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 634–39. This text is not to be confused with the ancient Greek Apocalypse of Peter, and there seems to be no literary relationship between the two.

more folios in most manuscripts) and composite text preserved in three recensions.⁷⁴ No full-scale study of the text has been undertaken, although a partial facsimile and English translation containing the major apocalyptic section of the third recension was published by Alphonse Mingana.⁷⁵ In addition to a number of shared apocalyptic images drawn from Revelation and the Gospels that are common in Syriac or Arabic Christian apocalypses, at least three major and unusual similarities to *Ps.-Ezra* are found within a single folio of the Book of the Rolls: the prediction of the rise of a messianic Roman emperor called "the lion's whelp" (cf. *Ps.-Ezra* §7–9),⁷⁶ the mention of the rise of twelve kings of Abus, followed by nine little kings (cf. *Ps.-Ezra* §3),⁷⁷ and a prophecy concerning the rebuilding of the walls of Phoenicia (cf. *Ps.-Ezra* §9).⁷⁸ Other sections of The Book of the Rolls reveal further similarities with *Ps.-Ezra*, including mention of a three-horned bull (cf. *Ps.-Ezra* §7),⁷⁹ the image of four figures bound on the river Euphrates (*Ps.-Ezra* §6),⁸⁰ and the conversion of a "young scion of the mighty Kings of the Children of Ishmael" to Christianity, who goes to the lion's whelp for military aid (*Ps.-Ezra* §7).⁸¹

Although these shared images suggest a relationship between *Ps.-Ezra* and the Book of the Rolls, the exact nature of that relationship is unclear, and will likely

74. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*, 291.

75. I have utilized Mingana's translation of and commentary on Mingana Syr. 70 in *Woodbrooke Studies: Christian Documents in Syriac, Arabic, and Garshūni, Edited and Translated with a Critical Apparatus. Vol. 3: Vision of Theophilus; Apocalypse of Peter* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1933). The apocalypse also occurs in the second recension, but not the first.

76. Mingana, *Apocalypse of Peter*, 222; 230–31.

77. *Ibid.*, 231.

78. *Ibid.*, 233.

79. *Ibid.*, 227.

80. *Ibid.*, 143.

81. *Ibid.*, 278–79. The young scion's parallel in *Ps.-Ezra* is the younger chick.

remain so until a comprehensive study of the Book of the Rolls has been undertaken. Unlike *Ps.-Ezra*, which was composed and preserved in Syriac, the Book of the Rolls survives only in Garshuni/Arabic and Ethiopic recensions. Until lately, commentators were unanimous in their conclusion that The Book of the Rolls was composed in Arabic in a Coptic context.⁸² Barbara Roggema's recent study, however, suggests that the text might have been composed in a Syrian context.⁸³ The Book of the Rolls contains a large number of Syriac terms and place names, often focuses on events occurring in Syria and Mesopotamia, and contains reworked version of texts belonging to the Syriac tradition, such as the *Cave of Treasures* and the *Testament of Adam*. At the very least, it seems likely that the author of the Book of the Rolls utilized Syriac sources when composing its apocalyptic sections. It is possible that one of these sources was *Ps.-Ezra*, however, because of the lack of distinct verbal correspondence between the two texts' descriptions of their shared apocalyptic images, it seems likely that *Ps.-Ezra* and the Book of the Rolls are both drawing on a third, common source for their shared apocalyptic material.

If *Ps.-Ezra* can be established as a source for the Book of the Rolls, then the latter's date of composition would serve as *terminus ante quem* for *Ps.-Ezra*. The earliest text of the first recension of the Book of the Rolls (Sinai Ar. 508) is dated to the tenth century, but this recension does not contain the apocalyptic sections that correspond to *Ps.-Ezra*; the earliest manuscript containing the apocalyptic section (Paris Ar. 76) is dated to 1336/37 CE, but its witness can be traced to a *Vorlage* dated

82. Mingana, *Apocalypse of Peter*, 214–15.

83. Barbara Roggema, "Biblical Exegesis and Interreligious Polemics in the Arabic Apocalypse of Peter—The Book of the Rolls," in *The Bible in Arab Christianity*, ed. David Richard Thomas, *The History of Christian-Muslim Relations* 6. (Leiden: Brill, 2007): 137.

1176/77 CE.⁸⁴ Thus, if the Book of the Rolls used *Ps.-Ezra* as a source, *Ps.-Ezra* must be dated no later than 1176/77 CE.

With this introduction concluded, the next two chapters of this thesis present the Syriac text, with critical apparatus, and English translation of *Ps.-Ezra*. The fourth and final chapter then offers a closer examination of the author of *Ps.-Ezra*'s use of several biblical sources, often as they have filtered through later apocalyptic tradition.

84. Grypeou, "Kitāb al-majāl," 635–36.

CHAPTER II

SYRIAC EDITION

EDITORIAL POLICY

One of the primary goals of this thesis to fill a *desideratum* in the study of Syriac apocalyptic texts: the production of an edition of the Syriac *Ps.-Ezra* with a critical apparatus noting variants in the manuscript tradition. This chapter, therefore, presents a diplomatic edition of *Ps.-Ezra* as preserved in folios 102r–105v of Mingana 11 with variants from other witnesses recorded in the footnotes. Mingana 11 was chosen as the base text for three reasons: (1) it is the only manuscript containing *Ps.-Ezra* to have been digitized and made publicly available for online viewing, allowing any reader to compare the edition to the manuscript,¹ (2) it is the oldest dated manuscript containing *Ps.-Ezra*,² and (3) it is a complete witness with relatively few clear issues of textual transmission or intelligibility. Although critical method has been followed in the presentation of the text, correction to Mingana 11 has only been made in cases of manuscript defect. Only one such defect, found in §12, is present in Mingana 11. Here, the work of the corrector of Mingana 11 has made the original reading of the text illegible. In this case, the intelligible variant reading recorded by Mingana 11^c was chosen for the edition; this variant, conveniently, also was supported by all other witnesses. The correction is indicated by the use of square brackets [] surrounding the corrected text, followed by a clarifying footnote. All diacritical and

1. Mingana 11 has been digitized and is available for online viewing through the University of Birmingham's Virtual Manuscript Room at: http://vmr.bham.ac.uk/Collections/Mingana/Syriac_11/table/.

2. A colophon indicates that that the manuscript was copied on January 16, 1702 by a Hoshabo, son of Daniel, son of Joseph the priest, son of Hoshabo.

vowel points are reproduced as preserved in Mingana 11 and do not reflect any editorial correction.

Mingana 11, as digitized and made available online by modern librarians, is presented with certain folios incorrectly labeled and placed out of order. Relevant to this project, ff. 104v–105r, which belong to another text within the manuscript, have been incorrectly labeled and placed in the middle of *Ps.-Ezra*. This edition, therefore, ignores the modern pagination and skips directly from f. 104r to f. 105v to maintain the integrity of the text of *Ps.-Ezra*. A footnote appears in the edition to signal to the reader where this skip occurs.

The critical apparatus presented in the footnotes of the edition records all variants attested by the corrector of Mingana 11 and/or four other witnesses available for study.³ Variants are noted in the text by the use of a superscripted footnote number, with variants of more than one Syriac word bounded by the text critical mark [†] on one side and the superscripted footnote number on the other. When applicable, an asterisk (*) following the manuscript name indicates the original reading of a manuscript, whereas a superscripted c (°) indicates the reading offered by a corrector. It should be noted that many of the variants recorded are orthographic, but are nonetheless noted in the apparatus for scholars and students who might find them of interest.

For ease of reading and reference, *Ps.-Ezra* has been divided and numbered into sections by the editor. The section divisions do not appear in any manuscript witness, and reflect the editor's own judgment concerning the narrative flow and

3. See the discussion of the the manuscripts used for the edition in chapter 1.

דָּהַתָּה דָּתָה.

7 הַבַּיִת יִשְׁעָהוּ יִשְׁעָהוּ בְּעֵינֵי הַבַּיִת. ³² מִן הַבַּיִת לֹא יִשְׁעָהוּ. הַבַּיִת

יִשְׁעָהוּ לְעֵינֵי הַבַּיִת. הַבַּיִת יִשְׁעָהוּ בְּעֵינֵי הַבַּיִת. ³³

הַבַּיִת לְעֵינֵי הַבַּיִת. הַבַּיִת יִשְׁעָהוּ בְּעֵינֵי הַבַּיִת. ³⁴

הַבַּיִת לְעֵינֵי הַבַּיִת. הַבַּיִת יִשְׁעָהוּ בְּעֵינֵי הַבַּיִת. ³⁵

הַבַּיִת לְעֵינֵי הַבַּיִת. הַבַּיִת יִשְׁעָהוּ בְּעֵינֵי הַבַּיִת. ³⁶

הַבַּיִת לְעֵינֵי הַבַּיִת. הַבַּיִת יִשְׁעָהוּ בְּעֵינֵי הַבַּיִת. ³⁷

הַבַּיִת לְעֵינֵי הַבַּיִת. הַבַּיִת יִשְׁעָהוּ בְּעֵינֵי הַבַּיִת. ³⁸

הַבַּיִת לְעֵינֵי הַבַּיִת. הַבַּיִת יִשְׁעָהוּ בְּעֵינֵי הַבַּיִת. ³⁹

32. BL 28,875 BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23

33. BL 28,875 UTS 23

34. BL 28,875 BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23

35. BL 28,875 BnF 326 Mingana 11^c Sachau 131 UTS 23^c | UTS 23

36. BL 28,875 Mingana 11^c Sachau 131 UTS 23 | BnF 326

37. omit BnF 326

38. add BnF 326

39. BnF 326

40. BnF 326

תדע. והַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם⁴¹ מְבַרְכִים. והַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם מְבַרְכִים. וְהַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם⁴² מְבַרְכִים⁴³ חֲתָב. וְהַבְּנֵי־

דִּישׁוֹבֵת לְבַת־תַּיִשׁ. וְהַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם מְבַרְכִים דְּבַר־לֶחֶם⁴⁴ לְחַלּוֹת

דְּהַיִּיבָה⁴⁵ אֶל־הַיָּם. וְהַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם מְבַרְכִים לְחַלּוֹת. וְהַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם מְבַרְכִים לְחַלּוֹת

וְהַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם מְבַרְכִים לְחַלּוֹת. וְהַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם מְבַרְכִים לְחַלּוֹת. וְהַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם

מְבַרְכִים לְחַלּוֹת. וְהַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם מְבַרְכִים לְחַלּוֹת⁴⁶. וְהַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם

מְבַרְכִים לְחַלּוֹת. וְהַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם מְבַרְכִים לְחַלּוֹת⁴⁷ וְהַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם

מְבַרְכִים לְחַלּוֹת⁴⁹ וְהַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם מְבַרְכִים לְחַלּוֹת. וְהַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם

8 וְהַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם מְבַרְכִים לְחַלּוֹת⁵⁰ וְהַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם מְבַרְכִים לְחַלּוֹת⁵¹ וְהַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם

דְּבַר־לֶחֶם⁵² וְהַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם מְבַרְכִים לְחַלּוֹת. וְהַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם מְבַרְכִים

41. UTS 23* והַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם

42. UTS 23* והַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם

43. BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23 מְבַרְכִים

44. BnF 326 והַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם | UTS 23 Sachau 131 BL 28,875 והַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם

45. BnF 326 add סל

46. BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23 BL 28,875^c והַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם מְבַרְכִים

47. BL 28,875 BnF 326 Sachau 131 והַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם

48. BnF 326 והַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם | UTS 23 Sachau 131 BL 28,875 והַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם

49. UTS 23 והַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם

50. BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23 BL 28,875 omit

51. sic. והַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם "Thrace"

52. BL 28,875 BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23 והַבְּנֵי־מִצְרַיִם

הלזל ייסדוהו. והנה⁶⁴ תבדל. והלזל ייסדוהו⁶⁵ תבדל
 הלזל ייסדוהו. והנה⁶⁶ תבדל ייסדוהו. והנה⁶⁷ תבדל
 דהנה. מהלזל ייסדוהו. והנה⁶⁸ תבדל ייסדוהו.⁶⁷
 והנה⁶⁹ תבדל ייסדוהו. והנה⁶⁸ תבדל ייסדוהו.
 הלזל ייסדוהו. מהלזל ייסדוהו⁷⁰. והנה⁷¹ תבדל ייסדוהו.
 דהנה תבדל. והנה⁷² תבדל ייסדוהו⁷³. והנה⁷⁴ תבדל ייסדוהו.
 דהנה תבדל ייסדוהו. והנה⁷⁵ תבדל ייסדוהו.
 והנה⁷⁶ תבדל ייסדוהו. והנה⁷⁷ תבדל ייסדוהו.

64. BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23

65. BL 28,875 BnF 326 Mingana 11^c Sachau 131 UTS 23

66. BL 28,875 BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23

67. UTS 23*

68. BL 28,875 BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23

69. UTS 23

70. BL 28,875

71. BL 28,875 BnF 326 Mingana 11^c Sachau 131 UTS 23

72. add BL 28,875 BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23

73. BnF 326

74. add BL 28,875 BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23

75. BL 28,875 BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23

77. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85.

77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85.

78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85.

80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85.

81. 82. 83. 84. 85.

82. 83. 84. 85.

83. 84. 85.

84. 85.

85.

85.

85.

76. omit BL 28,875 BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23

77. BnF 326

78. BL 28,875 BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23

79. BnF 326

80. Sachau 131

81. BL 28,875

82. BnF 326

83. BL 28,875 BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23

84. BnF 326 | Sachau 131

85. BL 28,875 BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23

וְיָבֵן. מִיָּד דְּתֵּיבָה דְּלִיבָה דְּלִיבָה דְּלִיבָה.

13 מִיָּד יִלְכֵּן יִבְרָחָהּ⁹⁶ חַתּוּתָּהּ מִיָּדָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ מִיָּדָהּ

חַתּוּתָּהּ מִיָּדָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ.

דְּיִבְרָחָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ⁹⁷ יִבְרָחָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ.

מִיָּדָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ⁹⁸ לְיִבְרָחָהּ מִיָּדָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ

לְיִבְרָחָהּ⁹⁹ מִיָּדָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ.

דְּיִבְרָחָהּ מִיָּדָהּ¹⁰⁰ לְיִבְרָחָהּ¹⁰¹ חַתּוּתָּהּ¹⁰². מִיָּדָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ

חַתּוּתָּהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ. מִיָּדָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ. מִיָּדָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ¹⁰³. מִיָּדָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ.

14 מִיָּדָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ מִיָּדָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ מִיָּדָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ מִיָּדָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ

מִיָּדָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ מִיָּדָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ מִיָּדָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ מִיָּדָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ

מִיָּדָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ מִיָּדָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ¹⁰⁴ חַתּוּתָּהּ: מִיָּדָהּ דְּיִבְרָחָהּ

96. add מִיָּדָהּ BL 28,875 BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23

97. add דְּיִבְרָחָהּ BL 28,875 BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23

98. omit BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23

99. חַתּוּתָּהּ מִיָּדָהּ BnF 326

100. מִיָּדָהּ BL 28,875 BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23

101. מִיָּדָהּ Mingana 11^c

102. חַתּוּתָּהּ BL 28,875 Sachau 131 UTS 23

103. omit BnF 326

104. מִיָּדָהּ BL 28,875 | חַתּוּתָּהּ Mingana 11^c | מִיָּדָהּ BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23

CHAPTER III ENGLISH TRANSLATION

TRANSLATION POLICY

Philosophy

The primary goal of this English translation is to provide access to *Ps.-Ezra* for students and scholars who may not read Syriac or be familiar with the language's idiosyncrasies. This thesis, therefore, adopts a translation method of dynamic equivalence.¹ The Syriac has been translated by units of typically phrase or clause length into the English idiom that most accurately represents the contextual meaning of the Syriac. For example, the phrase **ܕܘܕܐܘܘܪܐܝܢܐ** is translated dynamically and idiomatically as "through God" rather than formally or literally as "by the hand of God," a rendering that would less accurately convey the sense of the Syriac phrase. The goal of the dynamic equivalence method is, therefore, to produce a translation that most accurately represents the contextual meaning or sense of the Syriac rather than the most literal representation of the Syriac words. Within this method, however, the wording and order of the Syriac text is maintained as closely as proper English syntax allows so as to facilitate comparison of the English translation to the Syriac edition. Footnotes with more formal or "word-for-word" translation indicate instances where the English idiom differs substantially from the literal Syriac, and are prefaced by the abbreviation "lit."

1. See Eugene A. Nida and Charles R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation, With Special Reference to Bible Translating* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 200.

This translation is based on the diplomatic edition of Mingana Syr. 11 presented in chapter 2 of the thesis. Where the manuscript tradition bears witness to variants that would alter the meaning of the English rendering, a translation of the relevant variants is offered in the footnotes. Variants of more than one word in English are bracketed by the text critical mark ¶ on one side and the footnote number on the other. When applicable, an asterisk (*) after the manuscript name indicates the original reading of a manuscript, whereas a superscripted c (°) indicates the reading offered by a corrector. Minor and orthographic variants that produce no substantive change in the meaning of the English translation (slight variations in spelling, plenary forms, etc.) are indicated in the Syriac edition of chapter 2, but are not noted in the English translation.

The manuscript tradition of *Ps.-Ezra* occasionally contains variants that clarify or correct the witness of Mingana Syr. 11 and produce a more intelligible reading. In these cases the English translation has been made on the basis of the more intelligible variant, and is indicated by the use of square brackets [] followed by a footnote that indicates the source for the variant. Additionally, the English translation occasionally provides an explicit subject or object that is only implied in the Syriac; these clarifications are indicated by the use of square brackets [] without a footnote. Only one conjectural emendation unsupported by the manuscript witnesses has been made in the English translation; this is indicated by the use of square brackets [] followed by a footnote explaining the emendation.²

For ease of reading and reference, *Ps.-Ezra* has been divided and numbered into sections by the editor. The section divisions do not appear in any manuscript witness, and reflect the editor's own judgment concerning the narrative breaks and

2. This is the change from ܛܪܩܘܢܐ "Tarqono" to ܛܪܩܘܝܐ "Tarqoyo" to render the intelligible reading "Thrace."

flow. In general, section divisions fall where there is either an introduction of a new major apocalyptic figure or where the text breaks away from the apocalyptic vision to record Ezra's conversation with the revelatory angel. Underlined text indicates text copied in red in in Mingana 11.

Translation of Proper and Place Names

In keeping with the goal of producing a translation that is accessible to readers who may be unfamiliar with Syriac, it is the policy of this translation to use conventional English spelling rather than transliteration of the Syriac for proper and place names.

Gendered Language

In Syriac, all nouns have a grammatical gender that may or may not correspond to the referent's biological sex. For example, a "mountain" (ܡܘܢܬܐ) is grammatically masculine, whereas "earth" or "land" (ܐܪܥܐ) is grammatically feminine. Where English speakers would consider the referent to be sexless or neuter, the translation renders the Syriac into appropriate neuter English idiom, thus, the "mountain" and the "land" are both referred to by the English neuter pronoun "it."

The translation also avoids gendered renderings of contextually gender-inclusive words or phrases. For example, *Ps.-Ezra* makes frequent use of the epithet ܐܘܠܘܕܐܝܢܐ to refer to Arabs. Literally translated, ܐܘܠܘܕܐܝܢܐ is "sons," but in context and idiomatically it is a gender-inclusive term referring to "children." For this reason, ܐܘܠܘܕܐܝܢܐ is translated "children of Ishmael" throughout the text. Similarly, the idiom ܐܘܠܘܕܐܝܢܐ is literally "sons of man" and therefore often rendered by translators idiomatically as "men" or "mankind," but this translation instead opts for the inclusive terms "people" or "humankind."

The author of *Ps.-Ezra* often employs animal imagery to represent rulers or dynasties. Like all Syriac nouns, these animals have grammatical gender, for example, the "eagle" (ܐܘܘܠܐ) is grammatically masculine and the "viper" (ܐܘܘܠܐ) is feminine. When possible, neuter pronouns are used to describe these symbolic animals in the English translation. Since these animals often behave in anthropomorphic ways, however, it is sometimes awkward or incorrect English style to refer to these animal characters by neuter pronouns. In such cases, masculine pronouns—which correspond to both the animals' grammatical gender in Syriac and the biological sex of the historical men whom they symbolize—are used.

Cross References

To assist the reader, cross references or parallels between the text of *Ps.-Ezra* and biblical or apocalyptic texts that circulated among Syriac-speaking Christians are indicated in the footnotes. Some of these cross references are considered in depth in chapter 4's discussion of Pseudo-Ezra's use of sacred text and sources.

TRANSLATION

- 1 「Again, through God I write about³ the question that Ezra⁴ asked when he was in the desert with his disciple⁵.
- 2 He asked God to reveal to him the things that are going to happen in the end times.⁶ Then he said to Carpos his disciple,⁷ "Listen, my son Carpos, and I will

3. omit BnF 326

4. add "the scribe" BnF 326 BL 28,875 Sachau 131. The author writes pseudonymously in the name of biblical Ezra (cf. Ezra 7:6; 11), who is described as both a priest and a scribe. A rich tradition of apocalyptic and prophetic literature attributed to Ezra began in Second Temple Judaism and later gained popularity in Christian circles (ie: 2 Esdras, Greek Apocalypse of Ezra, Latin Vision of Ezra).

5. add "whose name was Carpos" BnF 326 BL 28,875 Sachau 131

6. cf. 2 Esd 8:63.

7. cf. 2 Esd 14:24, where the disciples and scribes of Ezra are named, though a "Carpos" does not appear among them.

tell you about the end times. It happened suddenly, in the manner of a dreadful vision. I asked God to explain⁸ the end times of the Ishmaelites. Then I saw a young man, one like whom I had never seen, wearing white clothing, and he had the figure of a scroll in his⁹ hand.¹⁰ He answered and said to me, 'Behold! Your prayer has been heard before God, and I have been sent to explain to you the end times of the children of Ishmael, that which has been concealed from many.'¹¹ Open this book of the scroll and read in it and see what is about to happen in the end times.'

- 3 I opened the scroll and I read about the times and the terrors that are going to come¹². My tears flowed with groans and I said, 'Have mercy on me, God, and have mercy on your creation,' for a serpent of the desert had devoured them. I saw twelve horns on the serpent's head, and nine small and cruel [horns] on its tail that came up from the desert¹³, contending against all creation [under heaven]¹⁴ and oppressing the people of God.¹⁵ Then I saw an angel, clothed in a flame of fire¹⁶, who descended from heaven and tore the twelve great horns from the serpent's head.

8. add "to you" BnF 326 BL 28,875 | add "to me" Sachau 131

9. add "right" BnF 326 BL 28,875 Sachau 131

10. cf. Dan 10:5–6; Rev 10:1–2; Ezek 2:8–10.

11. cf. Dan 10:12, 14.

12. "to happen" BnF 326 BL 28,875

13. "the east" BnF 326

14. Mingana^c BnF 326 BL 28,875

15. cf. Dan 7:7; 19–21; 2 Esd 11:1–35; Gen. 17:20; Mingana, *Apocalypse of Peter*, 231.

16. omit BnF 326

- 4 Then I said 'I believe in you, Lord'¹⁷; today the prophecy of Moses is fulfilled.'¹⁸
The angel of the Lord said to me, 'Take heart, Ezra, because it was also revealed to Daniel about the'¹⁹ nine small and cruel horns.'²⁰
- 5 Then I saw one great horn suddenly spring up on the tail of the serpent, and there were two small [horns] on its head.²¹ An eagle came from the south and broke the great horn and devoured the small ones.²² The world was filled with darkness and a whirlwind, and the whirlwind struck the eagle and tore out its two talons. Then there was a voice from heaven that said, 'The eagle will be recompensed according to its reward.'²³
- 6 Then I saw a viper that came from the east. It poured poison on all flesh and went up to the border of the Promise²⁴. There was an²⁵ earthquake and rumblings and thunders in heaven, and a voice 'from heaven'²⁶ was heard²⁷: 'Let those four kings who are bound on the great river Euphrates, those who are prepared to destroy one out of three people, be released.'²⁸ They were released, and there was a great uproar.

17. add "because" BnF 326 BL 28,875 Sachau 131 UTS 23

18. Presumably Gen 17:20, a text traditionally attributed to Moses and which prophesied that Ishmael will be the father of twelve princes. See also Gen 25:12–16.

19. "these" BnF 326 BL 28,875 Sachau 131 UTS 23

20. Presumably the fourth beast of Daniel 7–8, although this beast has ten horns, not nine.

21. cf. Dan 7:8; 20–21; 8:5–10.

22. cf. 2 Esd 11:29–31.

23. cf. 2 Esd 11:36–46.

24. Perhaps the "Land of Promise" or "Promised Land," a phrase which occurs in full in §8, 9, and 10.

25. add "great" BnF 326

26. omit BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23

27. cf. Rev 8:5; 16:18.

28. cf. Rev 9:13–15.

7 Out of the darkness came ravens from the east, piercing the viper. The viper escaped to the borders of Egypt, and there it became despondent²⁹. It took its³⁰ two chicks and crossed over to the right side.³¹ The younger³² chick came to the lion's whelp³³ and took refuge with him.³⁴ The lion's whelp received him joyfully, and the younger chick [persuaded]³⁵ the lion's whelp to deliver him from those ravens that were seeking to devour him. The lion's whelp sent 'an ambassador'³⁶ to the leopard³⁷ of the south so that he would come out to his aid, because the bull³⁸ was troubling the land of the west with many evils, since he was the king of the ravens. He gnashed his teeth against the lion's whelp. There were three horns on his head; with the right one he makes war, with the left one he destroys, and with the one in the middle one he ravages.³⁹ He will begin to ravage the children of his house, and he will gather gold and much silver, and he will begin 'to afflict all who are under his power'⁴⁰. He will become arrogant⁴¹ and he will not glorify God. One of his horns will go and make war against the lion's whelp, and will ravage

29. lit: "made its life/soul small"

30. "the" BL 28,875 UTS 23

31. cf. 2 Esd 12:29–30.

32. or "smaller"

33. cf. Gen 29:8–12; 2 Esd 11:37–46, Mingana, *Apocalypse of Peter*, 222; 230–31.

34. cf. Mingana, *Apocalypse of Peter*, 278–79.

35. BnF 326 BL 28,875 Sachau 131 UTS 23; "will persuade" Mingana 11

36. omit BnF 326

37. This is the more common Syriac word for leopard, a different word for leopard, borrowed from Greek, appears in §9.

38. cf. Mingana, *Apocalypse of Peter*, 231.

39. cf. Dan 8:3–4.

40. "to strike down and afflict all who are under his power" Sachau 131; "to strike down and afflict all who are under the strength [of] his power" BnF 326

41. lit: "exalt his heart;" cf. Dan 11:36.

the rebellious fortresses. They will contend against each other and ravage each other, and much blood will be shed between the two mighty men⁴². Then the bull will devise an evil plot against the seven hills and the great city of Constantine⁴³, and he will contend with it, and much blood will be shed round about the city.

- 8 Then the viper's chick will take a great⁴⁴ army from [Thrace]⁴⁵ and from the upper ranks of the west, and he will enter in blood. The father of the younger chick [will hear]⁴⁶ and he will gather a great nation from the Cushites and from the nations around them, and he will come to the aid of the chick and will ravage Egypt. Then the chick will come down from the Promised Land and he will ravage the chief cities. He will leave them devoid of their⁴⁷ inhabitants, because great iniquity was being perpetrated in them. He will throw the slain to the ground in heaps, and he will ravage Damascus at that time.
- 9 Then the lion's whelp will become inflamed with fierce anger,⁴⁸ and he will go out after those ravens and ravage them and drive [them] out⁴⁹ and destroy them from Syrian Antioch as far as the borders of the east, the land that belongs to the ravens. The leopard⁵⁰ will go out from the north, and a great people like flying locusts will go out with him⁵¹. He will go up to the Euphrates River and he will rise up in aid

42. "on their two sides" BnF 326 BL 28,875 Sachau 131 UTS 23

43. "Constantinople" BL 28,875 Sachau 131 UTS 23

44. omit BnF 326 BL 28,875 Sachau 131 UTS 23

45. The Syriac has the unintelligible "Tarqono," here emended slightly to read "Tarqoyo," meaning Thrace.

46. BnF 326 BL 28,875 Sachau 131 UTS 23; "hear" Mingana 11

47. lit. "its"; omit BnF 326 BL 28,875 Sachau 131 UTS 23

48. cf. 2 Esd 11:37.

49. omit BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23

50. This is a different and less common word for leopard, borrowed from Greek, than appears in §8.

51. omit UTS 23

of the lion's whelp, and from there the two of them will go down to the land of Persia. ʀ The bull will go out to meet them with a great army, but the lion's whelp will go⁵² between the bull's horns and break both of them.⁵³ He will ravage and plunder the land and burn⁵⁴ [it] with fire. The ravens will flee from his presence and go down to their land. The [lion's]⁵⁵ whelp will pursue them and will destroy them with the edge of the sword, because God has turned his face from them on account of their⁵⁶ surpassing uncleanness. He will capture and plunder their land, and lay [it]⁵⁷ waste down to the foundations. It will never again be inhabited, because they despised the Lord and made light of his commandments. There will be great tumult in the land— earthquakes and famines and plagues⁵⁸—and fear⁵⁹ will rule over the people until they fall and die, without diseases or illnesses, from the fear that rules over them.⁶⁰ The [lion's]⁶¹ whelp will go up with a great army to the Promised Land and will subject it to tribute, and there will be great tribulation in the land, the likes of which has never occurred.⁶² He will build walls around Phoenicia,⁶³ ʀ and around the desolate places that are within it⁶⁴. He will lay

52. "They will go out to meet them" BnF 326

53. cf. Dan 8:5–7. The bull, who earlier had three horns, now has two.

54. "destroy" BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23

55. BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23; "lioness's" (irregular form) Mingana 11

56. "his" UTS 23*

57. lit. "them"

58. cf. Luke 21:11.

59. add "and trembling" BnF 326

60. cf. Luke 21:26.

61. BnF 326 BL 28,875 Sachau 131 UTS 23; omit Mingana 11

62. cf. Mark 13:19; Matt 24:21.

63. cf. Mingana, *Apocalypse of Peter*, 233.

64. omit BnF 326 BL 28,875 Sachau 131 UTS 23

Damascus waste down to its foundations, because it provoked the Most High.

Then he will go up to Jerusalem with great pomp, and from there he will return⁶⁵ and go up to his royal city.⁶⁶

- 10 After three and a half weeks a certain mighty man will come out of the south with a great nation, and his power will go forth over the Promised Land.⁶⁷ He will make a great peace, and he will perform great good deeds in the land for three years and seven months.⁶⁸ Then the four winds of heaven will be stirred up,⁶⁹ and the nations will rise up one against the other,⁷⁰ and ravage each other until the earth cries out because of⁷¹ the blood that is shed on its face.⁷²
- 11 Then I, Ezra, fell to the ground, and I was utterly filled with tears.⁷³ And the angel of the Lord said to me, 'Do not be grieved, Ezra the scribe, because these things will not happen until uncleanness and wantonness and fornication defile the earth, when people have forsaken the marriage bed and defiled and polluted themselves and their bodies⁷⁴ with the uncleanness of fornication, with drinking wine, and with sodomy, shameless about the disgrace they commit.⁷⁵ Then the justice of

65. "will travel" BnF 326 BL 28,875 Sachau 131 UTS 23

66. cf. Mingana, *Apocalypse of Peter*, 231.

67. On "three and a half weeks," cf. Dan 7:25; 12:7. On the "mighty man of the south," cf. Dan 11:5ff.

68. cf. Dan 12:11.

69. cf. Dan 7:2; Rev 7:1.

70. cf. Mark 13:8; Matt 24:7; Luke 21:10.

71. "is hidden by" BnF 326; "makes known" Sachau 131

72. cf. Gen 4:10–11.

73. cf. Dan 10:9.

74. lit. "their souls and their bodies"; "their bodies and their souls" BnF 326 Sacahau 131 UTS

75. cf. Rom 1:27; Rev 17:1–2.

God will be provoked⁷⁶, so that the rebellious seed will be delivered into the hands of their enemies, because their end has come, and the End is coming quickly.'

12 'As I was pouring out fear on my face⁷⁷, the angel of the Lord stretched out his hand and lifted me up, since I was shaking with fear.⁷⁸ I said, 'Who will be able to live⁷⁹ in that time?' He said to me, 'Those in whom God is pleased. A great rebellion will gain strength, and the faithful⁸⁰ will be oppressed, but their cries and their groaning will ascend before the royal throne of God's majesty,⁸¹ so that 'he will quickly send a fearsome angel⁸² and take hold of the point of the destroying sword and destroy the rebellious seed without mercy. But woe to pregnant women and those who are nursing at that time, because a tribulation will happen the likes of which has not occurred since the worlds were created.⁸³

13 Suddenly [the children of the north will be opened and]⁸⁴ will go out from the house⁸⁵ of Gog and Magog and commit terrible atrocities on the earth.⁸⁶ Two tribes from the seed of Ishmael and those who have become sooty at the base [of the mountain]⁸⁷ of the south will come and take refuge with them. They will drink

76. omit BnF 326

77. BnF 326 BL 28,875 Mingana 11^c Sachau 131 UTS 23

78. cf. 2 Esd 10:26–27.

79. or, "to be saved"

80. lit. "the children of the faith"

81. cf. Rev 6:9.

82. or, "a terrible angel will quickly send" BnF 326 BL 28,875 Sachau 131 UTS 23

83. cf. Mark 13:17, 19; Matt 24:19; 20; Luke 21:23.

84. "the mountains will be opened. The children of the north" BnF 326 BL 28,875 Sachau 131 UTS 23

85. This is the best rendering of the dalet, attested in all witnesses, that I can come up with. The unusual grammar and variant in this sentence might indicate that the original reading has been corrupted.

86. cf. Ezek 38–39; Rev 20:7.

87. add BnF 326 BL 28,875 Sachau 131 UTS 23

and go up until they ascend⁸⁸ Jerusalem, the city of the great king.⁸⁹ There God will send against them the fearsome angel Michael, and he will ravage them without pity.⁹⁰ If these⁹¹ days were not shortened, no flesh would live⁹², because at that time a year is like a month, a month like a week, a week like a day⁹³, and a day like an hour.

- 14 Then the false messiah⁹⁴ will appear and will show his cruelty and the vehemence of his wickedness. He will go up to Enoch and Elijah upon the altar and shed their blood upon the earth with great suffering.⁹⁵ Then fearsome angels will be sent out, and they will cast the Son of Perdition⁹⁶ into the Gehenna of fire.⁹⁷ This is the End⁹⁸. But keep these words until their time.⁹⁹
- 15 Then I, since I had great fear, fell down to worship and gave thanks to God the Savior, who had deemed me worthy of this vision.¹⁰⁰ And I said¹⁰¹, 'Blessed are you, O God my Savior, and your holy¹⁰² name be glorified forever and ever, Amen.'

88. omit BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23

89. cf. Rev 20:9.

90. cf. Dan 12:1; Rev 12:7–9; 20:9.

91. "those" BnF 326 BL 28,875 Sachau 131 UTS 23

92. "be saved" Mingana 11^c; cf. Mark 13:20; Matt 24:22.

93. omit BnF 326

94. cf. Mark 13:22; Matt 24:24.

95. cf. Rev 11:3–8.

96. cf. John 17:12; 2 Thess 2:3.

97. cf. Rev 19:20; 20:10, 14–15.

98. "[This] will be the End." BnF 326 Sachau 131 UTS 23

99. cf. Dan 12:4; 2 Esd 12:35–38.

100. cf. Rev 22:8.

101. omit BnF 326 BL 28,875 Sachau 131 UTS 23

102. omit BnF 326 BL 28,875 Sachau 131 UTS 23

16 Ended¹⁰³ is the vision that Ezra the scribe saw about the kingdom of the
Ishmaelites¹⁰⁴. To God [be glory]¹⁰⁵.

103. add "with the aid of our Lord" BL 28,875 Sachau 131 UTS 23

104. omit BnF 326

105. Mingana 11 BnF 326; "To God be glory, Amen." Sachau 131 UTS 23; "Glory to God,
the helper of the weak and who has mercy on them, Amen." BL 28,875

CHAPTER IV

PSEUDO-EZRA'S USE OF BIBLICAL TEXT

Pseudo-Ezra most often employs biblical apocalyptic imagery¹ as it has been filtered through the lens of later apocalyptic interpretation and embellishment. Only rarely does he quote or overtly paraphrase Scripture,² and he uses no set formula to introduce those quotations or paraphrases. In fact, the only time Pseudo-Ezra names his sacred sources (which he calls the prophecies of Moses and Daniel in §4), his references are not quotations at all, but instead are veiled and highly reworked allusions to the biblical text that have been filtered through the interpretive lens of later apocalyptic literature and tradition. Yet, biblical imagery pervades the entire apocalypse, providing Pseudo-Ezra with a stock of apocalyptic vocabulary from which he freely and imaginatively draws, and biblical apocalypses provide a template from which to build the structure of his own apocalyptic message.

This chapter examines the way that Pseudo-Ezra uses and reworks apocalyptic sources. It will first discuss how the figure of Ezra and his visions as described in 2 Esdras/4 Ezra likely served as model for Pseudo-Ezra's own pseudonymous identity and vision. It will then consider his clearest quotations or paraphrases of biblical apocalyptic sources (Daniel, Genesis, the Gospels, and Revelation), paying careful

1. In my use of the term "biblical" I do not intend to denote a specific canon of Scripture, but rather use the term as a shorthand to refer to sacred texts that were in circulation among Syriac-speaking Christians and commonly used as a source for theological reflection. With regard to *Ps.-Ezra* these texts include what are typically designated as "canonical" biblical texts, such as the Gospels, Genesis, and Daniel, texts that did not gain canonical status in Syriac churches, though they did in the West, such as Revelation, and texts that are called apocryphal or pseudepigraphal by modern scholars, but which often circulated alongside "canonical" texts in ancient manuscripts, such as 2 Esdras.

2. The clearest quotations or paraphrases are of Rev 9:13–15 (§6) and the synoptic gospels Mark 13:3–27; Matt 24:3–31; and Luke 21:7–28 (§12).

attention to how Pseudo-Ezra reworks or contextualizes these sources to suit his own historical reality and apocalyptic message. In doing so, this chapter will show that many of Pseudo-Ezra's biblical allusions are filtered through the lens of later Jewish and then Christian apocalyptic interpretation, and will consider how these later Jewish and Christian sources shaped Pseudo-Ezra's own understanding and use of biblical texts.

The task of identifying biblical sources and allusions is one often fraught with disagreement over methodology. Since the primary goal of this thesis to make the text of *Ps.-Ezra* more accessible to scholars and students rather than to problematize questions about its use of sources and allusions, I have hoped to minimize methodological concerns by primarily focusing on sources that Pseudo-Ezra explicitly names or on what seem to be the clearest examples of quotation and allusion. When Pseudo-Ezra does not explicitly name his source, these allusions have been ascertained on the basis of Richard Hays's seven-fold test for determining intertextual echoes.³

TAKING UP THE MANTLE OF EZRA

By the time that Pseudo-Ezra composed his apocalypse, the character of Ezra the scribe had developed quite a reputation as an apocalyptic visionary by virtue of the large number of pseudepigraphal texts attributed to his authorship.⁴ In particular, the book of 2 Esdras, or more specifically, chapters 3–14, which comprise an apocalyptic work also known by the name of 4 Ezra, was widely translated into

3. Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 29–32.

4. Other apocalyptic texts ascribed to Ezra include 2 Esdras/4 Ezra, the Greek Apocalypse of Ezra, The Questions of Ezra, and the Latin Vision of Ezra. Lisbeth S. Fried offers a history of the traditions surrounding Ezra in *Ezra and the Law in History and Tradition* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2014); chapters 5–7 focus on Ezra in Jewish and Christian apocalyptic texts.

Syriac, and later, Arabic. Of all the extant Ezra literature, this text bears the most similarity to *Ps.-Ezra*, and is most likely to have served as a source of inspiration for its general structure and attributed authorship.⁵

The Book of 4 Ezra is distinctive for its use of the dialogue-dispute literary form, in which Ezra questions or challenges God as to why evil has befallen his chosen people and God then reveals how he will execute judgment and vindicate his people in the last days.⁶ *Ps.-Ezra*, a much shorter text than 4 Ezra, is not a full-fledged dialogue-dispute, although Ezra does ask God for revelation and then asks clarifying questions as to how and when the revelations he receives will come to be. It does, however, share with 4 Ezra the notion that Ezra, after posing a question to God, is a person who would be deemed worthy of receiving a revelatory vision. Both texts wrestle with the questions of theodicy and injustice, and ultimately conclude that temporary evil and captivity for the people of God will ultimately be overcome by divine judgment and justice.

Both 4 Ezra and *Ps.-Ezra* also link Ezra with scribal activity. In 4 Ezra, Ezra is commanded by God to take five men (whose names are given as Sarea, Dabria, Selemia, Ethanus, and Asiel) who have been trained to write rapidly so that they may record ninety-four books containing Ezra's revelations.⁷ Twenty-four are to be public (the canonical Hebrew scriptures) and seventy private, to be given only to the wise. Similarly, Ezra is explicitly named a scribe in *Ps.-Ezra*, and he shares his revelation

5. The similarities between the texts were also noted by Baethgen, "Sachau 131," 193–211 and Chabot, "L'Apocalypse d'Esdras," 242–50, 333–46 in their respective translations.

6. On 4 Ezra, see James H. Charlesworth, ed. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Volume 1: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983) 516–59, and Michael E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra*, Hermeneia 41 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

7. 2 Esd 14:23–48.

with a named disciple, Carpos, and Ezra's words are meant to be "[kept] until their time."⁸ For both authors, Ezra is a seer whose visions are to be preserved in writing, but only revealed under appropriate circumstances. Perhaps the author of *Ps.-Ezra* intended for his own apocalypse to be considered one of the seventy private books, or at least intended to mimic the sort of text that might have been recorded in one of 4 Ezra's private books.

INTERPRETING DANIEL THROUGH THE LENS OF 4 EZRA

Notable parallels also can be found in the imagery of Ezra's visions in 4 Ezra and *Ps.-Ezra*. In particular, the opening vision of *Ps.-Ezra* §3–54 bears similarity to Ezra's "Eagle Vision" of chapters 11–12. Both visions explicitly state that they are intended to be interpretations of or elaborations on the Book of Daniel, and recall his vision of the fourth beast.⁹ Fourth Ezra features an eagle with twelve wings and three heads that puts the whole earth under subjection. The eagle then sprouts eight little wings, and each of the large and little wings rises to power before disappearing until only the three heads remain, which then proceed to cannibalize each other. A lion (later identified as the Messiah) then appears and rebukes the eagle for its wicked reign, after which the final two little wings reappear and reign for a brief and tumultuous time. The reign of these two little wings and their "passing over to the head that was on the right side" is a sign of the eagle's end and the coming of the Messiah. In *Ps.-Ezra*, the vision features a serpent with twelve great horns on its head and nine small horns on its tail that contends against all creation. The twelve great horns are ripped from the serpent's head by an angel, and then one great horn springs up on its tail, replacing the nine small horns, while two additional small horns emerge

8. *Ps.-Ezra* §2, 15.

9. 2 Esd 12:11 and *Ps.-Ezra* §4.

on the serpent's head. An eagle then breaks the one great horn and devours the two small horns before having its two talons torn out by a whirlwind. A voice from heaven then rebukes the eagle.

Most striking in these two visions is the shared image of a beast with twelve great wings/horns, accompanied by eight or nine small wings/horns, followed by a total of three heads/horns. Although both texts name Daniel as their inspiration, both have departed in similar ways from Daniel's simpler description of the fourth beast as having ten horns, followed by one little horn.¹⁰ It seems likely, then, that the author of *Ps.-Ezra* read and interpreted Daniel's fourth beast not strictly on its own terms, but also through the lens of 4 Ezra's "new explanation"¹¹ of Daniel's vision. He therefore adopted 4 Ezra's pairing of twelve wings/horns with eight (or nine) smaller ones. Perhaps, in his effort to convincingly take on the legacy and mantle of Ezra the scribe, Pseudo-Ezra intentionally modeled certain aspects and details of his apocalypse on the popular 4 Ezra in order to lend his own work an air of authenticity by virtue of its similarity with a better-known text attributed to Ezra.

A problem remains, however, as to how Pseudo-Ezra came to understand the the serpent as having nine little horns when 4 Ezra mentions just eight little wings. A rather simplistic answer might attribute the discrepancy to a scribal error in the textual witness of either 4 Ezra or *Ps.-Ezra*. It is also possible that Pseudo-Ezra had in mind twelve and then nine particular, historical rulers or caliphs, and edited or "updated" 4 Ezra's numbers accordingly. I suspect, however, that a more satisfactory answer might be found in comparison of *Ps.-Ezra* with a Garshuni/Arabic text known as the *Kitāb al-majāll* (Book of the Rolls) or *Apocalypse of Peter*, which similarly pairs

10. Dan 7:7–8.

11. 2 Esd 11:11.

twelve "Kings of Abus" with nine "kinglets" or little kings. Further discussion of the *Kitāb al-majāll* and its possible relationship to Pseudo-Ezra can be found in the first chapter of this thesis.

Other echoes of 4 Ezra may be seen in Pseudo-Ezra's vision of the lion's whelp in §7–9. Much like the lion of 4 Ezra, the lion's whelp is a messianic figure that judges and destroys an evil kingdom that has oppressed the people of God. Interestingly, in both Ezra visions the fall of the evil kingdom by means of the rise of the lion/lion's whelp is immediately preceded by two small wings/chicks associated with the evil kingdom who are said to "cross over to the right side." The mention of the two chicks in *Ps.-Ezra* has been particularly problematic for commentators who have struggled to identify the chicks with their historical counterparts, and the significance of their "crossing over to the right side" has proven especially obtuse:

Then I saw a viper that came from the east. It poured poison on all flesh and went up to the border of the Promise. There was an earthquake and rumblings and thunders in heaven, and a voice from heaven was heard: 'Let those four kings who are bound on the great river Euphrates, those who are prepared to destroy one out of three people, be released.' They were released, and there was a great uproar. Out of the darkness came ravens from the east, piercing the viper. The viper escaped to the borders of Egypt, and there it became despondent. It took its two chicks and crossed over to the right side. The younger chick came to the lion's whelp and took refuge with him. The lion's whelp received him joyfully, and the younger chick persuaded the lion's whelp to deliver him from those ravens that were seeking to devour him.¹²

I suggest that the otherwise enigmatic "crossing over to the right side" of the viper and two chicks is a vestige of the influence of 4 Ezra's vision on that of *Ps.-Ezra*.

Compare to *Ps.-Ezra* 4 Ezra's description of the eagle's two little wings:

I looked and saw that the remaining head had disappeared. The two wings that had gone over to it rose up and set themselves up to reign, and their reign was brief and full of tumult. When I looked again, they were already vanishing. The whole body of the eagle was burned, and the earth was exceedingly terrified.¹³

12. *Ps.-Ezra* §6–7.

13. 2 Esd 12:1–2.

followed by his explanation of the significance of the two little wings, which specifies that they passed over to the head that was located *on the right side*:

As for your seeing two little wings passing over to the head which was on the right side, this is the interpretation: It is these whom the Most High has kept for the eagle's end; this was the reign which was brief and full of tumult, as you have seen.¹⁴

Although *Ps.-Ezra* has reimagined and reworked 4 Ezra's vision in some ways—for example, one of the chicks later becomes a positive figure who is allied with the messianic lion's whelp—certain clear commonalities remain: the two chicks/wings are associated with a decaying evil kingdom (the viper/eagle's head), they cross over to the right side, and their appearance is a symbol of the end of the evil kingdom and rise of the messianic lion/lion's whelp. Whereas in 4 Ezra the reason for the wings' crossing over to the right side is apparent (it specifies that they are joining the eagle's head that was on the right side, as opposed to the heads in the middle or on the left), in *Ps.-Ezra* the reason for the crossing over is unclear in the immediate context. This detail therefore is understood best as an example of the author maintaining a particular phrase and image drawn from 4 Ezra that, given the new context and reworking of the vision in *Ps.-Ezra*, becomes no longer immediately necessary or clear.

INTERPRETING GENESIS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ARAB CONQUESTS

Pseudo-Ezra explicitly names his vision as a fulfillment of one other biblical source, which he calls "the prophecy of Moses."¹⁵ In context, the fulfillment of the prophecy of Moses is the appearance from the desert of the serpent with twelve great horns, and perhaps also the tearing out of those twelve horns by an angel. Keeping in

14. 2 Esd 12:31–39.

15. *Ps.-Ezra* §3–4.

mind that this vision is meant to describe the "kingdom of the Ishmaelites," and then considering the content of prophecies that were commonly ascribed to Moses in ancient times, it is likely that Pseudo-Ezra alludes to Genesis 17. In this text, God establishes the covenant of circumcision with Abraham and his son Isaac, to whom Sarah has not yet given birth. Abraham's elder son, Ishmael, is not wholly ignored, however, for God declares, "as for Ishmael, I have heard you; I will bless him and make him fruitful and exceedingly numerous; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation."¹⁶ Traditionally, Ishmael was regarded as the forefather of the Arab tribes that would later join forces under Muhammad's leadership, thus, one common explanation among Christians for the rise of Arab rule was that it was nothing more than a fulfillment of the promise by God that he would make a great nation of Ishmael's descendants.¹⁷ The explicit mention of the serpent's twelve great horns, corresponding to Ishmael's twelve princes, further bolsters Pseudo-Ezra's identification of serpent who rose from the desert with the Arab forces that had emerged from the deserts of Arabia.

QUOTING JESUS' "LITTLE APOCALYPSE" FROM THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

The clearest example of quotation of biblical text is placed on the lips of the angel sent by God to deliver the apocalyptic vision to Ezra. After seeing the terror and destruction that is to occur during the last days of the Ishmaelites, Ezra is filled with fear and exclaims, "Who will be able to live¹⁸ in that time?"¹⁹ The angel promises Ezra that the faithful will survive and the wicked will be destroyed, and then

16. Gen 17:20.

17. For example, another common early Christian epithet for Arabs is **ⲁⲓⲙⲁⲗⲓⲧⲏⲥ** or "Hagarenes," a reference to Ishmael's mother, Hagar.

18. or, "to be saved"

19. *Ps.-Ezra* §12.

But woe to pregnant women and those who are nursing in those days! Pray that your escape will not happen in winter, for in those days a tribulation will happen the likes of which has not occurred since the beginning of the creation that God created until now, nor will ever happen again.

Matthew 24:19–21:

הוּ דְּבִי לְחַיִּיתָּ עֲלֵיכֶם דְּחַיִּיתָּ תְּסַמְּךְ מְעַמְּךְ . יְרַחֵם דְּבִי דְּלֵךְ מִסָּתְּרֵי עֲלֵיכֶם כִּדְּחַיִּיתָּ תְּסַמְּךְ

הוּ דְּבִי תְּסַמְּךְ . מִסָּתְּרֵי עֲלֵיכֶם דְּחַיִּיתָּ דְּחַיִּיתָּ דְּחַיִּיתָּ דְּחַיִּיתָּ דְּחַיִּיתָּ דְּחַיִּיתָּ דְּחַיִּיתָּ דְּחַיִּיתָּ

לְחַיִּיתָּ עֲלֵיכֶם .

But woe to pregnant women and those who are nursing in those days! Pray that your escape will not happen in winter or on the Sabbath. For then a great tribulation will happen, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world, nor will ever happen again.

Luke 21:23

הוּ דְּבִי לְחַיִּיתָּ עֲלֵיכֶם דְּחַיִּיתָּ תְּסַמְּךְ מְעַמְּךְ . יְרַחֵם דְּבִי דְּלֵךְ מִסָּתְּרֵי עֲלֵיכֶם כִּדְּחַיִּיתָּ תְּסַמְּךְ

הוּ דְּבִי לְחַיִּיתָּ עֲלֵיכֶם .

But woe to pregnant women and those who are nursing in those days, for there will be a great tribulation on the earth and anger against this people.

Comparison of each of the synoptic gospels shows closest verbal

correspondence between *Ps.-Ezra* and the accounts of Matthew and Mark, although,

like Luke, Pseudo-Ezra omits the mention that the people pray that their flight does

not come in winter or on the Sabbath.²¹ Upon closer inspection, Pseudo-Ezra's

quotation seems to synthesize elements from each of the synoptic gospels: Mark's

mention that God created (בְּדֵי, expressed indirectly using the passive מְעַמְּךְ in *Ps.-*

Ezra), Matthew's use of word "worlds" (עֲלֵיכֶם) to describe what was created, and the

aforementioned omission, as in Luke, of comments about winter and Sabbath.

Additionally, *Ps.-Ezra* introduces slight variations in his quotations that do not appear

21. This is an omission of Mark 13:18 or Matthew 24:19.

and slight variation from the standard Syriac text of the synoptic gospels in Pseudo-Ezra's quotation, however, makes it likely that Pseudo-Ezra did not cite directly from a gospel manuscript, but rather, quoted from memory.

ENGAGING THE IMAGES OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Revelation as a Source

Pseudo-Ezra's apocalyptic vision is ripe with imagery and phrases that parallel those found in the Christian apocalyptic text *par excellence*: the Book of Revelation. Because Revelation itself draws on earlier apocalyptic works, such as Daniel and Ezekiel, however, it is often difficult to ascertain precisely from where Pseudo-Ezra has received a particular image. Is his mention that "the four winds of heaven will be stirred up"²⁴ drawn from Revelation's image of four angels who hold back the four winds prior to judgment?²⁵ Or is it simply drawn from Daniel or another apocalyptic source?²⁶ When Pseudo-Ezra invokes the name of Gog and Magog in painting his landscape of eschatological terror, is he primarily indebted to Ezekiel or Revelation or perhaps even one of the many elaborations on the popular Alexander Legend that are extant in Syriac?²⁷

The question of Pseudo-Ezra's knowledge and use of Revelation is complicated by questions of when and to what extent Revelation was known and read by Syriac-speaking Christians. Revelation was not considered "canonical" by ancient Syriac-speaking churches, and did not enjoy as wide a readership as other apocalyptic

24. *Ps.-Ezra* §10.

25. Rev 7:1.

26. Dan 7:2.

27. Rev 20; Ezek 38–39. The Alexander Legend appears in a number of Syriac apocalypses, but was perhaps first popularized by the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*. See the discussion in chapter 1.

works such as Daniel or the Gospels. Nonetheless, there is reason to believe that Pseudo-Ezra could have had access to Revelation when writing his apocalypse, or at least had access to other, secondary apocalypses that introduced him to the images and vocabulary of Revelation.²⁸

At least three apocalyptic images found in *Ps.-Ezra* seem to have connections to images also found in Revelation. Of these, two certainly reached Pseudo-Ezra by means of a secondary apocalyptic source that interpreted and elaborated upon Revelation's image: the release of Gog and Magog from the mountains of the north,²⁹ and the slaughter of Enoch and Elijah by the antichrist.³⁰ The third image, that of four figures bound on and then released from the river Euphrates,³¹ is one that is also found in the *Kitāb al-majāll*. It is noteworthy that *Ps.-Ezra* contains closer verbal correspondence to Revelation's description of the figures than the *Kitāb al-majāll*'s, a fact which might suggest *Ps.-Ezra*'s direct dependence on Revelation, or at least on another apocalyptic source that more closely mirrored Revelation than does the *Kitāb al-majāll*. This section will now turn to discussion of Pseudo-Ezra's adaptation of Revelation's image of four figures bound on the Euphrates so that it fit his own apocalyptic message.

28. See the discussion in the section on "Provenance and Date" in the first chapter of this thesis.

29. Rev 20:7–10. The association of Gog and Magog with the mountains of the north originated in the Alexander Romance, which described how Alexander the Great locked them, along with a number of other unclean nations, behind a gate in the mountains; this tale was popularized in the Syriac tradition via *Pseudo-Methodius*. See the discussion in chapter 1.

30. Rev 11:3–9, where the descriptions of the two witnesses' miracles most closely corresponds to the miracles performed by Elijah and Moses. It is likely that the pairing of Enoch and Elijah, which emerged within the first few centuries of Christianity, became popular since the two men are the only biblical characters who were reported as being taken up to heaven without dying; their deaths were thought to have been delayed by God so that they later could die as martyrs at the hands of the antichrist. See the discussion in chapter 1.

31. Rev 9:13–15.

prepared, for an hour, and a day, and a month, and year, to kill a third of humankind.

Several commonalities between the two apocalypses can be identified: (1) both authors describe a commanding voice; for Pseudo-Ezra the voice is simply described as coming from heaven, though the author of Revelation elaborates on the precise provenance of the voice as coming from the golden altar; (2) both voices call for the release of four figures who are bound on the great river Euphrates, though Pseudo-Ezra names these figures as kings in contrast to Revelation's angels, a point that will be discussed in greater detail below; and (3) the four figures are described as having been prepared to destroy or kill a third of humankind.

Although there is a distinct correlation between the content of the two texts, the vocabulary and syntax of *Ps.-Ezra* varies enough from that of Revelation as to make it unlikely that the author is citing his source directly from a manuscript of Revelation. Rather, the small changes in details—the simplification of the location of the voice, the change in verbal form of the command, the choice of a different grammatical construction for expressing the idea of "a third," and the use of the term "destroy" rather than "kill"—make it likely that Pseudo-Ezra is recalling the image from memory or has encountered it in a third-party source that itself paraphrased Revelation.

In addition, the change from "angels" (ܡܠܬܝܩܝܢ) to "kings" (ܡܠܟܝܢ) in this context is particularly striking.³³ This is a variant that must have been introduced in Syriac, where the alteration required only the loss of a single alaph. Indeed, some

33. Indeed, this distinctive change prompted Iselin to propose that *Ps.-Ezra* offered evidence of an Aramaic Vorlage upon which post Pseudo-Ezra and the author of Revelation drew, see Iselin, "Apokalyptische Studien," 60–64. This stance was refuted by Chabot, "L'Apocalypse d'Esdras," 242–50, 333–46.

scribes displayed the orthographic tendency to omit the alaph in **ملائكة** on a regular basis, a tendency that could have led to Pseudo-Ezra's confusion about the correct term if it appeared in his copy of Revelation.³⁴ In any case, I argue on two grounds that Pseudo-Ezra intended for his apocalypse to depict four kings, and that this reading is not simply the result of scribal error in the transmission of *Ps.-Ezra*: (1) the term "kings" better fits Pseudo-Ezra's own historical context, and (2) the term "kings" rather than "angels" avoids dissonance with Pseudo-Ezra's other use of angelic imagery within his apocalyptic vision.

As was discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis, apocalypses are products of individuals and preserved within communities, and thus reflect the historical context in which they were composed. What historical circumstances, then, might have led Pseudo-Ezra to adopt an apocalyptic image from the book of Revelation, a work that did not enjoy the same long legacy of use and esteem within the Syriac tradition as, say, Daniel, Ezekiel, or the Gospels? I would propose that the image of four kings was one that particularly resonated with the author's own historical reality especially because the kings hailed from the Euphrates river. If, as I have previously suggested, *Ps.-Ezra* was written around the time of the rise of the Abbasid caliphate, in the context of either the Abbasid Revolution or Civil War, the author would have been well aware that the Abbasid caliphs reigned from Baghdad, a city located between the Tigris and Euphrates river. It is not difficult to imagine that Pseudo-Ezra's own context influenced him to read Revelation 9:13–15 as a clear prophecy of the rise of Abbasid rule. Although this connection could have been made

34. I do want to note that in other places within *Ps.-Ezra* the term "angels" appears in full, with the alaph, as **ملائكة**. In other words, the scribes who produced the manuscripts used in the edition make a distinction between "kings" and "angels," and so this variant cannot be dismissed as simply a matter of orthography on the part of the scribes who preserved *Ps.-Ezra*.

were the four figures "angels," the term "kings" naturally invites the reader to identify the figures as historical, temporal characters rather than divine or eschatological ones.

It is precisely this temporal vs. divine connotation of the two terms that leads to my second argument: Pseudo-Ezra's use of the term "kings" for these four figures avoids dissonance with his other use of angelic imagery within his eschatological vision. The use of "kings" clarifies that these four figures will be human entities rather than angelic or divine agents, a significant distinction for the author, since in his text the term "angel" is reserved for those apocalyptic figures that act in divine intervention and retribution against evil-doers, typically Arabs, or on behalf of God's people. Pseudo-Ezra describes a total of five angelic beings in his apocalypse:

- (1) "A young man... wearing white clothing (whom Pseudo-Ezra later explicitly calls an angel), who is sent from God to reveal to Ezra a vision about "the end times of the kingdom of the Ishmaelites,"³⁵
- (2) "An angel clothed in a flame of fire, who descended from heaven and tore the twelve great horns from the serpent's head;"³⁶ here the serpent represents the kingdom of the Ishmaelites,
- (3) An angel sent from God to avenge the faithful who have been oppressed and destroy "the rebellious seed" with the sword,³⁷
- (4) The angel Michael, who destroys the house of Gog and Magog and their Ishmaelite allies with fire,³⁸ and,

35. *Ps.-Ezra* §2; 4.

36. *Ps.-Ezra* §3.

37. *Ps.-Ezra* §12.

38. *Ps.-Ezra* §13.

(5) Fearsome angels sent to cast the Son of Perdition into the Gehenna of fire.³⁹

Comparison of these five angelic beings and their roles shows that Pseudo-Ezra's use of the term "angel" is consistent: angels are the messengers of God who execute his judgment against evil-doers (especially Ishmaelites or Arabs). Since Pseudo-Ezra identifies the four figures bound on the Euphrates as Arab leaders who oppress the people of God (and therefore identifies them as the very people God normally sends angels to destroy), it would make little sense for him to call the Arab leaders "angels" as well. Whether Pseudo-Ezra introduced the change from "angels" to "kings" himself by accidental misreading or intentional alteration of Revelation, or he faithfully represented the source from which he learned of the image of the four figures bound on the Euphrates, the end result is the same: "kings" better suits the author's purposes and message than does "angels," which would represent a departure from Pseudo-Ezra's usual use of the term "angels" as a descriptor of those who intervene on behalf of God to punish Arabs rather than as a description of the Arab rulers themselves.

CONCLUSION

The *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ezra* is a fascinating text that is, to the modern reader, rather mysterious at times because it lacks definitive historical markers within the text that would make clear when, about whom, and by whom it was composed. Because all extant witnesses are of late date, I suspect that the most fruitful research and discussion of the work's context of composition will come from comparative studies of *Ps.-Ezra* with other apocalyptic texts. I'm particularly hopeful that study of the Book of the Rolls or *Kitāb al-majāll*, which currently lacks a critical edition and

39. *Ps.-Ezra* §14.

full translation, or any sort of comprehensive study, can offer insight to the origins of *Ps.-Ezra*, since these two texts seem share the most similarities of any of the Christian apocalyptic literature considered in this thesis.

Even if its origins remain obscure, *Ps.-Ezra* stands as another fascinating example of the way that biblical stories take on a life and character that is beyond the biblical text itself, of the way that sacred stories inform Christians' worldviews, and in doing so, display remarkable elasticity so that they can be reinterpreted in ways that fit new contexts and historical realities. Apocalypse in particular has proven an extraordinarily resilient genre that Christians living in any number of times and places have turned to in order to make sense of the world and their place in it.

In his own use of biblical apocalypse, Pseudo-Ezra feels free to pick, choose, rework, and alter his sources in such a way that they better fit his own historical context, while still keeping the distinctive language and stories that evoke the biblical text and its prophetic authority. In his revisions, Pseudo-Ezra shows knowledge of earlier interpretations of biblical apocalypses, a fact that suggests that among ancient Christian writers, a high level of borrowing, whether through written texts or oral, perhaps exegetical or homiletical, elaborations on texts, occurred. It is my hope that this edition, translation, and brief introduction to *Ps.-Ezra* will make the text more accessible to scholars and students, and that by studying little-known literary productions like *Ps.-Ezra*, which crystallize a single apocalyptic imagination that represents one author living in particular time and place, we can continue to draw comparisons between them and correlate trends as to how Christians read and remembered and reinterpreted their sacred texts in light of their lived experience under Arab rule.

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