

Emma Wasserman's *Apocalypse as Holy War*: A Review Article

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Abstract

Emma Wasserman's 2018 book, *Apocalypse as Holy War: Divine Politics and Polemics in the Letters of Paul*, is an ambitious project.¹ Wasserman's central thesis is that the common interpretations of Jewish apocalyptic as reflective of a world ruled by cosmic dualism is a misreading that has, in turn, pulled interpretations of Paul as an apocalyptic thinker out of shape. In place of this classic dualism, Wasserman contends the operating principle of ancient religious cosmologies of the Ancient Near East (ANE) broadly, including Jewish apocalyptic, was one of unchallenged divine political order. Against this well-ordered universe, Wasserman attempts to recontextualize Paul's expectation of imminent eschatological violence and his discussion of the inner turmoil of the soul.

Key Words

apocalyptic, Paul, dualism, divine politics, rebellion, Exodus

1. Detail and Structure of the Argument

Wasserman's interlocutors in this book are scholars of the apocalyptic who "envision a world that is ruled by tyrannical divine rebels and evil gods" (106) and Pauline scholars who uncritically adopt such constructions of the ancient Jewish cosmos in their readings of the Apostle. In her opening argument, Wasserman concedes the presence of dualistic language in both apocalyptic texts and Paul's epistles but contends that the *presence* of dualistic language should not be mistaken as *evidence* of a dualistic worldview. This apocalyptic vision of an embattled cosmos is drawn, she charges, from an "uncritical, hodge-podge of conceptions" which "selectively appropriate images and rhetoric that

¹ Emma Wasserman, *Apocalypse as Holy War: Divine Politics in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

is then woven into a normative tapestry that is then claimed to be authentic” (203). Scholars have downplayed or ignored the ambiguity in these texts subsuming mentions of “harmful spirits, wayward divinities, and testing figures like Satan, Belial, Mastema” (4) into a metamyth cosmic struggle attesting the centrality of the myth of the rebellious powers in heaven. This, Wasserman alleges, has created a confirmation bias among Pauline scholars who are looking for evidence of the embattled cosmos in Paul and so find evidence confirming it by selectively focusing “on themes of persecution, freedom, and divine kingship understanding an apocalyptic Christ to triumph over the forces of darkness” (204).

Wasserman counters that the apocalyptic scribes did not share a worldview, theological system, cosmology, or vision of an embattled cosmos. Rather, she asserts, the apocalyptic writers share certain “premises, working assumptions, and strategies of argument” (3). Centrally, they assumed “that the world is constituted as a single unified political hierarchy that requires a plurality of divine beings to administer it.” Wasserman’s main thesis is that the relevant literature (a wider net than just Jewish apocalyptic) is better understood as “myths about political relationships in the divine world” (2). Far from a central conflict myth, these texts actively employ strategies to suppress rivalry and conflict in favor of a view of a stable, ordered cosmos. Wasserman claims that rather than a rebelliously chaotic cosmos, a close reading of 1 Enoch, Daniel 7–12, Jubilees, the War Scroll, and the Community Rule reveals the writers’ belief that the cosmos was fundamentally ordered and stable.

[T]he writers considered here tend to assume that the world is constituted as a single, unified political hierarchy that requires a plurality of divine beings who organize it, shape it, and rule it. [They] also share a marked ambivalence about the possibility of conflict and rebellion within the kingdom. In particular, they show a distinct tendency to imagine political relationships in ways that suppress the possibility of conflict or competition, especially in relation to the upper tiers of the divine order (3).

Wasserman claims this reconfiguring of Jewish apocalyptic texts along the axis of a settled, stable political order allows patterns of similarity to materialize between Jewish apocalyptic thinkers and those evidenced in the mythologies of Mesopotamia, Syria, and Greece. In her first chapter, “Creation, Battle, and Cosmic Intrigue,” Wasserman rereads the Baal Cycle, Enuma Elish, Epic of Anzu, and the Theogony as didactic, establishing the absolute dominion of a supreme deity and the unshakable stability of the resulting cosmic political order. Though these myths depict cycles of divine conflict, rivalry, battles, betrayals, and coups, Wasserman contends that the stress in these sagas should be placed on the settled political resolution that the cosmic conflict produced.

Post-conflict, the subservient presentation of the lesser gods to the supreme sovereign victor legitimized the political order (205). Set in the primordial past, these ancient conflict myths underscore the long-settled, stable nature of the divine political system. Critical to her argument, Wasserman proposes that this divine polity, once established, was unchallenged by successive combat narratives. All subsequent post-primordial martial contests served in this religious-political system only to illustrate the folly of rebellion against the divine empire. Contrary to most interpretations, Wasserman argues that the combat myths of the ANE actively work to suppress ideas of rebellion.

Wasserman's second critical contention concerns scholarly assumptions of Israel's exceptionalism. She insists that the Yahweh combat myths should be read as part of the greater mytho-system of the ANE. She draws points of comparisons between the myth cycles of the ANE and the divine combat mythologies of the Hebrew Bible. While the Jewish God wars against enemies in Exod 15, Deut 32–33, Hab 3, Isa 13, Joel 2–3 and Zech 14, the extreme asymmetrical nature of the conflict reveals the Jewish God has no credible rival. What is presented in the Hebrew Bible is a picture of a well-ordered political hierarchy in which a supreme deity effectively and decisively rules a tiered kingdom with unchallenged authority. Yahweh, like Baal and Marduk, enjoyed absolute dominion over a regimented cosmic empire. The proof she offers supporting this assertion is the radical asymmetry of Yahweh's martial conflicts in the Hebrew Bible. Yahweh, Wasserman concludes, has no credible opponent. Though the gods and details of these cosmic conflicts vary, what Wasserman claims is a striking similarity of assumption in the ANE concerning the structure and stability of the divine realm. Wasserman concludes from this that the authors/redactors of the Hebrew Bible were likewise engaged inactively suppressing ideas of rebellion within the Yahweh tradition.

Wasserman turns to Jewish apocalyptic texts in her second chapter, "Assemblies, Councils, and Ranks of Divinity." Against the common conception that apocalyptic literature is preoccupied with rebellion in the heavens, Wasserman asserts that these texts show a decided ambivalence about heavenly conflict, disobedience, and rebellion. Rebels were low-level flunkies who exceed their divine mandate or otherwise overreach their authority. Such missteps, Wasserman stresses, happen among the lower tiers of the heavenly court far from God. "Thus, whatever conflicts may erupt in the lesser ranks, the all-powerful ruler above assures order, stability, and justice in the political system as a whole" (106). The function of the tales of divine conflicts in the apocalyptic serve simply to warn of the "perils of insubordination" (205) not to suggest the divine realm is chaotic or in open rebellion. This is an extension of her anti-exceptionalism interpretation to the apocalyptic.

As the Hebrew Bible should be read within the context of the mythic cultural assumptions of the ANE, so apocalyptic literature should be read within the context of the Hebrew Bible. As the Hebrew Bible eschews any suggestion

of active, open rebellion in Yahweh's kingdom, so apocalyptic literature, Wasserman insists, should be read concomitantly as actively suppressing active rebellion. Focusing on the certain outcome of Yahweh's absolute triumph, Wasserman shifts the focus of the conflict in apocalyptic literature. She argues, such instances were minor, temporary instances of disorder, the result of wayward, over-zealous lower functionaries, and not expressions of insurgency or revolt capable of threatening the reign of Yahweh.

In chapter three, "Conflict, Competition, and Paul's 'Principalities and Powers' Reconsidered," Wasserman turns her attention to Paul. Excluding cosmic dualism as an interpretive lens, the question becomes what to do with Paul's discussion of "powers and principalities" in 1 Cor 15:23–28 and his portrayal of Christ as a warrior in the coming eschatological battle in Phil 2:6–9. Wasserman attempts to solve this puzzle by identifying the primary strategies authors of the Hebrew Bible and Pseudepigrapha deploy in dealing with the gods of the gentile nations as *reclassification* and *assimilation* as lower ranking deities into court of Jewish God, *satirization* and *misrepresentation* of the gods and their cults, and simply ignoring the gods of the gentiles all together. The problem with gentiles is one of ignorance. In future wars when the Jewish God defeats and subdues the nations, gentiles will be enlightened realizing the error of their worship of false/lesser gods. The Jewish God is not *threatened* by the gods of the nations but is made *jealous* by their worship. Wasserman claims,

This conceptual framework lends itself particularly well to the claims of stability and constancy at the upper levels of the divine hierarchy while also preserving the lower ranks as constructive sites for mythmaking about new characters and relationships of power on the conceit that they have always been there. Such framework proves especially illuminating for polemics that recast gentile gods as non-competitors of Israel's deity as well as for myths that develop characters such as Michael, Melchizedek, and Christ (119–120).

Wasserman points out that Paul's depiction of enemies against which Christ wars are ambiguous, how he will defeat them non-specific. What is unambiguous in 1 Cor 15 and Phil 2 is Christ's destruction and/or subdual of all opposition and his own complete submission to God. Though a moment of apocalyptic violence and upheaval, Wasserman insists that what Paul portrays is not the overthrow of the existing world order but inevitability of the realization or revelation of the order that has always existed (129). "This political model allows Paul to maintain that there will be some sort of battle (or even battle-cum-judgment) that will set things right in the world below while also strongly affirming the integrity, harmony, and inevitability of the political system as a whole" (121).

In her fourth chapter “Idols and Other Gods, in 1 Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans,” Wasserman addresses the *stoicheia* (elements), *daimonia* (divinities), *aggeloi* (messengers), and the principalities and powers in Paul’s thought. Wasserman concludes that Paul was ambiguous in his letters as to the nature, power and even existence of this undefined class of beings. What is clear is that he conceived of these beings as lesser deities subordinate to the supreme Jewish God mistakenly worshiped by ignorant gentiles (141). In all cases, Wasserman insists Paul pushed points of conflict to the periphery in line with mythological and apocalyptic precedent she established in the preceding chapters. Wasserman pivots to wisdom and philosophic traditions claiming Paul’s use of the gods “as foils for exploring the exceptional status of Israel’s deity” (164) in 1 Cor 8 and Rom 1 are at home among Wisdom, Pseudo-Philo, Platonists, Peripetics, and Stoics.

In the final chapter, “Victimization, Alienation, and Privilege Among the Christ-Elect,” Wasserman shifts focus from the traditions of divine conflict and Paul’s expectation of culminating violence to Paul’s distinctive anxieties about passions that threaten the believer from within. Here, Wasserman contends, the political model of a hierarchical cosmos is also the structure operating in Paul’s understanding of the inner working of the self/personality. The order of the vast political kingdom of God is conceived as a continuum extending from the highest tier of heaven through the vary structure of the human soul (173). Paul adapted Greek traditions to illustrate the inner landscape in which wayward passions lead the intellect astray. The soul was unstable, unbalanced by ignorance and therefore a locus of threat, conflict, and victory. The ideal for true believers was self-mastery and complete submission to Christ aligning oneself with the true cosmic order.

2. Engaging the Argument

Apocalypse as Holy War is a breath-taking tour through centuries of texts and traditions. Wasserman anchors her interpretation of Paul in a refreshingly serious engagement with apocalyptic literature itself. It is a creative and sweeping realignment that challenges many long-held approaches to ancient Jewish literature. I find I am inclined to many of Wasserman’s instincts in this book. I agree entirely with her anti-exceptionalism orientation—to privilege cultural parallels over assumptions of uniqueness when interpreting Jewish sacred literature unless compellingly warranted. I greatly appreciate the nesting contextualization she attempts here. I too think the authors/editors of the Hebrew Bible assumed Yahweh’s absolute dominion from the common cultural cosmology of the ANE. I agree entirely that Yahweh’s uncontested political dominion is posited throughout the biblical tradition and that this fact is underemphasized, if not ignored, in the work of modern apocalyptic scholars to the detriment of their interpretations. I find her didactic, conflict-suppression interpretation of the ANE myths plausible.

There is so much material in this book, so many questions and curiosities as to interpretive choices Wasserman makes, it is difficult to decide where to jump into this garden of intellectual delights. However, Wasserman's reading of Paul is ultimately contingent on distancing the Apostle from apocalyptic dualism. Her tactic in this project is not merely to read the epistles independently of apocalyptic dualism but to dismantle the dualistic framework for interpreting Jewish apocalyptic altogether thereby eliminating it as an interpretive lens for Paul. The obstacle to this agenda is the ubiquitous combat trope found throughout the Hebrew Bible, Jewish apocalyptic literature, and the New Testament. At issue is the portrayal of Yahweh as a warrior/champion of Israel within ancient Jewish cosmology that sets up the very dualism Wasserman is keen to avoid. Wasserman's project of dismantling classic apocalyptic dualism hangs on her contention that the Hebrew Bible—as part of the myth-culture of the ANE—was engaged in suppressing divine conflict.

The primary challenge to Wasserman's conflict-suppression interpretation of the Jewish sacred tradition is Israel's *myth of origin* that has at its center Yahweh's war against the Pharaoh of Egypt. Immortalized in Exodus, the conflict between Yahweh and the son of Ra was a protracted, theatrical affair. Fought in eleven rounds, Yahweh delivers the decisive final blow by drowning Pharaoh's army as they attempted to pursue the Hebrews through the sea. To Wasserman's point concerning the uncontested nature of Yahweh's political dominion, Pharaoh is not presented in Exodus as Yahweh's equal. The reader knows Pharaoh is only a man who thinks he is a god. At one point in the narrative, Yahweh must prop his opponent up, hardening his resolve (Exod 9:12; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:8), to continue the conflict. Yet, though this engagement was a grossly asymmetrical contest, it is a *war*, nonetheless.

In contrast to the ANE myths, Yahweh pointedly is given no primordial backstory. The Jewish god is met in time as he makes and interacts with the world of his creation. As presented in the Hebrew Bible, Yahweh's "combat mythology" is his epic battle with Pharaoh. If we grant Wasserman's conflict-suppression interpretation of the ANE combat myths, then Yahweh's war with Pharaoh is the point at which the traditions must be compared to see if her combat-suppression reading can be substantiated in the Jewish tradition.

To find this commonality of "premises, working assumptions, and strategies of argument"(3), Wasserman radically downplays the striking variances in the myth systems under study. Where the ANE myths were engaged in the project of establishing the dominion of their supreme gods through divine conflict, Yahweh's absolute dominion was a presupposition of the Exodus narrative. Though, the Exodus narrative showcased Yahweh's absolute dominion, the destruction of Pharaoh was a localized expression of the vast power the religious theorists of ancient Israel claimed for their god who by their account had created, destroyed and recreated the entire world long before the Hebrews came into existence to be enslaved by the Egyptians.

The divine wars of the ANE were unambiguous conflicts, pitched battles fought to the death for cosmic dominion. By contrast, composers of Exod 1–12 had a more nuanced agenda in their depiction of the Yahweh/Pharaoh war. The narrative rests in the metafiction that Yahweh was self-consciously play-acting a divine combat. This is revealed in the Horeb dialogue where Yahweh tells Moses he will allow Pharaoh to resist him for a time (Exod 3:18–20). Within the narrative world of Exodus, this is theatre of rescue is performed for the Hebrew slaves who did not know Yahweh and were thus unlikely to believe Moses when he proclaimed their deliverance to be at hand. The reader of Exodus, however, is never in doubt that this contest was theatre. Had Yahweh's first and only action against Pharaoh been the death of the first-born, the narrative would have arrived at the same pass concerning the extraction of the Hebrews—there just would not have been much of a story. Far from suppressing conflict, Exodus is decidedly interested in drawing Yahweh's war out.

Yet, as much the authors/redactors of Exodus claim absolute dominion for Yahweh as to make the metafiction of Exodus necessary, they simultaneously want/need to portray Yahweh as the consummate divine warrior, the peoples' champion. At the climax of the conflict, as Pharaoh's army pursues the Hebrews into the sea, the metafiction falls away and Yahweh *is* the warrior on the battlefield directly engaging the enemy, "At the morning watch the LORD, in the pillar of fire and cloud, looked down on the Egyptian army and threw the Egyptian army into a panic. He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, 'Let us flee from the Israelites, *for the LORD is fighting for them* against Egypt.'" (Exod 14:24–25, NRSV emphasis added). When this scene is recounted centuries later in the historical apocalypse of the Book of Dreams, this same aggressive presentation is retained—Yahweh the warrior stands between the people/flock and the Egyptians/wolves (1 En. 89:24). The asymmetry of the power dynamic—the fact that Yahweh is a god and the Egyptian are mortals—does not lessen the narrative effect. Israel's god defends her against her enemies.

While the myth of the ANE clearly evidences a shared set of cultural assumptions about the divine as Wasserman contends, the critical differences in the structure and content of these myths sets the Exodus narrative on drastically different rhetorical footing vis-à-vis the function of combat mythology within the tradition. Where the ANE combat myths served to establish the political dominion of the supreme gods, Yahweh's war against Pharaoh liberating the Hebrews established a *debt* obligating the people to observe Yahweh's Law.

Moses convened all Israel and said to them: "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and ordinances that I am addressing to you today; you shall learn them and observe them diligently. The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb... And he said: 'I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no

other gods before me.” (Deut 5:1–2, 6 NRSV, also Deut 7:7–11; Exod 20:1–2; Lev 19:36; 25:35–54)

This obligation was binding generation to generation. The command to preserve the memory of the Exodus specifically cites Yahweh’s military action against Pharaoh on the Hebrew’s behalf as the basis of the people’s obligation.

When your children ask you in time to come, ‘What is the meaning of the decrees and the statutes and the ordinances that the LORD our God has commanded you?’ then you shall say to your children, ‘*We were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. The Lord displayed before our eyes great and awesome signs and wonders against Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his household.* He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land that he promised on oath to our ancestors. Then the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our lasting good, so as to keep us alive, as is now the case. If we diligently observe this entire commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us, we will be in the right.’ (Deut 6:20–25 NRSV, emphasis added)

The Mishnah Pesahim 10:5 fortified the command to remember, teaching that in hearing the story of the Exodus, successive generations were to understand the story of the Exodus personally, that they themselves had been liberated by Yahweh from Egypt not merely their ancestors.

Where the combat myths of the ANE happen before the creation of humanity, Yahweh’s war with Pharaoh was with and about humans. The war was the moment Yahweh claimed the Hebrews in the seminal act of Israel’s identity construction as a nation. As opposed to suppressing conflict, the fight was the point of the Exodus story. The violence Yahweh wrought against Pharaoh was the cause that effected the transfer of the people from Pharaoh’s service into that of Yahweh.

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh: indeed, by a mighty hand he will let them go; by a mighty hand he will drive them out of his land”... Say therefore to the Israelites: I am the LORD, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am

the LORD your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians. (Exod 6:1, 6–7 NRSV, also Deut 4:20)

In threshold moments of Israel's history, Israel's leaders recount Yahweh's rescue of the Hebrews to the people tethering the national narrative in successive generations the Exodus. Speeches like Joshua's renewing the covenant (Josh 24:1–7), Samuel's farewell speech (1 Sam 12:6–8), Solomon's dedication of the Temple (1 Kgs 8:14), and Ezra's prayer of repentance (Neh 9:9–19) demonstrate the temple authors of the Hebrew Bible used to make sense of their history. The war's significance within the tradition can hardly be exaggerated.

Rather than pushing conflict to the periphery, the tradition ritually centers Yahweh's conflict with Pharaoh. The three yearly pilgrimage festivals of ancient Israel—Pesach, Sukkot, and Shavuot—are commemorations of the war itself or the events made possible by the war. Pesach reenacted the suffering and liberation of the Hebrews (Exod 12; Num 9). Sukkot was the enactment of living in temporary dwellings after being liberated, “so that your generations may know that I made the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt” (Lev 23:43; Neh 8:14–16). On Shavuot, the harvest festival associated with the giving of the Law, the people recite the story of the Exodus noting specifically how the Lord liberated the Hebrews “with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a *terrifying display of power*, and with signs and wonders” (Deut 26:8 emphasis added) as they gave their offering of first fruits to the priest. First-born males were to be consecrated to the Lord because “...Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from human firstborn to the firstborn of animals” (Exod 13:15). The command to observe the Sabbath (Deut 5:14–15) was tied to the Exodus as was the wearing of the tefillin (Exod 13:9–10), and the tzitzit (Num 15:37–40).

Israel's special relationship with Yahweh was based on Yahweh's war for Israel's liberation. When the people failed their covenant obligations, Yahweh's indictment regularly cited Exodus as his cause for offence. In these passages, Yahweh is astounded and outraged that his crushing of the Hebrew's oppressor Egypt did not secure the people's loyalty in either the generation he freed or subsequent generations. For Example, “Samuel summoned the people to the LORD at Mizpah and said to the Israelites, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and I rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.’ But today you have rejected your God, who saves you from all your calamities and your distresses...” (1 Sam 10:17–19a also 1 Sam 8:4–8; Ps 81:7–12; Jer 7:20–24; 11:11–7; Amos 3:3). The Exodus was used to threaten impious Israel:

If you do not diligently observe all the words of this law that are written in this book... He will bring back upon you all the

diseases of Egypt, of which you were in dread, and they shall cling to you... The LORD will bring you back in ships to Egypt, by a route that I promised you would never see again, and there you shall offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no buyer. (Deut 28: 58–68 NRSV, also Deut 28:27; Jer 34:8–22)

When Yahweh's anger blazed against the people to destroy them, the prophets leverage the Exodus arguing Yahweh has sunk costs in the redemption of Israel and should not destroy his reputation among the nations by destroying them (Exod 32; Deut 9; Dan 9). Solomon attempts to get ahead of this cycle by asking Yahweh to forgive the people for the sins they will commit in the future *because* Yahweh has elected Israel his inheritance by bringing them out of Egypt (1 Kgs 8:50–53). Post Exodus, Yahweh pledged on going martial support of Israel in exchange for covenant compliance.

When you go out to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots, an army larger than your own, do not fear them, for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt. Before you engage in battle, the priest shall come forward and speak to the troops and shall say to them, 'Hear, O Israel! Today you are drawing near to do battle against your enemies. Do not lose heart or be afraid or panic or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to give you victory.' (Exod 20:1–4 NRSV, also 4:38, Lev 26:6; Jud 6; 1 Sam 7:3; Jer 15:21)

Explicitly and repeatedly the authors of the Hebrew Bible claimed that Yahweh remained involved in the defense of Israel. Yahweh defeated the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, Assyrians, Babylonians, and Greeks on behalf of his people (Josh 24:11; 1 Kgs 19:35–36; Isa 45; Amos 2:9–10; 2 Macc 11). Critically, this was the basis of Israel's hope at the low point of their political fortune. As Yahweh formed Israel as a nation by bringing her out of Egypt with a strong arm, so Yahweh might be enticed by their repentance to do so again. In the face of clear and present danger, prayers of the people for deliverance leveraged the Exodus in appealing to Yahweh to have mercy, "Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved. You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it." (Ps 80:7–9 NRSV, also Ps 106; Jer 32; Dan 9).

Jewish scared literature is replete with reference, illusions, and assumptive knowledge of the Exodus—this is but a small sampling of examples that should be brought into this discussion. However, I belabor the point here to demonstrate something of how the Exodus functioned as the spine of ancient

Israel's identity, as the lens through which they interpreted history, and their rationale for hope for the future. Following Wasserman's directive that texts must be read with their cultural contexts, Jewish apocalyptic must be read against an Exodus-centric Hebrew Bible.

Jewish apocalyptic has proven notoriously difficult to define. Texts categorized as apocalyptic share a general orientation—an overt interest in esoteric knowledge, the periodization of history, the eschatological fate of the righteous. While their texts vary widely in detail, plot, and focus, Jewish apocalyptic thinkers were playing at the margin of their tradition seeking a revelation that explained the political fortunes of Israel and Judah. Awash in binary oppositions—light and darkness, righteousness and wickedness, God and rebellious spirits—one could forgive the scholars Wasserman criticizes for postulating cosmic dualism lay at the heart of Jewish apocalypticism. I do though appreciate what Wasserman is drawing attention to here, the classical dualism scholars have long assumed *is* problematic and explains considerably less than they imagine. Yet the designation *warrior* for Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible demanded the postulation of an *enemy* for him to fight. Yahweh's identification as a warrior does create a dissonance when set against the equally asserted claim of Yahweh's absolute, unthreatened dominion. This, I respectively submit, however, may be our issue and not that of the writers of the Hebrew Bible or apocalyptic literature.

The religious theorists of the Jewish tradition toggled seamlessly between representations of Yahweh as a warrior and Yahweh as unrivaled sovereign without apparent issue. There appears little difference for the function of the divine warrior trope whether Yahweh is engaged against human enemies of Israel whom he allows to resist him for a time (Exod 1–12) or angelic dissidents who he similarly allows to run amuck for a time (1 En. 1–36). The collated eschatology of Jewish apocalyptic resolves all conflict within Yahweh's dominion in an anticipated final, cataclysmic battle and final judgement in which the defeat of Yahweh's enemies, as with Pharaoh, was a forgone conclusion. In attempting to reconcile the dual assertions of Yahweh's identity—warrior patron and unrivaled sovereign—Zoroastrianism might have provided an instructive parallel for this study. Zoroastrianism posits a dualist struggle that resolves in eschatological monotheism. Like the authors of the Jewish sacred tradition, the Avesta evidences no theological struggle to reconcile the fact of the battle between Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu/Ahriman with the sure, eventual eschatological triumph of Ahura Mazda.

The terrestrial superpowers of the ANE could afford to let the cosmological conflicts of their gods rest comfortably in the primordial past because their political dominion affirmed/reflected that of their supreme god. Israel as the clients of a patron they claimed was also the supreme deity, had a more complicated theological history to justify. Israel has particular needs of the warrior mythology. While it is entirely possible that the authors of the Exodus narrative assumed all manner of cultural norms from the ANE religious-cultural

context, the fact of the matter is they did not reproduce those assumptions in the construction of Yahweh's combat myth. Whether by design or happenstance, the result was a new myth oriented to address the rhetorical needs of a people under extreme political pressure—a people who needed Yahweh to be more than the uncontested ruler of heaven, who need him to be their champion.

Apocalypse as Holy War is the best kind of book—a book that calls into question your assumptions and drives you back to the primary sources. Wasserman's study is rich and provocative. This review can only deal with an aspect of the material and ideas she offers a reader in this book. I look forward to all the studies this important contribution will spawn long into the future.

