

Expansion and Speculation of the Creation Theme in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

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Abstract

In this study the theme of creation in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha is explored. From the Apocrypha, the study focuses on selected creation references from the Wisdom of Ben Sira, Baruch, the Wisdom of Solomon, and the Prayer of Manasseh. From the Pseudepigrapha, creation references are selected from the Book of Jubilees, the Book of the Secrets of Enoch (2 Enoch), and the Apocalypse of Ezra (4 Ezra). Even though in most cases both the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha generally follow many of the Old Testament creation traditions, they also interpret the creation account of Genesis 1–2 through the lens of other creation passages in the Old Testament. As a result, they modify and expand certain creation images and ideas. Moreover, they also have the tendency to speculate. The speculation involves, in most cases, adding details to the creation narrative of Genesis 1–2 so as to clarify what is not mentioned in the narrative.

Keywords: *Second temple, Jewish writings, Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, creation*

Introduction

The Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha are two bodies of literature that were written during the Second Temple period. During this period, considerable “development and elaboration” (Helyer, 2004) and “Jewish speculation” (Young, 1955) of the Old Testament (OT) occurred. As one reads the New Testament (NT), especially the Gospels, it is helpful to remember that Jesus and His apostles were reading Israel’s sacred Scriptures “through the lens of Second Temple Judaism” (Helyer, 2004; Hauser & Watson, 2003).

In this study the focus is on these two bodies of writings despite the fact that there are other writings during the Second Temple period such as those of the Qumran literature. This delimitation is due to the fact that unlike most of the writings in the Second Temple period, the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha were written following the styles and forms of biblical literature (Dimant, 1988; Nickelsburg, 2005). Furthermore, these writings were influential and considered inspired by many Jewish and Christian communities (Biblical literature: Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, 2021).

Several scholars have explored how the Second Temple Jewish literature has expanded some biblical themes including creation. Nickelsburg (1984), for instance, discussed how some portions of the OT have been rewritten and expanded. He provided several examples of expansion. For example, 1 Enoch speculated on the giants and angels in Noah’s narrative. Jubilee expanded on Moses and Israel. However, he did not elaborate on other elements of creation in the Genesis 1–2 creation story. Similarly, Young (1955) argued that the Second Temple period had been a time for “considerable speculation” of biblical themes. However, he focused only on Isaiah. Additionally, Kulik and Minov (2016) presented, among others, how the Slavonic texts *About All Creation* and *the Creation of Adam* expanded the six days of creation in Genesis 1 and gave non-biblical details of the creation of Adam (cf. Gen 2–3). Kulik and Minov’s study perhaps closely reflects the focus of this study. However, it explored only the Slavonic texts whereas this study looks at the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. A survey of other similar scholarly literature revealed a gap in the study of how the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha have expanded and speculated on the theme of creation in the OT that included the narrative of Genesis 1–2. Thus, this study seeks to fill this gap.

The objective of this study was to explore the theme of creation in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha with the focus on Jewish elaboration and speculation. However, it is not meant to be exhaustive. Due to the limitation of space, it analyzes selected creation references from both the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha in order to demonstrate Jewish elaboration and speculation

concerning the theme of creation in the OT with a particular interest in the Genesis 1–2 creation narrative.

Research Methodology

The methodology involved selecting creation references from the two bodies of writings and categorizing them into (a) narrative accounts of creation, (b) descriptive accounts of creation, and (c) brief references to creation. Endo (2002) explained that the narrative accounts of creation are a retelling of the Genesis creation narrative and generally follow the pattern of Genesis 1–2. The descriptive accounts of creation are selective references of creation with interpretative nature. The brief references to creation are shorter, and briefly mention creation in support of the main theme of a passage. Subsequently, these selected references were examined with the focus on how the creation theme had been expanded and speculated in the references. A special interest was given to Genesis 1–2 creation narrative. Throughout the process of examination, the study utilized the primary sources in their English translations. Concerning Bible references, it used the Hebrew text of the OT while consulting various English translations.

Apocrypha

From the Apocrypha, this study analyzed selected references from the Wisdom of Ben Sira, Baruch, the Wisdom of Solomon, and the Prayer of Manasseh. These books were selected on account of the clear connection of the creation references to the theme of creation. The English translation of all the references were taken from *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English* edited by Charles (1913).

The Wisdom of Ben Sira

The Wisdom of Ben Sira is also known as Sirach. Sirach is the Greek form of Sira. Sometimes it is called Ecclesiasticus. In this discussion, the form Sirach is used.

Sirach 16:24–17:14

Sirach 16:24–17:14 is a descriptive account of creation (Endo, 2002). The creation passage appeared in the central argument (16:17–17:14) of a larger unit (Sir 14:20–23:27). The reference emphasized “God’s mercy which prevails over human sinful nature” and presented creation as “an accurate knowledge” (Sir 16:25), focusing on “the creation order (16:26–30), and on the creation of human beings (17:1–8)” (Endo, 2002, p. 102).

Endo (2002) suggested two themes to consider: (a) creation order, and (b) wisdom and the law in the context of humanity. The first theme portrays God as “the Creator who established the eternal order in the universe” (p. 102), alluding to Psalm 104:5–23. The section focuses on the creation order (16:26–30) depicting God as assigning boundaries to His creation (Sir 16:26), arranging their (creation) eternal order and their dominion or realm in their generation (Sir 16:27), and graciously providing for them so that they could obey the divine word (Sir 16:28). Two things characterized God’s creation: (a) “harmony among all its constituent parts,” and (b) “obedience of all things to the divine plan” (Berg, 2013, p. 146). All of these depictions highlighted “the sovereignty of God who rules the world by His divine order” (p. 102).

The second theme—the theme of wisdom and the law—was emphasized in a sapiential context (Sir 17:1–8), focusing on the creation of human beings. Human beings were said to be weak and their life transient. However, God endowed them with strength and wisdom by placing the fear of God in their hearts and giving them human attributes (17:3–6), by filling them with knowledge and understanding in order to discern good and evil (17:7), and by allotting them the law of life (17:8).

Berg (2013) argued that Sirach’s primary concern in the creation account (16:24–17:14) was “about the human capacity to *know* God’s law” (pp. 157). Sirach interpreted the Genesis creation accounts through creative juxtaposition of Genesis 1–3 and allusions to Exodus 19–20 and Deuteronomy 5, 30. Even though the discussion was about humankind, the implication was applied in

particular to the people of Israel, whom God endowed with wisdom (cf. Sir 17:17). In Sirach it is argued that since “humans are capable of knowledge in their created state,” it followed then that “the Jews are capable of knowing the law given specifically to Israel.” This argument seemed to reflect an attempt by Sirach’s author “to reconcile the universal and the particular” (Berg, 2013, p. 151; cf. Goering, 2009). Consequently, human beings, in general, and Israel, in particular, should pursue the way of life if they “desire to live in accordance with the law and wisdom” (Endo, 2002, p. 103).

Sirach 33:7–15

Sirach 33:7–15 gives a brief reference to creation (cf. Endo, 2002). It is a section in a larger unit of Sirach 24:1–33:18. The section affirmed God’s providence through the creation account. Creation was connected with the idea of theodicy in this passage. After comparing and contrasting those who feared God and sinners, Sirach 33:7–15 explained why there were two kinds of people—good and evil—in this world.

The universal divisions or pairs of opposites in time and space, in the highlighted passages in Sirach, were illustrative of the division between good and evil people. On the one hand, “in His infinite wisdom, God has established in creation a series of opposites or contrasts or contraries” as part of the divine ordering of the cosmos, which included human beings. On the other hand, “God has also made ‘people unlike’ (33:11a), blessing some and cursing others (33:12)” (Skehan & Di Lella, 1987, p. 400). “Referring to the created universal order, Sirach thereby emphasized how the destinies of human beings (or Israelite) are in the hands of the Creator” (Endo, 2002, p. 153).

Sirach 39:12–35

Sirach 39:12–35 is a descriptive account of creation (Endo, 2002). The unit where the reference is located (Sir 38:24–43:33) contains another creation reference: Sirach 42:15–43:33. This other reference is discussed next. Within the broader context, Sirach 39:12–35 highlighted “the sovereignty of God who provides for every need of His creation (Sir 39:33)” (p. 103).

In general, Sirach 39:12–20 was based on Psalm 33 (Endo, 2002). Several motifs alluding to Psalm 33 appeared in Sirach. These motifs included the praise of God with lyres (Sir 39:15; Ps 33:2), the works of the Lord undertaken were right/good (Sir 39:16; Ps 33:4), the word (from the mouth) of the Lord made water reservoirs (Sir 39:17b; Ps 33:6–7), God spoke/commanded and things were done (Sir 39:18a; Ps 33:9), and God saw all humans (Sir 39:19; Ps 33:13). These motifs, however, were just examples of how Psalm 33 has influenced Sirach 39:12–35. Consequently, they demonstrated how the author of Sirach has speculated on Psalm 33 (Bernard, 2020).

The central theme of the passage concerned the relationship between creation and eschatology. On the one hand, God created everything good and for its own purpose (Sir 39:17) and need (39:21, 33); things existed in balance (Skehan & Di Lella, 1987). On the other hand, this balance carried the idea that good things were for the good ones and bad things were for the bad ones (Sir 39:22–27). Thus, a dualistic idea was developed. Under the Creator’s sovereignty, the whole creation became instrument of judgment and punishment for the wicked at the appointed time, namely, at the eschaton (Sir. 39:28–31; cf. Skehan & Di Lella, 1987; Endo, 2002). Furthermore, by alluding to Psalm 33:6–12, Sirach’s author was also presenting an eschatological interpretation of the creation passage in the Psalm. In other words, “Sirach understands that God who accomplished His work of creation by His word (Sir 39:17b) can realize and accomplish His eschatological judgment through His word” (Endo, 2002, p. 107).

Sirach 42:15–43:33

Sirach 42:15–43:33 is a descriptive account of creation (Endo, 2002). As mentioned, this passage is the second creation reference in its broader context or unit (i.e., 38:24–43:33) and it follows the section on ethical instructions (Sir 40:1–42:14). In the passage, the works of God are recalled and declared (Sir 42:15). These works of God highlighted His sovereignty.

There was a clear Old Testament influence in Sirach 42:15–43:33. It contained several verbal correspondences to Job 37–38 (Endo, 2002). The correspondences included phrases or words such as “the ordinances of the heavens” (Sir 43:1–10; Job 38:31–33), “thunders” (Sir 43:13, 17; Job 37:5), “snow” (Sir 43:13; Job 37:6), “north wind” (Sir 43:17b, 20–21; Job 37:9–10), “south wind” (Sir 43:16b; Job 37:17a), “hail” (Sir 43:15; Job 38:22), “frost” (Sir 43:19; Job 38:29), and “ice” (Sir 43:20; Job 38:30). They were used in connection with God’s mighty power of judgment as well as salvation.

The theme of the sovereignty of God is highlighted in the passage. First, it underscores “God’s sovereignty over all creation by referring to His knowledge (Sir 42:18–20) and His power which rules over all creation through the universal order (Sir 43:21, 23)” (Endo, 2002, p. 109). As Calduch-Benages (2008) pointed out concerning Sirach 42:15–43:33, “the manifestations of beauty and splendor in creation are seen as reflections of the glory of God” (p. 135). Second, the theme emphasized God’s sovereignty through the motifs of God’s creative word and wisdom (Endo, 2002). By His word, His work was accomplished and by the wisdom of His command, everything in creation found its order and design. Moreover, wisdom was mentioned in the creation context that strongly exhibited monotheism (Sir 42:21). The monotheistic emphasis was a clear allusion to Isaiah 40:13b–14a, 28 (LXX). Thus, God’s identity “is depicted as the Creator and Ruler over the whole universe” following “the exegetical tradition of the Genesis creation account” (Endo, 2002, p. 111).

Baruch

The book of Baruch was “the first of several works attributed to Baruch, the secretary of Jeremiah” (Nickelsburg, 2005, p. 94). Thus, it was sometimes called 1 Baruch. It was divided into four sections: (a) narrative introduction (1:1–14), (b) prayer or the confession of sin (1:15–3:8), (c) Wisdom poem, which highlighted the praise of God’s wisdom (3:9–4:4), and (d) Zion poem, which concerned the author’s lamentation and comfort (4:5–5:9) (Endo, 2002; Nickelsburg, 2005; cf. Whitehouse, 1913). They were bound together by the common theme of exile and return.

The brief creation reference in Baruch 3:32–38 (Endo, 2002) falls within the larger unit of a wisdom poem (3:9–4:4). Endo (2002) suggested a structural understanding of the unit and noted that Baruch used the creation account to describe God’s sovereignty.

Sheppard (1980) noted several verbal correspondences between Baruch 3:32–35 and Job 28, 38. It was a case of motif expansion. Summarizing Sheppard’s comments on the correspondences, Endo (2002) succinctly wrote that Baruch “expands the imagery of light, from lightnings in Job chapters 28 and 38 to the primordial light (1 Bar 3:33) and luminaries (1 Bar 3:34–35) which appear in the Genesis creation account” (p. 151–152; cf. Sheppard, 1980).

The focus of the brief creation reference in Baruch seemed to be the creation of light. The creation of light portrayed God’s sovereign power over creation in the sense that God was authoritative and creative in His command. God was depicted as commanding the obedience of lights and luminaries in Baruch 3:33–35. This was clearly an allusion to the creation of lights and luminaries in the Genesis creation account. This particular motif of obedience of lights, in Baruch’s portrayal, seemed to be a result of juxtaposing the references to “lightning” in Job 38:35 and “light” in Genesis 1:3–4, 14–19. In other words, the obedience of “lightning” (Job 38:35) was adapted to the creation of light and luminaries (Gen. 1:3–4, 14–19) in order to depict God’s commanding of obedience of lights and luminaries (1 Bar 3:33–35) (Bernard, 2020; cf. Endo, 2002). Thus, Baruch 3:32–38 portrayed God’s sovereign power in commanding obedience of creation.

The Wisdom of Solomon

The Wisdom of Solomon (or Wisdom) was “an exhortation to pursue Wisdom and thereby to live the righteous life that issues in immortality” (Nickelsburg, 2005, p. 205). Nickelsburg suggested that the book has “three closely related and interlocking parts”: (a) the “book of eschatology” (1:1–6:11), (b) the “book of wisdom” (6:12–9:18), and (c) the “book of history” (chapters 10–19). The four brief references to creation in the book—Wisdom 7:22; 8:5; and 9:1–2, 9 (Endo, 2002)—are located in the second section. All of them portrayed a personification of wisdom (cf. Winston, 1979).

All four references in Wisdom referred to the role of wisdom as a “fashioner” in God’s work of creation. Wisdom 7:22 (in context) personified wisdom in a mystical way as one who told about “the cosmic order, the astronomical phenomena, and the nature of all living things (Wisd 7:17–22)” (Endo, 2002, p. 148). Wisdom 8:5 (in context) depicted wisdom as one who was more desirable than riches since it could “make known the will of God” to the people because of its position that was “in close relationship to God from the beginning (Wisd 8:3–4; 9:4, 9–10; cf. Prov. 8:27–30)” (pp. 148–149). Wisdom 9:1–2 (in context) presented God’s identity as Creator who created all things by His word and made human beings by His wisdom “in order that they could rule over the world according to the knowledge of God (Wisd 9:2b–3)” (p. 149). Wisdom 9:9 (in context) portrayed wisdom as in close relationship to God, knowing His works, and being present at creation.

Consequently, the central theme of the creation references in Wisdom is wisdom personified (Endo, 2002; cf. Winston, 1979). The references speculated “about the divine role of wisdom (i.e., to reveal the will of God, and to guide the people to perfect knowledge)” in relation to the motif of wisdom as a “fashioner” (cf. Prov 8:30) and the “breath of life” (cf. Gen 2:7) (Endo, 2002, p. 149). Through wisdom, the sovereignty of God was highlighted.

Cox (2007) suggested that the “book of wisdom” (6:12–9:18) elevated wisdom or “Sophia” to prominence. He concluded that “Sophia is not one of God’s creations but an entity closely related to him; she is His breath, His emanation, His image” (p. 64). Furthermore, Sophia “does not just witness creation but has a preeminent role in the event; she fashioned all things and, while essentially distinct from them, she continues to pervade and order all things” (p. 87). Thus, the Wisdom of Solomon portrayed wisdom in relation to creation.

Endo (2002) pointed out some influences of the OT in the Wisdom. First, the description of wisdom in the Wisdom of Solomon seemed to be grounded in the book of Proverbs (e.g., 8:1–9:6). Second, Wisdom 7:7 seemed to recognize the phrase “an understanding and wise heart” (1 Kgs 3:12 [LXX]) as a bestowment of “a spirit of wisdom.” This recognition was a unique exposition of Solomon’s narrative in 1 Kings 3:5–15. Third, there was a connection between the divine wisdom and God’s spiritual activity such as depicted in Exodus 31:3; 35:31 where the spirit of God brought wisdom and all kinds of craftsmanship in the building of the tabernacle. Isaiah 11:2 also portrayed God’s spirit bringing “wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge and the fear of the Lord” (p. 148).

The Prayer of Manasseh

The Prayer of Manasseh (PrMan) was a short penitential prayer claimed to have been uttered by Manasseh, the wicked king of Judah, to God (cf. 2 Chr 33:12–13) (Nickelsburg, 2005). Structurally, the prayer contained three main parts (Endo, 2002; Charlesworth, 1985): (a) an invocation (vv. 1–7) which contained praise to the Lord for His work of creation (vv. 1–4) and an acknowledgement of the Lord’s anger against sinners and His immeasurable mercies (vv. 5–7), (b) a confession of sins (vv. 8–10), and (c) a petition for forgiveness (vv. 11–13). The prayer ended with a doxology (vv. 14–15).

The brief reference to creation (PrMan 1:2–3) (cf. Endo, 2002) was part of the invocation. The reference comprised praise to God and proclamation of His mighty work of creation (vv. 2–3) in order to affirm His power (v. 4). This work of creation was associated with God’s name. It was His identity. “Reference to the work of creation is made to affirm the unique identity of God which is the ground for the implied author’s plea” (Endo, 2002, p. 144).

The OT influence was observed in several ways. First, the narrative of King Manasseh in 2 Chronicles 33:11–19, which contained his prayer (vv. 11–13), provided the background of the prayer. Charlesworth (1985) listed several correspondences between the narrative in 2 Chronicles 33 and the Prayer of Manasseh. The correspondences included information such as the provocation of the Lord’s anger (2 Chr 33:6; PrMan 1:10, 13), the placing of the idol in the temple (2 Chr 33:7; PrMan 1:10) and the humbling of Manasseh before the Lord (2 Chr 33:12; PrMan 1:11) (cf. Endo, 2002). Bateman IV (2010) suggested that the author of the Prayer of Manasseh used “supplemental exegesis” method since he seemed to attempt a finalization of an “incomplete content of a biblical text” (p. 46).

Second, Charlesworth (1985) pointed out the resemblance of the penitential nature of the prayer to Psalm 51, which contained references to God's right judgment against transgression (Ps 51:3–4; PrMan 1:9–10), His abundant mercy (Ps 51:1; PrMan 1:7), and His forgiveness and salvation (Ps 51:14–15; PrMan 1:15) (cf. Endo, 2002). The reference to God's mighty work of creation at the beginning of the prayer might have been added in light of other OT passages that highlighted God's sovereignty (Charlesworth, 1985; Endo, 2002).

One could discern the theme related to God's word and name in the work of creation. The parallelism "He bound the sea and established it by the command of His word, He closed the deep and sealed it by His powerful and glorious name" (PrMan 1:3) suggest a direct association between the command of God's word and the creative, sustaining, and glorious name of God. The connection between God's name and creation also was found in other Second Temple Jewish literature (e.g., Jub 36:7; 3 En 42:1–7; 1 En 69:16–21). The connection "indicates the power of the divine authority of Yahweh, through which the heavens and the earth were made and sustained" (Endo, 2002, p. 147).

Pseudepigrapha

There are several creation passages in Pseudepigrapha. This investigation focuses on three books only: the Book of Jubilees, the Book of the Secrets of Enoch (2 Enoch), and the Apocalypse of Ezra (4 Ezra). These books were selected because of their direct connection to the theme of creation, particularly the narrative of Genesis 1–2. The English translation of all the references was taken from *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English* edited by Charles (1913)

The Book of Jubilees

The Book of Jubilees (Jubilees) retold the story and history of the people of Israel. It was "an extensive elaboration of Genesis 1 to Exodus 12, presented as a secret revelation that the angels of God's presence transmitted to Moses on Mount Sinai" (Nickelsburg, 2005, p. 69). The author of Jubilees did this by "putting the date in each episode in accordance with the Solar calendar (7 day periods) and Jubilee years (49 year periods), in order to demonstrate how history is governed by the times of the laws" (Endo, 2002, p. 12). The author "constantly and seamlessly integrated Levitical Law with Genesis 1–Exodus 24:18" (Bateman IV, 2010, p. 37). Bateman IV suggested that this was an example of complementary exegesis in the Second Temple period. From this book, the examination focused on one narrative account of creation (Jub 2:1–16) and two brief references to creation (Jub 12:4, 26) (cf. Endo, 2002).

Jubilees 2:1–16

Jubilees 2:1–16 retold the Genesis creation account, followed by a passage on the significance of the Sabbath in relation to the story of creation (Jub 2:17–33). The angel of the presence told Moses to write the whole account of creation that covered the six days of creation work and the Sabbath (v. 1). The angel's utterance "alludes to the biblical creation account of Exod 20:11 and Gen 2:2–3" (Endo, 2002, p. 13). Endo (2002) noted that God kept the first Sabbath after all His work of creation; He sanctified it and made it "a sign" for all His works.

Since Jubilees 2:1–16 was a retelling of the Genesis creation story, it followed the order of creation in the creation week. However, the author of Jubilees did several things. First, he picked up "twenty-two objects which were made in the six days" of creation to match "the number of chief men from Adam until Jacob (Jub 2:23)." Second, he supplemented the story of the creation of the Spirit and understood it to be the creation of angels. This description of angelic creation seemed to be an interpretation of the term *ruach* in Genesis 1:2 (Endo, 2002). Furthermore, the author provided a detailed list of objects created on the third day that were not in the Genesis creation account. On the fourth day, he employed the words "sun" and "moon" instead of "the greater light" and "the lesser light" (Gen 1:16). Ruiten (2000) suggested that those words were used in order to give special attention to the sun (i.e., solar calendar).

The creation account of Jubilees 2:1–16 used several motifs in the form of images. These motifs exhibited aspects of God’s identity (utterance [vv. 5–6], wisdom/knowledge [v. 2], and hands [v. 11]) and represented eschatological reality (light [vv. 8–10]). The image of God’s utterance depicted God’s sovereign power in creation; the image of wisdom or knowledge expressed His perfect and wonderful plan; His utterance portrayed His sovereign power (Endo, 2002). The image of lights was a symbol of the eschatological event of a new creation. The description of the role of light especially in connection with the eschatology in Jubilees 2:8–10 seemed to be an interpretation of Isaiah 30:26 in connection with Genesis 1:15–16. Thus, these motifs of creation were used to depict God’s identity and an eschatological reality (Bernard, 2020).

Jubilees 12:4

Jubilees 12:4 was part of a conversation between Abraham and Terah. The Jubilees’ account of the story narrated how Abraham told Terah not to worship idols (12:2–5). In their conversation, “Abraham refers to God’s work of creation to demonstrate the sovereignty of God, which is contrasted with the uselessness of other gods” (Endo, 2002, p. 137).

The theme of the sovereignty of God was central to Jubilees 12:4. “The God of heaven” was depicted as the Creator who sent down rain and dew upon the earth. By His word, He created everything. In order to emphasize God’s sovereignty, the author of Jubilees made a couple of contrasts (vv. 4–5). First, the idols were made by hands while God created hands. Second, whereas the idols had no life, God provided life. By implying that God was the origin of all life, the author emphasized God’s sovereignty (Endo, 2002).

The theme of creation in Jubilees 12:2–5 corresponded with Isaiah 44 and 46 as well as Psalm 135. These Old Testament passages demonstrated “a clear contrast between God and idols by referring to God’s mighty work of creation” (Endo, 2002, p. 137). The verbal correspondences reflected the attributes of the idols and included ideas such as to “bow down” and “worship” the idols (Jub 12:2; Isa 46:6), which had “no spirit/breath” (*ruach*) in them and could “not speak” (Jub 12:3; Ps 135:17). The idols were “made by hands” (Jub 12:3, 5; Ps 135:15) and being “carried on your shoulders,” giving “no help/salvation” but bringing “shame” to those who made them (Jub 12:5; Isa 46:7; 44:11, 9) (Bernard, 2020).

Jubilees 12:26

The context of Jubilees 12:26 was the account of the restoration of the Hebrew language, which was said to be the language (tongue) of creation (Jub 12:25–27). God wanted to restore the language in Abraham’s mouth. This account was speculative in nature. The story of Abraham receiving the word of the covenant, which appeared before this, however, had a basis in Genesis 12:1–3 (Bernard, 2020).

The motif of the language of creation was the central theme of Jubilees 12:25–27. Interestingly, it was mentioned in the context of the covenant. Rubin (1998) proposed that during the second century BCE a tradition was conceived that believed in the restoration of the Hebrew language. It was called “*Leshon Haqodesh*.” The tradition maintained that “the world which was created will prevail once more in the end of the days, when all nations will once again speak this primordial language in which the world was created” (p. 317). Endo (2002) pointed out that this tradition was an eschatological speculation grounded on the Genesis creation account.

The Book of the Secrets of Enoch (2 Enoch)

The book of the Secrets of Enoch (2 Enoch) is also called *Slavonich Enoch* because it survived “only in old Church Slavonic and some other Slavic languages” (Stone, 1984, p. 406). It is “an amplification of Genesis 5:21–32,” covering “events from the life of Enoch to the onset of the Flood” (Andersen, 1983, p. 91). It consists of three major sections. First, chapters 1–34 cover the account of Enoch’s ascent to the heavens, the vision of God, the transfiguration into an angel, and the receiving of the secrets of the creation process from God. Second, chapters 35–68 deal with Enoch’s return to earth, the revealing of the heavenly mysteries, and the giving of moral instruction to his children. Third,

chapters 69–73 narrate the story of the antediluvian priesthood beginning with Adam and climaxing in the story of Melchizedek’s miraculous birth and life through the flood (Stone, 1984). In the third section, however, chapter 73 appears only in the longer recension (called J) of the work (cf. Andersen, 1983). Each section has its correspondence in 1 Enoch (cf. Nickelsburg, 2005). The analysis of 2 Enoch in this study is based on the longer text (recension) and the translation by Andersen (1983). From this book, the examination focuses on the creation references in chapters 24–33, 47–48, and 65–66.

2 Enoch 24–33

2 Enoch 24–33 is a narrative account of creation (cf. Endo, 2002). In the chapters 24–33, the author of 2 Enoch called the accounts of creation as “the great secrets of God” (2 En 24:1 [J recension]). Furthermore, “the account of the cosmos has been elaborated in a quasi-scientific manner” (Andersen, 1983, p. 91). God was highlighted as “the sole ruler (33:7) in the universe, and that there is no other God except Himself (33:8; cf. 2:1; 10:6)” (Endo, 2002, p. 20).

While 2 Enoch 24–33 was based on the Genesis creation narrative in its content and order, it added three things that were not in Genesis 1. First, it added on the creation of the throne of God on the first day (2 En 25:4). Second, it speculated on the creation of the angels on the second day (2 En 29:3). This speculation is different from the creation account of Jubilees 2, where angels were created on the first day. Third, the creation of a paradise garden (possibly referring to Eden) came on the third day (2 En 30:1). These additions appeared to be speculative of the biblical account of creation (Bernard, 2020).

Endo (2002) suggested five thematic considerations in 2 Enoch 24–33. First, the way God created the heavens and the earth described the motif of God’s creative command. The description follow the formula of creation in Genesis 1. The creation account emphasized God’s exclusiveness as Creator, without adviser or successor to His creation. Second, 2 Enoch 24–33 depicted the motif of light and darkness as two contrasting elements. Both were portrayed as pre-existent and the primary elements for His subsequent creative work (2 En 27:1). Light was placed highest in creation (25:5) and was depicted as a symbol of paradise (cf. 65:10). It was separated from the darkness, which was the foundation of the lowest things (26:3; 27:4). Third, 2 Enoch 24–33 depicted the motif of life as a symbol of the eschatological blessing of Paradise. The blessing of joy and happiness with eternal light and life would be given to the righteous (42:3) in future paradise. Fourth, the account of creation emphasized the motif of new revelation. Enoch told “the great secrets of God” to his children and admonished them truthfully. Fifth, 2 Enoch 24–33 portrayed wisdom as God’s perfect thought-up plan. In wisdom, God had thought-out the plan of creation before realizing the plan by His word (33:3–4).

2 Enoch 47–48 and 65–66

2 Enoch chapters 47–48 and 65–66 contain descriptive accounts of creation (cf. Endo, 2002). They are located within a section where sapiential disciplines are discussed. The two accounts appear in the context where the principle of the fear of God in teaching recurred (2 En 43–66).

The account of creation in chapters 47–48 emphasized God’s exclusive sovereignty over His creation. It depicted a monotheistic understanding of God. The Lord was unique and the sole Creator of all things (cf. 47:3–6). Several images that correspond to OT passages in Job, Isaiah and the Psalms were used to emphasize this monotheistic understanding of the Creator and His sovereignty. The images include: there is no one but the Lord ... in the deepest places (2 En 47:3; Ps 139:8–12); God laid the foundation and spread out the heavens (2 En 47:4; Isa 42:5; cf. 40:22; 44:24); God solidified the earth above the waters, alone created innumerable creatures and counted the dust or drops of rain (2 En 47:5; Ps 136:6; 104:25; Job 28:25; 38:37; Isa 40:12) (Bernard, 2020; cf. Endo, 2002).

2 Enoch concluded the account of creation in chapters 47–48 by encouraging “the readers to accept these books and to fear the Lord (2 En 48:6–9) in order to gain the way to Life (2 En 48:9)” (Endo, 2002, p. 62). Thus, this creation account “functions as a theological basis for sapiential instructions” (p. 63).

2 Enoch chapters 65–66 contain Enoch’s last instructions to the people before he was taken up to heaven. Similar to chapters 47–48, here Enoch urged them to appreciate the laws (65:5), not to commit idolatry, and to worship the sole Creator (Endo, 2002; cf. Bernard, 2020).

The principal theme in chapters 65–66 is the worship of the one and only God, who was depicted as the Creator and Lord of all creation (cf. 2 En 66:2–7 [JJ]). Idols were not to be worshipped because they were not the true God; they were merely things created by man. The true God was “the Lord of all creation” (2 En 66:5 [JJ]). Thus, as Endo (2002) noted, 2 Enoch 65–66 exhibited a monotheistic understanding of God in the context of sapiential instructions. This understanding was “extended into monolatry, based on the understanding of God’s mighty work of creation” (p. 64).

The Apocalypse of Ezra (4 Ezra)

The book of 4 Ezra comprises chapters 3–14 of 2 Esdras (Metzger, 1983). It is also known as the *Apocalypse of Ezra* (Stone, 1984). Generally, it can be divided into seven sections which comprise seven visions: (a) 3:1–5:20; (b) 5:21–6:34; (c) 6:35–9:25; (d) 9:26–10:59; (e) 11:1–12:51; (f) 13:1–58; (j) 14:1–48 (Metzger, 1983). The first three sections are dialogues between Ezra and the angel concern divine justice; the next three are symbolic visions that deal with the questions raised in the dialogues; while the last section is a narrative of the revelation of the books of Ezra (Stone, 1984). “The main concern of 4 Ezra is the question of why Israel should be handed over to the unrighteous, and why salvation should be delayed (4 Ezra 3:28–36; 5:28–30; 6:55–59)” (Endo, 2002, pp. 24–25). References to creation are located in 4 Ezra 3:4–5; 6:1–6, 38–54. These three references are descriptive (3:4–5; 6:1–6) and narrative (6:38–54) in nature.

4 Ezra 3:4–5

The creation reference in 4 Ezra 3:4–5 is part of a larger section that recounted the biblical creation story up to the event of the giving of the Torah (3:4–19). It depicted God as the “sovereign Lord” who alone created the earth by His word and formed Adam by His word, His spirit of life and His hands. However, the context involved the relationship between God and Israel. The sovereign God would not abandon His people in destitute. He would show them grace and mercy. Thus, 4 Ezra 3:4–5 focused “on the identity of the people of Israel and their destiny in relation to the understanding of the identity of God as the Creator” (Endo, 2002, p. 66).

The theme of God’s creation of Adam in 4 Ezra 3:4–5 was based on Genesis 2:7 and Isaiah 42:5 (Endo, 2002). God’s act in the creation of Adam was depicted by the imagery of His word, His hands and the giving of the breath of life. God spoke at creation; He “commanded the dust and it gave you Adam, a lifeless body” (4 Ez 3:4). Endo (2002) pointed out that the employment of the motif of God’s creation of Adam emphasized the special status of Israel as the chosen people and the fact that God has never abandoned them even in their present tribulation.

The idea of theodicy was also connected to the status of Israel. The imagery of God’s hands in forming Adam highlighted God’s mighty power and loving care for His people (cf. Isa 45:12; Ps 95:5; 119:73; Job 10:8). Endo (2002) concluded that “since human beings were created by God’s word or by His hands, they will not be abandoned easily by their God the Creator” (p. 68). The giving of the breath of life to Adam after God made Adam’s lifeless body by His word/hands portrayed God as a powerful Creator who gave life to lifeless beings (4 Ez 3:5).

4 Ezra 6:1–6

The creation reference in 4 Ezra 6:1–6 contains more than a dozen temporal subordinate clauses that begin with the word “before” followed by descriptions of creation (vv. 1–5). These clauses were employed to emphasize God’s “pre-existent plan for the past (creation) and the future event (the eschaton) (4 Ez 6:6a)” (Endo, 2002, p. 70). In other words, “God has already made a plan for the eschatological salvation with His deep thought (cf. 4 Ez 5:49; 6:6, 7–10)” (p. 69). The framework of the passage with descriptions that begin with “before” might be influenced by Proverbs 8:22–29 (cf. Kee, 1981) which described wisdom’s pre-existence.

The main concern of the passage was the idea that the eschatological salvation “will be brought by God alone, not through another Messianic figure” (Endo, 2002, p. 69). God, who has thought out the plan for the creation of the world in His wisdom, will alone bring about salvation in the end time (Bernard, 2020).

4 Ezra 6:38–54

The creation reference in 4 Ezra 6:38–54 narrated the six days of creation. It opened the third section of 4 Ezra (i.e., 6:35–9:25) where “the question of theodicy is pressed to its unanswerable limits” and Ezra’s prayer dealt, once again, with Israel’s plight (Nickelsburg, 2005, p. 272). The creation account in 4 Ezra 6:38–54 corresponded with the content and the order of creation in Genesis 1. The expression, “in the beginning” appeared in both accounts (4 Ez 6:38; Gen 1:1). The rest of the creation account in 4 Ezra narrated the work of creation from the first day to the sixth day (vv. 38–54).

An intriguing piece of information about the creation of light appeared in 4 Ezra 6:40. It is stated that a ray of light was brought forth from God’s treasuries. Box (1913), in his comment on 4 Ezra 6:40, noted that the Rabbinic tradition (cf. Hagigah 12a) mentioned about light being created on the first day and that it was “afterwards withdrawn and reserved by God for the righteous in the world to come” (p. 578). In other words, “light itself existed before the work of creation” and was described as a divine thing (Endo, 2002), or as Box (1913) put it, “the heavenly light ... was older than Creation, and belonged to God’s essence” (p. 578).

The motif of God’s word in creation was prominent in 4 Ezra 6:38–54. The idea that God’s word (divine command) proceeded from His mouth and accomplished His plan immediately (cf. 4 Ez 6:38, 43) alluded to Isaiah 48:3 and 55:11. “In both 4 Ezra 6:38–43 and Isa 55:11 (and Isa 48:3), the word of God is personified and functions as an agent to accomplish the will or the plan of God” (Endo, 2002, p. 26). This personification was depicted in the account by phrases such as “your [God] word accomplished the work” (6:38); “your [God] word went forth, and at once the work was done” (6:43). The personification of the divine word implied God’s mighty work in creation, even to the extent of producing living things out of lifeless objects (cf. 6:47 [the dry land]; 6:48 [the dumb and lifeless water]). The word of God was a powerful agent to produce life from lifeless things (Endo, 2002; cf. Cook, 1992).

Directly related to the account of creation in 4 Ezra 6:38–54 was Ezra’s question of why Israel could not possess the world even though God created it for them as an inheritance (4 Ez 6:55–59). Here, creation was used to demonstrate the unique relationship between God and His people, Israel. While other nations were nothing (cf. Isa 40:17) and like spittle or a drop from a bucket (cf. Isa 40:15; 4 Ez 6:56), Israel was special. They were people who would inherit the world God created (Bernard, 2020).

Summary

References to creation in the Apocrypha generally follow the OT understanding of creation. There are allusions to the OT creation references such as those in Genesis, Job, Psalms, and Proverbs. God is portrayed as the Creator who is wise, powerful, sovereign, and unique. He alone created the world by His word. By His wisdom, He endowed His creation with purpose, order and design. As sovereign God, He rules over human history. His sovereignty answers the issue of theodicy; He rules over times so that the eschatological promises for His people are fulfilled.

There are expansions of ideas, however, concerning the creation of lights and the personification of wisdom in creation. First, God created light and ruled sovereign over them (1 Bar 3:32–38). He commanded its obedience. The imagery of light in Baruch 3:32–38 resembles that of Job 28 and 38. This expansion seems to be the result of combining the idea of the creation of light and luminaries in Genesis 1:3–4, 14–19 and the reference to the obedience of lightning in Job 38:35 (cf. Job 28; 38). Second, wisdom is personified and portrayed as an artificer in the work of creation. Wisdom is personified in some mystical way and it sets the order in creation (Wisd 7:22). Wisdom is an agent by

which God ruled the world that He created by His word (9:1–2). It is also depicted as a close pre-existent companion of the Creator (9:9).

Similar to the Apocrypha, references to creation in the Pseudepigrapha generally follow the OT creation tradition. The expansion and speculation of the creation theme can be seen particularly in the Genesis creation story in relation to other biblical references. First, concerning the objects of creation, the Pseudepigrapha depicted (a) twenty-two objects that were created in the six days of creation (Jub 2:1–16); (b) the creation of angels either on the first day (Jub 2:2) or the second day (2 En 29:3); (c) the creation of God’s throne on the first day (2 En 25:4); and (d) the creation of a paradise (possibly Eden) on the third day (2 En 30:1). Second, the motif of light was portrayed as a contrasting element to darkness. Both light and darkness pre-existed creation. They were the primary elements for subsequent works of creation (2 En 27:1). Light was said to have been brought from God’s treasures (4 Ez 6:40). Third, the motif of creation by the word was expanded by employing the idea that God devised His creation plan by His wisdom and executed it by His word with immediate effect (2 En 33:3–4). The idea seemed to be a juxtaposition of Psalm 33:6, 9; Proverbs 8:30, Isaiah 48:3, 13 and 55:11. God’s wisdom and His word were personified and functioned as agent to accomplish creation. Fourth, the motif of Hebrew as the language of creation was an intriguing piece of information. The motif was central to Jubilees 12:25–27. Through Abraham, God wanted to restore this language. Thus there was an expansion and speculation of the creation theme in the Pseudepigrapha.

Conclusion

The investigation of the selected creation references from the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha establishes three salient points. First, the creation theme in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha generally follows many of the OT creation tradition. The idea of the sovereignty of God is particularly prominent and it follows the theology of creation from the Old Testament. Second, the two bodies of writings interpret the Genesis creation account through the lens of other OT creation passages, resulting in modification of images and expansion of original OT creation ideas. Third, there was a tendency to speculate concerning creation ideas as the OT creation texts were appropriated. The speculation involves adding details to the creation theme, particularly the creation narrative of Genesis 1–2. These points may provide useful bases for future investigations concerning the theme of creation in the Second Temple Jewish writings.

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