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Pesher and Periodization¹

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Abstract

This study re-examines the use of the term *pesher*, and the related root פָתַח, in Qumran compositions, and their significance with respect to conceptions of determinism and periodization in the corpus. It discusses how the treatment of the book of Genesis in 4Q180, 4Q252, and the Admonitions sections of the *Damascus Document* reflect a worldview and hermeneutic that are generally associated with the continuous and thematic pesharim at Qumran. *Pesher* compositions reveal how scripture is fulfilled in current events. These related works demonstrate the fulfillment of the divine grand plan in scripture and past events. It is suggested that these texts share a “performative” aspect: in all of these compositions, the act of transmitting divinely-revealed knowledge is as much an actualization and fulfillment of eschatological expectations as the unfolding social and political history that is tied to the texts.

Keywords

pesher; periodization; Jubilees; 4Q252; 4Q180; Qumran; performative texts

¹ This article is the last of a series of three publications based upon a paper I delivered at the Fifteenth World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, in August 5, 2009. The oral presentation was entitled, “4Q252 and the Heavenly Tablets.” The first of these articles will appear in a Festschrift dedicated to the memory of Prof. Hanan Eshel: Shani Tzoref, “4Q252: Listenwissenschaft and Covenantal Patriarchal Blessings,” in “*Go Out and Study the Land*” (*Judg 18:2*): *Historical and Archaeological Studies in Honor of Hanan Eshel* (ed. Aren Maeir, Jodi Magness, and Lawrence H. Schiffman; Leiden: Brill, forthcoming). The second article is “Covenantal Election in 4Q252 and *Jubilees*’ Heavenly Tablets,” *DSD* 18 (2011): 74–89. I am grateful to Prof. Eibert Tigchelaar, Prof. Moshe Bernstein, and Prof. Hanan Eshel נ"ר for their feedback on drafts of these publications, and to the anonymous reviewers of *DSD* for their very helpful comments on this article.

The Qumran *pesharim* are generally considered classic exemplars of “sectarian” writings, featuring the distinctive terminology, socio-political alignments, and theological beliefs that characterize the Qumran community.² Examination of the use of the term *pesher*, and the related root פָּשַׁר, in non-*pesher* compositions from Qumran can help us understand broader traditions that underlie the theology expressed in the *pesharim*. In the first section of this study, I demonstrate that 4Q180 (*Pesher on the Periods A*), 4Q252 (*Commentary on Genesis A*), and the Admonitions sections of the *Damascus Document* share core mythical conceptions of determinism and periodization, especially as pertaining to a belief in eternal records engraved on Heavenly Tablets. In the second section, I explore the philological significance of the use of פָּשַׁר/פָּתַח in these compositions.³ Finally, I conclude with a brief re-assessment of Qumran *pesher*.

1. Dualistic Determinism: From Urzeit to Endzeit

In the following discussion, I build primarily upon the work of Devorah Dimant, as well as that of Ida Fröhlich.⁴ The periodized schematization of

² For a thorough recent treatment of the classification of “sectarian” and “non-sectarian” texts, with emphasis on sectarian terminology, see Devorah Dimant, “Criteria for the Identification of Qumran Sectarian Texts,” in *The Qumran Scrolls and Their World* (2 vols.; ed. Menahem Kister; Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 2009), 1:49–86 [Hebrew]. See also the response of Menahem Kister, “Some Further Thoughts on Identifying the Sectarian Writings at Qumran,” *ibid.*, 87–90. A preliminary discussion in English appears in Devorah Dimant, “The Qumran Manuscripts: Contents and Significance,” in *Time to Prepare the Way in the Wilderness: Papers on the Qumran Scrolls by Fellows of the Institute of Advanced Studies in the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1989–1990* (ed. Devorah Dimant and Lawrence H. Schiffman; STDJ 16; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 23–58, esp. 30–32.

³ Unless otherwise stated, citations and English translations of Qumran texts are taken from *The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader* (Vols. 1–6; ed. Donald W. Parry and Emanuel Tov; Leiden: Brill, 2004–2005). For CD, I have relied upon the text and translation in Joseph M. Baumgarten and Daniel R. Schwartz, “Damascus Document,” in PTSDSSP 2:4–57, with some modification.

⁴ See Devorah Dimant, “The ‘Pesher on the Periods’ (4Q180 and 4Q181),” *IOS* 9 (1979): 77–102; *eadem*, “Ages of Creation,” in *EDSS* 1.11–13; Ida Fröhlich, “The Biblical Narratives in Qumran Exegetical Works (4Q252; 4Q180; The

history is a hallmark of “historical apocalypses,”⁵ but the belief is also attested in contemporary Jewish writings of other genres.⁶

It is prominent in a variety of compositions preserved at Qumran, including some of the distinctive sectarian works. A significant component of the Qumran community’s self-perception is the belief that its members have been given privileged access to divinely-revealed knowledge, concerning both halakah and transcendental existential realities. The progressive

Damascus Document),” in *Qumranstudien: Vorträge und Beiträge der Teilnehmer des Qumranseminars auf dem internationalen Treffen der Society of Biblical Literature, Münster, 25.–26. Juli 1993* (ed. Heinz-Josef Fabry, Armin Lange, and Hermann Lichtenberger; *Schriften des Institutum Judaicum Delitzschianum* 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 111–24; eadem, “Narrative Exegesis’ in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Biblical Perspectives: Early Use and Interpretation of the Bible in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Proceedings of the First International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 12–14 May 1996* (ed. Michael E. Stone and Esther G. Chazon; *STDJ* 28; Leiden: Brill), 81–99. See also, George J. Brooke, “The Thematic Content of 4Q252,” *JQR* 85, 1–2 (1994) [33–57], 56–57; Jonathan G. Campbell, *The Exegetical Texts* (CQS 4; London: T & T Clark, 2004), 18.

⁵ Thus, e.g., Daniel; the Apocalypse of Weeks and the Animal Apocalypse in *1 Enoch*; and *4 Ezra*. See John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 6–7.

⁶ And in non-Jewish literature. See, inter alia, Jacob Licht, “Time and Eschatology in Apocalyptic Literature and Qumran,” *JJS* 16 (1965): 177–82; Robert G. Hall, *Revealed Histories: Techniques for Ancient Jewish and Christian Historiography* (JSPSup 6; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 61–121. On Hellenistic traditions concerning “four kingdoms,” see Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 92–98 and the literature cited there. On the “sabbatical eschatology” found in Jer 25 and 29, Dan 9, and 11QMelch, see, inter alia, Collins, *ibid.*, 108–9; George W. Buchanan, *The Consequences of The Covenant* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 9–17; Mark Leuchter, “Jeremiah’s 70-Year Prophecy and the לְבָשָׂמִים / שְׁשִׁים Atbash Codes,” *Bib* 85 (2004): 503–22 at 509 (though Leuchter supposes that there was not widespread familiarity with the Esarhaddon inscription among biblical authors and their readers; 515); Hanan Eshel, “4Q390, the 490-Year Prophecy, and the Calendrical History of the Second Temple Period,” in *Enoch and Qumran Origins: New Light on a Forgotten Connection* (ed. Gabriele Boccaccini et al.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005), 102–10; John S. Bergsma, *The Jubilee from Leviticus to Qumran: A History of Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

attainment of revelation concerning God's plan served simultaneously as cause, effect, and aim of their way of life.⁷ Among the community's eschatological beliefs was the idea that history would culminate with perfect knowledge of the law⁸ and of God's mysteries.⁹ Chief among the secrets that are revealed over time, is the divine system of proper calendrical calculation and of reward and punishment. Dimant observed that in Qumran sectarian works, “allusions mentioning Periods and generations... usually appear in the context of predestination teaching.”¹⁰ She further

⁷ See Shani Tzoref, “The ‘Hidden’ and the ‘Revealed’: Esotericism, Election, and Culpability in Qumran and Related Literature,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls at 60: The Scholarly Contributions of NYU Faculty and Alumni* (ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman and Shani Tzoref; STDJ 89; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 299–324; Jacob Licht, “The Doctrine of ‘Times’ according to the Sect of Qumran and other ‘Computers of Seasons,’” *EJ* 8 (1967) (E. L. Sukenik Memorial volume; Hebrew), 63–70 at 63, where he cites 1QS 8:15, 9:12–15, 19–20; CD 12:20–21 regarding progressive sectarian revelation; Cana Werman, “What is the *Book of Haqq*?” in *Sapiential Perspectives: Wisdom Literature in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Proceedings of the Sixth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 20–22 May, 2001* (ed. John J. Collins, Gregory E. Sterling, and Ruth A. Clements; STDJ 51; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 125–40, esp. 126–27.

⁸ See, e.g., CD 12: 22–13:1, “And this (is) the rule for the settlers of [the] camps... until the rising of the Messiah of Aaron and Israel”; 1QS 9:9–11, “They shall deviate from none of the teachings of the Law, whereby they would walk in their willful heart completely. They shall govern themselves using the original precepts by which the men of the *Yahad* began to be instructed, doing so until there come the Prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel.” (In viewing this statement as a reference to anticipation of perfect knowledge of the law, I follow, *inter alia*, Jacob Licht, *The Rule Scroll: A Scroll from the Wilderness of Judea* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1965), ad loc, 190 and 188 [Hebrew]; and Joseph M. Baumgarten, “Mutability and Immutability in Sectarian Law,” in *idem, Qumran Cave 4. XIII: The Damascus Document (4Q266–273)* (DJD 18; Oxford; Clarendon, 1996), 16–18. Contra Daniel R. Schwartz, “Qumran and Early Christianity,” in Kister, ed., *The Qumran Scrolls and Their World*, 2:613–28 at 625 [Hebrew].

⁹ On conceptions of the end of days in sectarian writings, see Cana Werman, “Eschatology at Qumran,” in Kister, ed., *The Qumran Scrolls and Their World*, 2:529–49 [Hebrew]. The association between knowledge and experience of historical and eschatological fulfillment is also found in related circles. Cf. *Jub.* 23, and the discussion of this text by James L. Kugel, “The Jubilees Apocalypse,” *DSD* 1 (1994): 322–37. Werman cites this chapter as well (*ibid.*, 540), but she views *Jubilees* as a Qumran sectarian work.

¹⁰ Dimant, “The ‘Pesher on the Periods,’” 98, citing 1QS 3:13–15; 1QH^a 9:17–21 (Suk. 1:15–19); CD 2:8–10.

noted that the “mysteries and great deeds of God: the planning, creating and managing of the universe... are the subject of the sect’s special knowledge and are revealed only through divine inspiration.”¹¹

A particular interest in the initial and final periods of human history, with a distinct dualistic perspective, characterizes 4Q180,¹² the *Admonitions of the Damascus Document*, and 4Q252. Table 1 illustrates the similarity in the specific events presented in these different lists, which also align with the events found in the non-legal passages attributed to the Heavenly Tablets in the *Book of Jubilees*.¹³

¹¹ Ibid., 100, citing 1QS 9:18; 1QH^a 9:23; 12:28; 15:30; 12:15–18 (Suk. 1:21; 4:27; 7:27; 12:12–13).

¹² 4Q180 *Pesher on the Periods A* was first published in 1968 by John M. Allegro under the title “Ages of Creation.” (See John M. Allegro, *DJD* 5:77–80.) J. J. M. Roberts used the title “The Wicked and the Holy” (*PTSDSSP* 2 [1995]: 204–13). Devorah Dimant, in her encyclopedia entry on the composition, stated that “a more suitable title would be the one provided by the work itself (4Q180 1.1): *Pesher on the Periods*” (eadem, “Ages of Creation,” in *EDSS* 1:11), and this is the title she uses in her seminal treatment of 4Q180–4Q181, eadem, “The ‘*Pesher on the Periods*’ (4Q180 and 4Q181).” 4Q181 (*Pesher on the Periods B*) is a closely related work that has been identified by some scholars as an additional copy of the same composition. See John Strugnell, “Notes en marge du volume V des ‘Discoveries in the Judaean Desert of Jordan,’” *RevQ* 7 (1970): 163–276 at 252–55; 248–52; Campbell, *The Exegetical Texts*, 67–77, and the additional bibliography cited there, 77. Dimant refutes the identification of 4Q181 with 4Q180 in Dimant, “On Righteous and Sinners: 4Q181 Reconsidered,” in *Manières de penser dans l’Antiquité méditerranéenne et orientale: Mélanges offerts à Francis Schmidt par ses élèves, ses collègues et ses amis* (ed. Christophe Batsch and Mădălina Vartejanu-Joubert; *JSJSup* 134; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 61–85.

¹³ I.e., those passages in the book of *Jubilees* that ascribe records of human nature and events to Heavenly Tablets. For the argument that 4Q252 is structured as a list of blessings and curses upon the elect in Genesis and their offspring, see Tzoref, “4Q252: *Listenwissenschaft*.” For a more detailed discussion of the comparison between 4Q252 and the Heavenly Tablets records in *Jubilees*, see Tzoref, “Covenantal Election.” The basis for viewing these passages as a unified collection is also discussed there. Cf. James L. Kugel, “On the Interpolations in the Book of *Jubilees*” *RevQ* 24/94 (2009): 215–72. On the “Heavenly Tablets” in *Jubilees* see Cana Werman, “The ‘Torah’ and the ‘Té’udah’ Engraved on the Tablets,” *DSD* 9 (2002): 75–103; Liora Ravid, “The Special Terminology of the Heavenly Tablets in the Book of *Jubilees*, *Tarbiz* 68/4 (1999): 463–71 [Hebrew].

Table 1

CD 2:17–3:4	4Q180	4Q252	<i>Jubilees</i> “testimonies” in HT
2:18 Watchers	1 7–9 Watchers		? ¹⁴
2:19 Sons of Watchers			
3:1 Sons of Noah	1 4 Sons of Noah	Flood; Sons of Noah	5:13 judgment; 5:19 Noah’s sons saved on account of Noah
3:2 Abraham counted as “a friend”	2–4 i–ii 4 Abraham (= Gen 17)	Abraham is God’s “friend”; entry into land; promised a covenant with son, Isaac Ishmael’s 12 princes	16:3 predicted birth of Isaac; 19: 9 Abraham recorded as God’s “friend”; Ch. 15, 16 non-election of Ishmael
	2–4 ii 4–8 Sodom and Gomorrah (= Gen 18, 19)	Sodom and Gomorrah	16:9 uprooting of Lot’s descendants, like Sodom
3:3 Isaac and Jacob counted as “friends of God,” and eternal members of the covenant	5–6 Mt. Moriah: Binding of Isaac (Gen 21; following Milik, <i>Books of Enoch</i> , 252) ¹⁵	Binding of Isaac Blessing of Jacob Eradication of Amalek, probably as pertaining to Isaac’s pronouncements to his sons	18:18–19 Passover commemorates Binding of Isaac; 32:16–29 Bethel revelation; Jacob reads seven <i>Heavenly Tablets</i> 24:33 uprooting of the Philistines, fulfilling a curse by Isaac; 36:9–11 uprooting of Esau

¹⁴ The episode of the Watchers is not one of the events explicitly attributed to the Heavenly Tablets in *Jubilees*, but see *Jub.* 4:22–24, where it is written of Enoch that “he testified to the Watchers, who had sinned with the daughters of men... and we led him into the Garden of Eden for (his) greatness and honour. Now he is there writing down the condemnation and judgment of the world, and all the wickedness of the children of mankind.” Translation from James C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees* (Leuven: Peeters, 1989), 27–28.

¹⁵ Józef T. Milik, *Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976).

Table 1 (cont.)

CD 2:17–3:4	4Q180	4Q252	<i>Jubilees</i> “testimonies” in HT
3:4 Sons of Jacob strayed and were punished		“ <i>Blessings of Jacob</i> ” (for end of days, each son “according to his blessing”)	30:17–33; 31:32 Simeon and Levi, Judah, all men inscribed as enemy or friend; judgment for him and his descendants

The similarity in the selection of passages from Genesis in the comparanda points to a common underlying tradition. The alignment across the four compositions is not absolute, and there is some variation that reflects the distinctive character of each. The *Damascus Document* and 4Q180 are interested in the ante-diluvian period, which is not reflected in the other compilations;¹⁶ The *Damascus Document* is not interested in any of the discontinued patriarchal lines of Lot, Ishmael, and Esau that are represented in 4Q252 and the *Jubilees* testimonies.¹⁷ But it is clear that all of the

¹⁶ Marcus Tso observes an important difference between these parallel sections of CD and 4Q180. Significant weight is given to free will in the passage in CD, following Deut 29:8 (“walking in the stubbornness of their heart”) and its reverberations in Jeremiah. 4Q180 seems more similar to *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees* in blaming the fallen angels for the introduction of evil into the world. See Marcus Tso, “The Uses of Scriptural Traditions at Qumran for the Construction of Ethics,” in *The Hebrew Bible in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. Armin Lange et al.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, forthcoming). On the proposal that the centrality of extreme dualistic determinism, once considered foundational to Qumran thought, may actually be a late development in the thought of the community, see Charlotte Hempel, “The Teaching on the Two Spirits and the Literary Development of the Rule of the Community,” in *Dualism in Qumran* (ed. Geza Xeravits; LSTS; London: T & T Clark, 2010), 102–20.

¹⁷ Thus, 4Q180 2–4 and 8 ii 5–7; *Jub.* 16:9; 20: 5–6; *T. Naph.* 3:4. Eibert Tigchelaar surmises that the reason for the omission of Sodom from the dualistic historical review in CD is that the men of Sodom were not part of the Covenant. See Eibert Tigchelaar, “Sodom and Gomorrah and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Sodom’s Sin: Genesis 18–19 and Its Interpretations* (ed. Ed Noort and Eibert Tigchelaar; TBN 7; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 47–62 (50). His rationale may be supported by the association of Sodom with the Watchers in 4Q180, *Jub.* 20, and *T. Naph.*, and

texts are interested in tracing history through periods, and in reading Genesis with a sensitivity to a dualistic assessment of humanity as friends or enemies of God, and to resultant punishment or reward. The concept of covenant is central in all of these texts. In the extant text of 4Q252, this worldview is largely implicit. The other works offer more self-conscious descriptions of their agendas. Thus, 4Q180 begins with the following title and introduction:

Pesher concerning the Periods made by God, (each) Period in order to terminate [all that is] and all that will be. Before he created them, he set up their activi[ties...], one Period after another. And it is engraved on the Tablets [of Heaven... according to all(?) the Periods of their dominions.¹⁸

In comparing the *Damascus Document* to 4Q180, both Dimant and Fröhlich focused upon the list of sinners and righteous represented above in Table 1, which is found in the section of the *Damascus Document* conventionally identified as the “Third Admonition” in the exhortatory portion of the composition. The previous section of CD 2, the “Second Admonition” of 2:7–13, is also important in this context:

before they were established he knew their works. And he despised the generations (in which) they [st]ood and hid his face from the land from (...) until their completion. And he knew the years they would stand and the number(s) and detail(s) of *their periods* (ומספר ופרק קציהם) of all that exist for eternity and that which unfolds until what will come (*עד מה יבוא*) *in their periods* (בקציהם), according to all the years of eternity. And during all of them (God) raised up for himself those called by name so as to leave a remnant for the land and to fill the face of the world from their seed *vacat* And he informed them

with the non-elect line of Lot in *Jub.* 16. It is precisely their non-covenantal status that is useful to the authors of these texts. See Tzoref, “Covenantal Election,” 85–88; and see Tigchelaar’s comments on the use of the Sodom narrative in the “actualizing or eschatological exegesis” of 4Q177 4 10 (*ibid.*, 60–62). Compare the treatment of Lot in *Jubilees* to that in *Wisd* 10:1–14, where Lot appears in a list of righteous patriarchs: “[Wisdom] rescued a *righteous man* [Lot] when the ungodly were perishing; he escaped the fire that descended on the Five Cities.” See James L. Kugel, “*Jubilees*, Philo, and the Problem of Genesis,” in Lange et al., eds., *The Hebrew Bible in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (forthcoming).

¹⁸ Translation from Dimant, “*Pesher on the Periods*” [italics are mine—ST].

(וַיֹּאמֶר) by the hand of the anointed of his holy spirit and the seers of his truth, of the details of their names.¹⁹ But those whom he hated, he caused to stray.

1.1 *Revelation Concerning Engraved Periods*

In the Second Admonition of the *Damascus Document* just cited, the history of mankind is described as known eternally by God, according to set periods (ספר ופרש קציהם).²⁰ The text asserts the belief that God reveals knowledge of the unfolding of these periods (יבוא בקציהם) to elect men, informing them (וַיֹּאמֶר) by means of prophets, and that He explicitly names the elect—as is done in the texts in Table 1, above. When 4Q180

¹⁹ The text in CD A reads וְחוֹזֵי אָמָת וּבֶפְרֹשׁ שְׁמוֹ שְׁמוֹתֵיהֶם. The above translation reflects the editors' correction on the basis of 4QD^a [ה] בֶּפְרֹשׁ שְׁמוֹתֵי. I have translated “seers of his truth” rather than retaining Baumgarten and Schwartz’s “who view his truth,” because I think that this better reflects the prophetic significance of the expression, which describes those who were anointed with the divine spirit and were recipients of divine information. On the role of these “visionaries,” and comparison of this passage with 1QM 11:7–8 (“By the hand of your anointed ones, seers of things appointed (תְּעוּדֹת), You have told us about the time[es of] ([צ]ק) the wars of Your hands”), see Alex P. Jassen, *Mediating the Divine: Prophecy and revelation in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Second Temple Judaism* (STDJ 68; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 67–72.

²⁰ On קָרְבָּן, see Devorah Dimant, “Criteria for the Identification of Qumran Sectarian Texts,” 73–74. See also Licht, “The Doctrine,” 65; he cites CD 4:7–11; 1QpHab 7:1–2; 7–8; 10–11 (interpreting Hab 2:2–4), and 1QS 3:13–15. There are well over a hundred concordance entries for the term in the classic “sectarian” scrolls *Damascus Document*, *Community Rule*, *Pesher Habakkuk* and other *pesharim*, *War Scroll*, and *Hodayot*, and some prominence is also evident in 4QInstruction (4Q415–418; 4Q423); and the prayer texts 4Q508–4Q511. See Martin G. Abegg Jr., with James E. Bowley, and Edward M. Cook, in consultation with Emanuel Tov, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Concordance. Vols. 1–2: The Non-Biblical Texts from Qumran* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), s.v. “קָרְבָּן,” 2:656–58. In discussing the sectarian valence of the term, Dimant (*ibid.*) calls particular attention to the occurrences in the plural, in CD 2:9–10; 16:2; 1QS 1:14; 3:15; 4:13, 16; 1QSb 4:26, 5:18; 1QH^a 5:15, 9:18; and 11Q13 1 ii 20, and to collocations that indicate dualism and determinism, especially periodization. Cana Werman associates קָרְבָּן with עַת, as well as עַתָּה (esp. CD 12: 20–21 עַת וְעַתָּה), עַתִּים, and עַתָּה (Werman, “Eschatology at Qumran,” in Kister, ed., *The Qumran Scrolls*, 529–49).

outlines some of these designated times, the periods (קָצִים) of humanity, it seems to refer to two of these periods in particular: a set of ten generations beginning with Noah and ending with Abraham, and another period beginning with Abraham. This same division is found in 4Q252, where the division between Noah and Abraham is highlighted by the use of vacats in the extant manuscript.²¹ This use of the term צָרָב, particularly in collocation with אֶל בָּוּ, to indicate divine revelation concerning the unfolding of human history, is shared by three of the compositions in our table, appearing in CD 2:7 and 4Q180, and in the difficult phrase בָּא קָצֵם לְנוֹתָח in 4Q252.²²

²¹ Cf. *m. 'Abot* 5:2–3, which similarly connects the concepts of periodization and reward and punishment with these generations: “Ten generations were there from Adam to Noah, to show how great was His long-suffering; for all the generations were provoking him, till He brought the deluge upon them. Ten generations were there from Noah to Abraham, to show how great was His long-suffering; for all the generations were provoking Him till Abraham our father came, and received the reward of them all.” Cf. Tzoref, “4Q252: *Listenwissenschaft*.”

²² Lim discusses the connection between this phrase in 4Q252 and Gen 6:13 נָכַר בְּשָׁר בָּא לְפָנָי (NRSV: “I have determined to make an end of all flesh”). See Timothy H. Lim, “The Chronology of the Flood Story in a Qumran Text,” *JJS* 43 (1992): 288–98 at 291. Given the technical use of the term צָרָב in the Qumran corpus, and the nature of 4Q252, it seems most reasonable to view the phrase as both responding to Gen 6:13 and deliberately employing a theologically loaded term. There are six occurrences of the term צָרָב in the Noah pericope of 4Q252. Scholars who have sought thematic unity in 4Q252 have struggled with the problem of how to fit this long chronological passage into the composition as a whole. Some light is shed on this question when we view 4Q252 as a composition concerned with revelation, calculation, and the fulfillment of predicted times and episodes of punishment and salvation. Just as the *pesher* concerning Reuben in this work relates to the actualization of a predetermined event—in that case, a punishment for sin (see below), so too does the enumeration of set periods in the Noah pericope, as well as the chronology of Abram’s travels in the following section. This would account for the content of the pericope, but not the difference in style from the rest of the work. For an attempt to account for the multi-generic character of 4Q252, see George J. Brooke’s observations about anthologies as a vehicle of expression for marginal groups, in “Genre Theory, Rewritten Bible and Peshher,” *DSD* 17 (2010): 361–86 at 385. He cites Cynthia G. Franklin, *Writing Women’s Communities: The Politics and Poetics of Contemporary Multi-Genre Anthologies* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 10.

According to 4Q180, these periods, which were known before creation, were engraved on Tablets (1 3).²³ The specific language of engraving periods (זקק + חקק) is not found in the extant Hebrew passages of *Jubilees* from Qumran, where the concept of recording divisions of time is expressed with the terms *כתב* and *מחוקות העתים*.²⁴ The imagery of the engraving of historical periods is found elsewhere in sectarian Qumran compositions in 1QpHab 7:13–14 (“*כל קשי עם יבואו לתוכם כאשר חקק להם ברזי ערמותו*”) (all the times fixed by God will come in due course as He ordained that they should be by his inscrutable insight”);²⁵ 1QH^a 9:25–26 (“*הכל חקוק לפניכה*”) (Everything is engraved before You with the ink of remembrance for all times of eternity, for the numbered seasons of eternal years in all their appointed times”); 4QD^{a,c} (4Q266 2 i 2–4; 4Q268 1 4–6) (“*כִּי אֵין לְהַתְּקִין לְפָנֶיךָ וְלֹהֲתָאֵר מִמּוּעָדֶיכָם*”) (for they can neither come before or after their appointed times [] and he ordained a period of wrath for a people that knows him not,²⁶ and he established [times of] favour for those that seek his commandments”).

²³ 4Q247 has been convincingly restored as referring to an “engraved period” in line 1, *בְּלֹחוֹת הַשְׁמִים קָצֵחַ*. See Magen Broshi, “4Q247. 4QPesher on the Apocalypse of Weeks,” DJD 36:187–91. The designation “the 5th week” in 4Q247 2 is followed by historical references to 400 years and the Solomonic Temple, Zedekiah king of Judah, and perhaps the Return to Zion. Since this corresponds to the framework of the *Apocalypse of Weeks* in 1Enoch 93:2, Broshi followed Milik (*Books of Enoch*, 256) in naming the composition *Pesher on the Apocalypse of Weeks*. There is no definitive evidence, however, of textual dependence upon 1Enoch in this passage, or of any shared antecedent tradition. 4Q247 might be another exemplar of a sort of *pesher* on historical periods like 4Q180, but it is not a *pesher* commentary on a specific text. 4Q369 (*Prayer of Enosh*) also refers to engraved periods, associated with antediluvian figures. Cf. Harold W. Attridge and John Strugnell, “Prayer of Enosh,” DJD 13:353–62.

²⁴ 4Q216 1:11; 4Q217 2 1. Cf. the references to the book of *Jubilees* in CD 16:3–4 and *סִפְר מְחֻלְקֹות הַעַתִּים לְיוּבָלִים וְלִשְׁבוּעָתִים עַת* and 4Q384 9 2; with *עת* occurs in 4Q228 (*Text with a Citation of Jubilees*) in 1 i 2, 4, 7 and the expression *כתב במחוקות* in line 9 is probably a reference to the book of *Jubilees*.

²⁵ On the root *תְּקִין* and predestination, see Menahem Kister, “Commentary to 4Q298,” *JQR* 85 (1994): 237–49 at 240–42.

²⁶ This translation follows Joseph M. Baumgarten’s rendering in 4Q266 ad loc.; in 4Q268 he translated the restored parallel as “[that he has not known].”

The thematic *pesher* 4Q177 (4QE^schatological Commentary B; Catena A; *Midrash zur Eschatologie*) describes predetermined historical periods as having been engraved on [Heavenly] Tablets. The text is not very well-preserved, but it is clear that the key ideas in the passage relate to eternal blessing, fathers and sons, the specification of names, and revealed knowledge:

and they shall be exalted by them for ever, and he shall bless them [*t*]
old that for ever he would bless them [] epochs (קָצִים) be [*ful*] filled
[] their fathers [] clearly set out by name (שְׁמוֹת), man
by man [] their [y]ears and the epoch (קָצִים) of their existence []
their tongues [] offsp[ring of]. Now, behold, everything is written
on the tablets (כְּתֻובָה בְּלֹחֶות) which[] and he taught him
the number of [...] (4Q177 1-4 10-12) (וַיֹּדִיעַ)

1.2 *Performative Contemporization*

From the current state of the cited passage of 4Q177, it is unclear just which individuals are specified by name. It may be the elect of every generation. The specification of names in 4Q177 is like that in CD 2:13 cited above, and the similar CD 4:4 (with **פֶּרֶשׁ מַעֲשֵׂהֶם**), which seem to have been written as introductions to lists of the members of the community, though the lists themselves have not survived.²⁷

CD 4: 3-5 reads:

And the “sons of Zadok” are the chosen ones of Israel, those called by name, who stand in the end of days (**באחרית הימים**). Here are the detail(s) of their names (**פרוש שמותיהם**), in their generations and the time(s) of their standing (**קץ מעמדם**) and the number(s) of their trou-

bles and the years of their residence, and the detail(s) of their works
פירוש מעשיהם

The specification of the names of the contemporary elect is analogous to the revelations concerning the specified figures in earliest times. In his discussion of 4Q180–181, Campbell suggests that “this preoccupation with Genesis probably stems from the Qumran sect’s conviction that the traditions concerned were paradigmatic of their own day.”²⁸ Grossman states more forcefully:

For the author/editor(s) of the Damascus Document, the narrative of history is complex, but its secrets and true meanings are accessible to anyone with the right covenantal knowledge. The various histories in the text—cosmic, national, sectarian—could all be understood by a given covenanter as reflections of his own—personal—history; his own history, in turn, could be read in terms of these larger narratives.²⁹

I would like to suggest that this personal identification with patriarchal narrative history operated beyond the conceptual or descriptive level in the *Damascus Document*. In addition to serving “informative” functions, CD 2:1 and 4:4–5 exhibit a “performative” dimension, which would have been even more profound in the original versions of these passages, if they included actual lists of names. I use the terms “informative” and “performative” here in a somewhat informal manner, derived from terminology employed in the development of speech acts theory within discourse analysis, especially Austin’s initial description of performative sentences through these examples:

“I do (take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife)”—as uttered in the course of the marriage ceremony; “I name this ship the *Queen Elizabeth*”—as uttered when smashing the bottle against the stem; “I give and bequeath my watch to my brother”—as occurring in a will; “I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow” . . . To name the ship *is* to say

²⁸ *Exegetical Texts*, 76. Campbell refers to Alexander’s observation that “the sect’s great interest in traditions regarding Noah and the Flood probably stemmed from the fact that they saw an analogy between the antediluvian period and their own times” (Philip S. Alexander, “The Bible in Qumran and Early Judaism,” in *Text in Context: Essays by Members of the Society for Old Testament Study* [ed. A. D. H. Mayes; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], 35–63 at 46).

²⁹ Grossman, *Reading for History*, 161.

(in the appropriate circumstances) the words “I name, etc.”. When I say, before the registrar or altar, etc., “I do”, I am not reporting on a marriage: I am indulging in it.³⁰

CD 4:4–5 functions in a similar manner: “Here are the detail(s) of their names in their generations and the time(s) of their standing.” By listing, or even promising to list, detailed data about the contemporary/eschatological elect, the author or editor of CD 4:4–5 would have been acting in his role of elect recipient and disseminator of privileged information, revealing details of eternal divine records about blessed individuals—the unfolding of human events in their determined times, including the present. This activity, I maintain, lies at the heart of Qumran *pesher*. The oft-cited passages in *Pesher Habakkuk* that present the pesherist’s own perception of his activity take on fresh meaning when viewed in the context of the preceding discussion. 1QpHab2:5–10 and 7:1–5 both describe and constitute *pesher* as revelatory exegesis:

It refers to ([ל] פשָׁר הַדָּבָר) . . . in the Last Days . . . everything that is to co[me up]on the latter generation that will be spoken by the Priest in whose [heart] God has put [the abil]ity to explain (לפְשֹׁר) all the words of his servants the prophets, through [whom] God has foretold everything that is to come upon his people and [his] com[munity]. (1QpHab 2:5–10)

When it says, “so that with ease someone can read it,” this refers to the Teacher of Righteousness to whom God made known all the mysterious revelations of his servants the prophets. (1QpHab 7:3–5)

The essence of the production of *pesher* compositions is the transmission of revealed truths that are believed to have been encoded in scripture for the purpose of these future revelations about future events and people. The act of transmission is as much an actualization and fulfillment of eschatologi-

³⁰ John Langshaw Austin, *How to Do Things with Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955* (ed. J. O. Urmson; Oxford: Clarendon, 1962), 5–6; see also John Langshaw Austin, “Performative Utterances,” in *idem, Philosophical Papers* (ed. J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 220–39. My distinction between “informative” and “performative” adapts a formulation I heard from Dr. Elie Holzer of Bar-Ilan University on 20 November, 2010, in an analysis of *b. Šabb.* 21b in the writings of the 19th-century Hasidic rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter (the Sefat Emet).

cal expectations as the unfolding social and political history that is tied to the texts. The act of *peshering*, for which the verb לפְשֹׁר, “to explain,” is used in 1QpHab 2:8, is rooted in the worldview seen above in CD, 4Q180, and 4Q252. This worldview incorporates a hermeneutic of reading scripture as a tool for discovering hidden truths of contemporary and eschatological value. Where *pesher* compositions disclose the contemporary significance of prophetic future-oriented scriptural texts associated with the end-time, **אחרית הימים**, this other group of compositions aim to reveal contemporary applications of Pentateuchal texts about the distant past, the **קדמוניות ראשונים** or **קדמוניות ראשונים**. The shared use of the term **פְשָׁר** in these compositions is the subject of the second half of this study.

2. פְשָׁר/פְתַר in Non-*Pesher* Compositions from Qumran

The term *pesher* is most commonly associated with the “continuous” *pesharim* and, to a lesser extent, the “thematic” *pesharim* from Qumran. As one would expect, the majority of the attestations of the word in the Qumran corpus are found in these works.³¹ Here, I would like to call attention to the handful of occurrences of the Hebrew root **פְשָׁר** in compositions other than those generally labeled as *pesharim*: CD 4:14; 1Q30; 4Q159 5 1, 5; 4Q180 1 7; 4Q252 IV 5; 4Q464 3 ii 7, and probably 1Q22.³² The etymology of the word *pesher* and its relation to the root **פְתַר** have been discussed at length in earlier studies, especially with regard to dream interpretation.³³ My focus here is upon the occurrences of these roots in

³¹ See the discussion of *pesher* in Shani L. Berrin, “Qumran Pesharim,” in *Biblical Interpretation at Qumran* (ed. Matthias Henze; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 110–33, and the literature cited there; Timothy H. Lim, *Pesharim* (CQS 3; London: Sheffield, 2002); Robert Williamson Jr., “Pesher: A Cognitive Model of the Genre,” *DSD* 17 (2010): 336–60.

³² See Abegg et al., *Dead Sea Scrolls Concordance*, s.v. “**פְשָׁר**,” 2:626–27.

³³ See Berrin, “Qumran Pesharim,” 123–26 and the literature cited there, esp. in n. 51; see also the comparison between Qumran *pesher* and rabbinic *petira*, *ibid.*, 113; and Paul Mandel, “Midrashic Exegesis and its Precedents,” *DSD* 8 (2001): 149–68. I do not address the attestations of Aramaic **פְשָׁר** in the Qumran corpus, all of which are found in the Book of Giants. In 4Q503, the word simply denotes dream interpretation (4Q530 2ii+6–12, 14; 2ii+6–12, 23; 7ii7; 7ii10). Stuckenbruck has noted the wordplay with the root **פְרֹשָׁה** in 7 ii 7, where Enoch is called **ספר פְרֹשָׁה**. This designation is found as well in 4Q203 8 4, a few lines

the relevant texts.³⁴ Some of these attestations are very similar to the use of the term in *pesher* compositions, while others exhibit a distinctive set of shared features that can shed light on the meaning of the term and upon early Jewish conceptions of a pre-determined schema of history.

2.1 פְשָׁר in CD, 4Q252, 4Q180, and 4Q464

In CD 4:14 the term *pesher* is used formulaically to introduce an identifying interpretation, as it is in the *pesharim*:

But during all those years, Belial will run unbridled amidst Israel, as God spoke through the hand of the prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz, saying: “Fear and a pit and a snare are upon you, O inhabitant(s) of the land” (Isa 24:17). This refers to (פְשָׁרִים) the three nets of Belial, of which Levi, the son of Jacob, said that he (Belial) entrapped Israel with them. (CD 14:12–16)

Devorah Dimant has designated this as an “isolated *pesher*,” a label she applied further to instances of *pesher*-like interpretation that do not actually employ the word *pesher* itself.³⁵ Dimant stated that “the texts com-

before the occurrence of the word פְשָׁר, in line 13. Cf. Loren Stuckenbruck, “4Q203 4QEnochGiants^a ar,” DJD 36:8–41 at 28–31. There is no direct concern with textuality associated with the dream interpretation in 4Q503. It is possible that 4Q203 could be of greater value for our discussion, since this column is concerned with both primordial events and writing (lines 1–3 feature the words “book,” “copy,” “tablet,” “letter,” and “document” in addition to “scribe”). However, the context is insufficiently clear to justify specific hypotheses. Even the reading of [א] וְפְשָׁר צְבָוֹת is not certain.

³⁴ I view this as one of many necessary approaches for determining the “meanings” of *pesher*. See the methodological considerations, especially the questions, raised by George Brooke in his, “*Pesher and Midrash in Qumran Literature: Issues for Lexicography*,” *RevQ* 24/93 (2009): 79–95.

³⁵ Devorah Dimant, “*Pesharim*,” in *ABD* 5:247. She noted that the extant cases identified as “isolated *pesharim*” are found primarily in CD, with an additional example in 1QS, and that, “Significantly, all the isolated *pesharim* occur in paraenetic sections, where the *pesharim* serve as prooftexts both for events in the history of the community and for its ideological tenets” (*ibid.*). Lim has suggested that the term *pesheresque* be used to describe instances of this sort of interpretation without the term *pesher* (Timothy H. Lim, “*The Qumran Scrolls, Multilingualism, and Biblical Interpretation*,” in *Religion in the Dead Sea Scrolls* [ed. John

mented upon in this way are mostly prophetic, but a few are taken from ancient songs found in the Torah.”³⁶ In the example just cited, the text that is interpreted is from Isaiah, but reference is also made to a teaching of a Pentateuchal figure, the patriarch Levi son of Jacob. This is potentially significant, because the other occurrences of the term *pesher* outside of *pesher* compositions are all associated with Torah, and figures in the book of Genesis are especially prominent in these sources.³⁷

In one of these passages, the term “*pesher*” is again used in the familiar manner of an interpretive formula, introducing a comment upon Gen 49:3–4:

“*Reuben you are my first-born and the firstfruits of my strength, excelling in dignity and excelling in power. Unstable as water, you shall no longer excel. You went up onto your father’s bed. Then you defiled it*”. ‘*On his bed he went up!*’ Its interpretation (רִשְׁפָה) is that he reproved him for when he slept with Bilhah his concubine. And he [s]aid, “*Y[ou] are [my] firstbo[rn] Reuben*” he was the firstfruits of [... (4Q252 IV 3–7)

There are a number of anomalies to this usage, however.³⁸ The chief anomaly is that the interpretive comment does not offer a contemporizing or

J. Collins and Robert A. Kugler; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000], 57–73 at 64–65).

³⁶ Dimant, *ibid.*

³⁷ The use of biblical prophetic texts as bases for contemporizing exegesis is among the defining characteristics of Qumran *pesher*. Although some texts cited in the *pesharim* are from Torah, the extant continuous *pesharim* are all commentaries on sections of books of the Prophets or Psalms, and these are predominant in the thematic *pesharim* as well. See Shani Tzoref, “Qumran Pesharim and the Pentateuch: Explicit Citation, Overt Typologies, and Implicit Interpretive Traditions,” *DSD* 16 (2009): 190–220.

³⁸ See Moshe J. Bernstein, “4Q252: From Re-Written Bible to Biblical Commentary,” *JJS* 45 (1994): 1–27 at 17–18; *idem*, “4Q252: Method and Context, Genre and Sources. A Response to George J. Brooke,” *JQR* 85/1–2 (1994): 61–79 at 73; Robert H. Eisenman and Michael O. Wise, “14. A Genesis Florilegium,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered* (Rockport: Element, 1992), 77–89; Juhana M. Saukkonen, “The Story Behind the Text: Scriptural Interpretation in 4Q252” (Ph.D. diss., University of Helsinki, 2005), 157; Devorah Dimant, “Between Sectarian and Non-Sectarian: The Case of the Apocryphon of Joshua,” in *Reworking the Bible: Apocryphal and Related Texts at Qumran. Proceedings of a Joint Symposium by the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature and the Hebrew University Institute for Advanced Studies Research Group on Qumran*,

eschatological identification of the cited text, but rather provides an explanatory identification related to an event that occurred in the past vis-à-vis the quoted speaker. In Gen 49:1, the blessings of Jacob are characterized as pertaining to **אחרית הימים**, and in the subsequent column of 4Q252, the blessing to Judah is in fact given a contemporizing eschatological interpretation (4Q252 V 1–7).³⁹ But the “*pesher*” of Jacob’s pronouncement to Reuben does not focus upon the present or future; it provides the frame of reference for the quoted verses in a past event—Reuben’s act of sleeping with Jacob’s concubine Bilhah, as recorded in Gen 35:22—and an explanation for the fact that Jacob’s parting “blessing” to Reuben consisted of rebuke.⁴⁰

I suggest that the key to understanding the use of the term *pesher* in 4Q252 is the recognition that the primary authorial aim in this composition is the same as that in 4Q180 and in *Jubilees*—particularly with respect to the material attributed to the Heavenly Tablets: the presentation of a conventional list of elect and non-elect figures in Genesis, and promises made concerning them and their offspring, in accordance with pre-ordained periods of time.

15–17 January, 2002 (ed. Esther G. Chazon, Devorah Dimant, and Ruth A. Clements; STDJ 58; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 105–34 at 133.

³⁹ Some scholars have described the use of the term *pesher* here as conforming to the manner in which it is usually employed. Cf. George J. Brooke, “4Q252: 4QCommentary on Genesis A,” DJD 22:187; Lim, “The Qumran Scrolls,” 64. Lim maintained that the two passages in columns IV and V of 4Q252 are similar in nature, other than the presence or absence of the word *pesher*. I agree that the similarities are important—both passages apply a text associated with **אחרית הימים** to a specific historical event pertaining to prediction, reward, and punishment—but the difference with respect to eschatological content of the interpretation is also significant.

⁴⁰ It is unlikely that mere identification of the referent of Jacob’s words is the primary purpose of the comment; we would expect the intended readers to be aware of this (*pace* Eisenman and Wise, “14. A Genesis Florilegium.” See Bernstein, “4Q252: From Re-Written Bible,” 17–18. More likely, the point is the rebuke. The comment is not an explanation of the verse, but a demonstration of how the application indicates actualization and fulfillment. The specification of the real-life case to which the poetic words apply is not intended to provide data to an uninformed reader, but to prove alignment between real life and the poetic prophetic utterances pertaining to reward and punishment.

To this group, we may add 4Q464 (*Exposition on the Patriarchs*).⁴¹ In their introductory notes to 4Q464, Charlesworth and Elledge comment upon the “stylistic resemblances” among 4Q464, 4Q180, and 4Q252, “all of which combine narrative and exegetical styles.”⁴² The compositions also exhibit similarity of content and themes, and the use of the word *pesher*; they all present selected passages from Genesis pertaining to the righteous and wicked. As observed by Esther Eshel and Michael Stone, both 4Q464 and 4Q180 use the word *pesher* in the context of specifications of historical time periods, with reference to stories about the patriarchs from the book of Genesis.⁴³ These works contain the only extant examples in the Dead Sea Scrolls in which the word *pesher* appears in the phrase “*pesher ‘al*.” Although the similar collocations פְשָׁר הָדָבָר עַל and פְשָׁר עַל are both attested in *pesher* compositions, the specific use of the absolute form of the word without pronominal suffix and followed by preposition עַל is so far unique to the works cited here. It reflects the distinctive use of the term *pesher* with respect to “subjects”⁴⁴ or “events,”⁴⁵ rather than to introduce an

⁴¹ On 4Q464, see Esther Eshel and Michael E. Stone, “4QExposition on the Patriarchs,” *DJD* 19:215–30. See also James H. Charlesworth and Casey D. Elledge, “Exposition on the Patriarchs,” *PTSDSSP* 6B: 274–85.

⁴² Charlesworth and Elledge, “Exposition on the Patriarchs,” 275. See Campbell, *Exegetical Texts*, 76.

⁴³ Eshel and Stone, *DJD* 19:215–30. For these observations regarding 4Q180, see Dimant, “The Pesher on the Periods,” esp. 91, 98. On similarities between 4Q180, 4Q252, and 4Q464, see also Esti Eshel, “Hermeneutical Approaches to Genesis in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation: A Collection of Essays* (ed. Judith Frishman and Lucas Van Rompay; *Traditio Exegetica Graeca* 5. Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 1–12.

⁴⁴ Dimant, “The Pesher on the Periods,” 92, with respect to 4Q180.

⁴⁵ Thus, Moshe J. Bernstein, regarding the occurrence in 4Q159, in *idem, “4Q159 Fragment 5 and the ‘Desert Theology’ of the Qumran Sect” in Emanuel; Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov* [ed. Shalom M. Paul et al.; *VTSup* 94; Leiden: Brill, 2003], 43–56 at 53 n. 29. Our discussion of the meaning and function of פְשָׁר at Qumran may offer some insight into the puzzling occurrences of the term in 4Q159 (4QOrdinances). This is not a *pesher* composition. The extant fragments primarily form a “medley of laws,” and the work has been compared to 4Q265 (thus, Joseph M. Baumgarten, “4Q265,” *DJD* 35:58–59). In frag. 5, containing the word פְשָׁר, the subject matter is Pentateuchal narrative. The central text has been identified as Exod 33:7, in which Moses pitched the Tent of Meeting outside the camp. The first occurrence

interpretation of a particular verse. In 4Q180, פְשָׁר עַל is used with respect to “time periods” generally, both in the title of the work, and in the introduction to the section on the Watchers.⁴⁶ In 4Q464, a fragmentary composition that exhibits particular concern with chronology in the narratives of Genesis, the idiom is used in the context of Gen 15:13, the Covenant of

of the term פְשָׁר, in line 1, seems to be formulaic, but the preceding words, אל ימתו, do not correspond to any known biblical text, and the same is true for the words פְשָׁר הַדָּבָר וְצַא שְׁמָה preceding פְשָׁר in line 5. As noted, Bernstein suggests that perhaps what is “being ‘peshered’” here is a “historical event” rather than a text. For Bernstein, the historical event is “Moses’ separation of himself from the Israelite camp, after the biblical Israelites had sinned with the golden calf.” He suggests that this may have served typologically as a model for the Qumran community’s “own departure to the desert to isolate themselves from the sinful remainder of contemporary Israel.” Bernstein (ibid., 45 n.6; 46 n.11) rejects Strugnell’s proposal that the words אל ימתו in line 1 are the remnants of a variant citation of Lev 16:1, recording the deaths of Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu. However, even if one were to accept Strugnell’s proposal, the reference to Lev 16:1 would best be explained along the lines suggested by Bernstein, taking fragment 5 as a typological “pesher of an event.” As suggested by Schultz, the probable reference to Nadab and Abihu in 1QM 17:2 could provide a parallel to 4Q159, in presenting Lev 16:1 as a typology for the future time of the “testing in the crucible.” See Brian Schultz, *Conquering the World: The War Scroll (1QM) Reconsidered* (STDJ 76; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 118–19. Perhaps, in 4Q159, what it means for a Pentateuchal event to serve as *pesher* is that it is presented as the fulfillment of a predestined fate associated with elect and non-elect figures, and thereby serves as evidence for the divine master plan, similar to how certain events in Genesis are treated in the works we examine below.

⁴⁶ 4Q180 1 1 and 1 7. The following translations are from Dimant, “Pesher on the Periods,” 78–79. Line 1 פְשָׁר עַל הַקְצִים אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אֱלֹהִים, “Pesher concerning the periods made by God”; line 7 פְשָׁר עַל עֹזָאֵל וְהַמֶּלֶאכִים [וְ], “[And] Pesher concerning ‘Azazel and the Angels.” The lack of suffix in the word pesher in the expression *pesher ‘al* is due to the fact that the phrase does not introduce an interpretation of a particular biblical verse, but rather provides a thematic title for the composition as a whole, and for a new section in line 7. Thus, Lim: “The technical term ‘pesher’ is used twice to introduce the concept of ages which God had made and Azazel and the angels who consorted with the daughters of man (cf. Gen. 6:4)” (Lim, *Pesharim*, 17); and it is “plausibly reconstructed” in a comment on Gen 18:20–21 (ibid.), i.e., at 2–4 ii 7. Lim follows Józef T. Milik, “Milki-ṣedeq et Milkî-rešā‘ dans les anciens écrits juifs et chrétiens,” *JJS* 23 (1972): 109–24 at 119.

the *Pieces*, which is a prophecy pertaining to a designated time period.⁴⁷ 4Q180 and 4Q464 also exhibit a similar use of vacats to set off blocks of material, a phenomenon that is found in 4Q252 as well.⁴⁸ Eshel and Stone comment upon the blank lines that set off sections in this manuscript: “These divisions may suggest that the manuscript contains a series of promises of prophecies of an eschatological character based upon the biblical narratives about the patriarchs”⁴⁹

I thus suggest that the use of the term **פְּשָׁר** in 4Q252 may be illuminated by the use of the expression **פְּשָׁר עַל** in 4Q180, where it designates historical periodization in the book of Genesis, and in 4Q464. The introduction to the comment on Reuben’s blessing in 4Q252 IV 3–7 seems to blend the sense of *pesher* as a technical term serving the specific exegetical and formulaic function of applying a biblical verse to an historical event, as in the *pesharim*, together with a distinct but related usage to designate exposition of divinely ordained periods in the remote past, as in 4Q180 and probably 4Q464. In 4Q180, the subject matter that is *peshered* is identified as **קְצִים**.⁵⁰

2.2 פְּתָר

It is instructive to compare the *pesher* on **קְצִים** of 4Q180 to CD 13:7–8. Baumgarten and Schwartz translate:

And this is the rule for the Examiner of the camp (המִבְּקָר לְמַחְנָה): Let him instruct the Many about the works of God, and allow them to discern the wonder of his mighty deeds and relate to them the happenings of eternity together with their interpretations.

⁴⁷ 4Q464 3 ii 7 (DJD 19:222 and Pl. XXVII) (the ‘ayin is marked doubtful). The immediate context in 4Q464 is lacking, but it is likely that this is not a citation of a specific verse. Gen 15:13 is plausibly restored in lines 3 and 4, following a citation formula, but there is additional text in lines 5 and 6. Line 7 does not appear to be a direct interpretation of the previous citation (contra Lim, *Pesharim*, 17).

⁴⁸ Eshel and Stone, “4QExposition,” DJD 19:217.

⁴⁹ Eshel and Stone, “4QExposition,” DJD 19:215.

⁵⁰ See the discussion of the relationship between **קְצִים** and **פְּשָׁר** above section 1.1.

The Hebrew of the last phrase is **וַיָּסֶף לְפָנָיהם נְהִיָּת עֹלָם בְּפִתְרִיה** (where **בְּפִתְרִיה** is a metathesis for **בְּפִתְרִיה**).⁵¹ (The Qumran parallel is found in 4Q267 9 iv 5 **בְּפִתְרִיהֶם**).⁵² Similarly, 4Q298 3–4 ii 8–9 is restored **פָתָר יְמִינֵי חֲזֹודָה אֲשֶׁר פָתָר [יְמִינֵי] חֲזֹודָה**.⁵³ In these texts, the term **פָתָר** refers to explications of pre-ordained periods of time that are set before the community by their leaders—the Examiner (מַבְקֵר) in the *Damascus Document*, and the Maskil in 4Q298.⁵⁴ The instruction of **פָתָרים** is identified as the clarification of secret knowledge about designated time periods. The word may best be understood to mean “fulfillment in their ordained times.” An understanding of the term as “fulfilled times” could also be suitable for **פָתָרים** in 1Q30 (a plural noun with masc. plural suffix, like **פָתָרִים**), though the fragmentary context precludes certainty.⁵⁵ The words **לְפִי** appear on line 6 of frag. 1 in 1Q30. Among the additional words preserved on the few extant lines of text on this fragment, numbers are prominent: “one-third” (**שְׁלִישִׁית**, line 3), a reference to “five” (perhaps “the Pentateuch”; **סִפְרִים חָמָשִׁים**, line 4), and “four” (line 5). Fragment 2 includes the words **רִישׁוֹנִים** and **וְלִסְפֵּר רָצִי**. Either of the two related meanings of *pesher* would be suitable here, as a reference to ordained periods laid out in the Pentateuch, or to eschatological interpretations of

⁵¹ Elisha Qimron prefers the reading found in 4Q267, (Qimron, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: The Hebrew Writings* [Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 2010], 1:48; so, too, Baumgarten and Schwartz, *ibid.*). Since **נְהִיָּת** is feminine, and the *waw* of **נְהִיָּת** may in fact be a *yod*, the reading in CD may be equally acceptable, and perhaps preferable. In 4Q298, the referent of the masc. pl. poss. suff. in **פָתִירִים** would be “days,” following the restoration **יְמִינֵי** as suggested by Stephen Pfann (DJD 20:25–27).

⁵² Baumgarten, DJD 18:69, 108–9.

⁵³ Stephen J. Pfann and Menahem Kister, “4Q298 4QCrypt A Words of the Maskil to All Sons of Dawn,” DJD 20:1–30 and Plates I–II, at 21, 25, 27. The reconstruction is based on CD 13:8, because of the similar content, style, and context of the leader’s revelation of esoteric knowledge to the community.

⁵⁴ These occurrences are the only attestations of this noun in the extant corpus. The lone attestation of the verb **פָתַר**, in 4Q223–224 (4QpapJub^b), simply follows biblical usage with respect to Joseph’s interpretation of Pharaoh’s dream in. In their 1995 edition of CD, Joseph M. Baumgarten and Daniel R. Schwartz wrote, “**פָתַר** is now found in the 4Q fragments as a variant for **פָשַׁר**, ‘interpretation’” (Baumgarten and Schwartz, PTSDSSP 2:55). Presumably, this is a reference to **בְּפִתְרִיהֶם** in 4Q266 and 4Q267.

⁵⁵ Józef T. Milik, DJD 1:132–33, pl. XXX.

biblical texts. A formulaic usage introducing an interpretation does not seem likely.⁵⁶ Baumgarten stated that **פִתְר** in 4QD “is equivalent to **פִשְׁר**, ‘interpretation’.”⁵⁷ I agree that **פִתְר** in these texts is equivalent to **פִשְׁר**, but prefer a broader understanding of the meanings of **פִשְׁר**, reflecting not only the interpretive aspects of the term, but also its concern with progressive revelation about ordained time periods.

Our investigation of the terms **פִתְרִים** and **פִשְׁרִים** in non-pesher compositions reinforces appreciation of the interconnectedness of exegesis and revelation in Qumran *pesher*. Our observations concerning the use of these terms to describe revelation about pre-ordained historical periods serve to enhance our understanding not only of 4Q180, 4Q464, and 4Q252, but also of the more general function of the term *pesher* at Qumran as indicating the true meaning of biblical prophecy with regard to a time period beyond its original utterance. The evidence from the use of **פִתְר** and the collocation **פִשְׁר עַל** at Qumran corroborate the view that *pesher* interpretations of biblical verses in *pesher* compositions do not only aim to offer the true identifying interpretation of a given verse, but more

⁵⁶ Contra Lim, *Pesharim*, 17. On 1Q30, see also Timothy H. Lim, “The Alleged Reference to the Tripartite Division of the Hebrew Bible,” *RevQ* 20/77 (2001): 23–37 at 28–29; Johannes Zimmermann, *Messianische Texte aus Qumran: königliche, priesterliche und prophetische Messiasvorstellungen in den Schriftfunden von Qumran* (WUNT2 104; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998). 426–27; Craig A. Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies* (AGJU 25; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 91–92; Alex P. Jassen, *Mediating the Divine*, 85. I am thankful to Alex Jassen for bibliographic references for this text.

⁵⁷ Similarly, Pfann and Kister, translate “whose interpretation” in 4Q298 (Pfann and Kister, DJD 20:27). Another instance in which **פִשְׁר** has been understood as “interpret” is Milik’s restoration and explanation of 1Q22 (Józef T. Milik, “1Q22 Dires de Moïse,” DJD 1:91–97; Milik restores **רְאֵשׁ פִשְׁר**, in I 3, which he explains as an imperative—a command to Moses to interpret the Torah; he distinguishes between Moses’ obligation to offer explanation of the Torah to the elite—heads of families, levites, and priests, as compared to “simple notification” to the people as a whole (ibid., 93; see Timothy H. Lim, *Pesharim*, 17). The restoration is uncertain, and the context is too fragmentary to allow for responsible evaluation of the text or of Milik’s hypothesis. On this text, see also John Strugnell, “4Q376 Apocryphon of Moses,” DJD 19:121–36 at 130; Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, “A Cave 4 Fragment of *Divre Mosheh* (4QDM) and the Text of 1Q22 1:7–10 and *Jubilees* 1:9, 14,” *DSD* 12 (2005): 303–12; Daniel K. Falk, “Moses, Texts of,” in *EDSS* 1:577–81.

precisely to designate the specific preordained time for its fulfillment. I propose that when the term “*pesher*” is used in Qumran *pesharim* to indicate the identification of contemporary/eschatological referents of biblical prophetic texts, this is a technical application of a term that was already in use to describe the fulfillment of divine plans in ordained time periods, with a probable special association with Pentateuchal narrative.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to suggest that discourse analysis of the sort tentatively attempted above concerning the performative aspects of naming in CD and 4Q177, may be profitably combined with genre study to offer further insight into Qumran *pesher* and into the sectarian corpus as a whole.

In her discussion of “theories of genre,” Carol Newsom wrote:

One of the features that has often been noted about the sectarian literature from Qumran is the number of new genres developed by the community. These include, most notably, *serakim*, *pesharim*, *hodayot*, *mishmarot*, and a variety of distinctive liturgical texts such as the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, covenant ceremony texts, marriage rituals, rituals of expulsion, and so forth.⁵⁸

Among the questions Newsom asks about these genres as a group, is “How do they work together to construct the integrated sectarian world and also to differentiate it into a series of discrete experiences?”⁵⁹ One feature that is common to many of the “new” genres named by Newsom is that many of them may be considered “performative”; they do not only report or instruct but they enact; they constitute activities and construct realities. *Serakhim* do not only describe rules—they prescribe rules. *Hodayot* describe liturgy, but more importantly, they constitute liturgy. And so too, with the other liturgical and ceremonial texts in Newsom’s list. Even if one follows Elliot Wolfson’s judgment that the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* are not mystical as such, the performative aspect of the communion in the text is

⁵⁸ Carol A. Newsom, “Pairing Research Questions and Theories of Genre: A Case Study of the *Hodayot*,” *DSD* 17 (2010): 270–88 at 285.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

evident.⁶⁰ In the case of liturgy and ritual, it might actually be more appropriate to speak of “performance texts.” This is illustrated effectively in Menahem Kister’s presentation of 1QS 1:16–2:19, the text of the Yahad’s annual covenant renewal ceremony.⁶¹ Kister uses three different fonts in order to distinguish between (1) the descriptions of the ceremony (which read as stage directions); (2) the statements of the participants (essentially, the script); and (3) the introductory paraphrase of the scripted statements.

In this manner, we may gain an appreciation of how the innovative author(s) of Qumran *pesharim* built upon existing terminology and beliefs such as pre-ordained periods of history, heavenly records of divine elect and non-elect, and the necessity for revelation and instruction in these mysteries, to create the genre of Qumran *pesher*.

To understand the genre of *pesher*, in addition to considering such factors as the meaning of the lexeme פְשָׁר and the technique or mode of exegesis employed in *pesher*, it can be useful to attend to the distinction between texts that report about revelation and texts that reveal. In the instructional contexts of 4Q298 and the Damascus Document, the terms פְתִירִים and פְשָׁרִים are employed to describe the transmission of knowledge of divine mysteries by community leaders. In 4Q298, it is clarified that the these פְתִירִים pertain to “former times” (קְדֻמּוֹנִיות) and that the point of the instruction is oriented toward understanding of the future: “so that you may understand the קְצָצָעִילָמּוֹת... and know [...]. In the extant portions of 4Q180 and 4Q464, the word *pesher* occurs in the context of presentation of data about elect and non-elect individuals in those former periods. These texts do more than describe the need for instruction—they are not only *about* revelations pertaining to former times, but they themselves instruct. They reveal data about former times, within the rubric of the unfolding of the grand divine design, and they employ formulaic terminology in doing so: פְשָׁרוּ עַל. This seems to be the sort of material that

⁶⁰ See Elliot R. Wolfson, “Mysticism and the Poetic-Liturgical Composition from Qumran: A Response to Bilhah Nitzan,” *JQR* 85/1–2 (1994): 185–202; cf. Philip S. Alexander, *The Mystical Texts: Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice and Related Manuscripts* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 5–10; 74. See now, Peter Schäfer, *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), *passim*, esp. ch. 4 “Qumran,” 112–52, and the summary remarks at 348–50.

⁶¹ Menahem Kister, “On Good and Evil: The Theological Foundations of the Qumran Community,” in *idem*, *The Qumran Scrolls and Their World*, 497–528 at 500.

would have been in the curriculum of the Maskil and the Mevaqqer as described in 4Q298, in teaching about the fulfillment of times. The continuous *pesharim* also actually reveal data about the unfolding of God's predetermined plan, and employ formulaic terminology in doing so, including especially the expressions “פָשָׁרō” or “פָשָׁר הַדָּבָר עַל.” However, the revelations in the continuous *pesharim* do not pertain to the former days, but to the latter or last days, **אַחֲרִית הַיּוֹםִים**. Hence, their base-texts, or hypertexts, are prophetic scriptures rather than the Pentateuchal material found in 4Q180 and 4Q464.⁶² The leader with whom they are associated is the Teacher of Righteousness.⁶³ In the *Damascus Document* and 4Q252, the term *pesher* is used in a formulaic manner similar to that employed throughout the continuous *pesharim*, for cases of the implementation of *pesher* as a technique, in which interpretations of particular biblical verses connect the former times to the End of Days. Finally, the “thematic *pesharim*” seem to take a somewhat broader view, showing interest in both describing the eternal process of revelation and instruction and in interpreting biblical verses with respect to the fulfillment of divine plans for the elect in the End of Days.

⁶² George J. Brooke, “Hypertextuality and the ‘Parabiblical’ Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *In the Second Degree: Paratextual Literature in Ancient Near Eastern and Ancient Mediterranean Culture and Its Reflections in Medieval Literature* (ed. Philip S. Alexander, Armin Lange and Renate Pillinger; Leiden: Brill, 2010). Cited in Brooke, “Genre Theory, Rewritten Bible and Pesher.”

⁶³ 1QpHab 2:7–10; 7:1–5.