Identity Formation Through Stories of Suffering:

A Comparative Textual Analysis of The Book of Job and The War Scroll

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I. Introduction

The Book of Job and the Essenes' War Scroll[1] both represent a sense of religious identity (for the early Jewish people and the Essenes, respectively), describe responses to different catastrophic situations, and conclude with the general claim that faith in God is necessary to handle human suffering and external oppression. Modern scholarship claims that the authors' motivation were to express their sense of identity—as it was understood through a tumultuous relationship with God—by writing these particular stories, and by going to great lengths to ensure that the concepts represented in the stories would outlive the authors.[2] This paper will compare the Book of Job and the War Scroll based on their similarities and their differences, and will address how each story represented a sense of group identity.[3] A brief note on the historical context will describe the relationship between the early Jewish people and the Essenes, as religious groups struggling to maintain stability in a world defined by unjustified suffering and external chaos.

Early Jewish people and Jewish sects experienced numerous catastrophic events, periods of external domination, and challenges to their faith and relationship with God.[4] Between the 6th century BCE and the 1st century CE, the Jewish people experienced the annihilation of their Southern Kingdom of Judah and exile into Babylon (586 BCE), domination by three separate empires, and the destruction of their second temple in 70 CE.[5] Though the Jewish people were

[1] The Book of Job is dated approximately to the 6th century BCE and the War Scroll is dated approximately to the 1st century CE.
[2] Michael L. Satlow, *Creating Judaism: History, Tradition, Practice,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).
[3] Barbara A. Holdrege, "What's Beyond the Post? Comparative Analysis as Critical Method," in *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age*, Edited by Kimberley C. Patton and Benjamin C. Ray, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000).
[4] Alison Schofield, "RLGS 3001: Judaism, Class Lectures," (University of Denver, Denver, CO, March 27 – June 1, 2017).
[5] The Jewish people were dominated by the Persians (539 BCE – 312 BCE), the Greeks (312 BCE – 63 BCE), and the Romans (63 BCE – 73 CE). Ibid.

allowed to return home from exile in 539 BCE and their second temple was built in 515 BCE, most of the early Jewish people remained dispersed outside their homeland, responding to the suffering in a variety of ways. As a response to the domination and imposition of social guidelines by the Greeks, Judaism began to splinter, forming sects,[6] each with a different perspective regarding the oppression of Greek culture. Additionally, the canon[7] began to close in the 6th century BCE. The study of the Torah replaced sacrificial worship as the primary religious activity, and sacred space was no longer understood as a centralized, physical location, but as existing between the lines of scripture. The textualization of Judaism contributed to the creation and preservation of early Jewish stories, as various individuals' and communities' expressions of their position in the world at that particular moment.[8]

This paper will utilize a comparative methodology, drawing from Wendy Doniger's *The Implied Spider: Politics and Theology in Myth*, and Jonathan Z. Smith's concept of "third term" to analyze these two stories.[9] In this paper, the "third term" will be understood as that which connects the two stories, the lens through which each is being understood: both genres of literature (wisdom and apocalyptic) are responses to external chaos, and each story is representative of the struggles and suffering that each group of people faced, relating to a sense of group identity. Thus, identity is defined in this paper as relating to a particular group of people (early Jewish people, the Essenes), a particular land (Jerusalem), and a particular belief in moral behavior.[10] When the concept of identity is addressed in this paper, it is most concerned with the

[6] The Pharisees, the Essenes, the Sadducees, and the Christians. Ibid.
[7] The canon is considered "holy scripture." Ibid.
[8] The "textualization of Judaism" refers to the process of writing down oral tradition.
[9] Smith and Doniger both discuss the "third term." Doniger describes it as "the scholar's own defining interest, which serves now not just as the pivot of two things being compared but as the hub of a wheel to which an infinite number of spokes may be connected." Wendy Doniger, *The Implied Spider: Politics and Theology in Myth*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 100; Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.)
[10] Ibid., 86.

relational identity between the group and God, represented by their faith that He would offer salvation, should they behave morally.[11] The intention of this paper is to argue for a continuity in the experience of suffering that informed Jewish thought, which has been immortalized in written stories.[12] Furthermore, I argue that though the stories differ in form, content, and context, the two stories are similar in that they both describe a struggle for justice and are hypothesized to have been written during a period in which each group faced external oppression.

In analyzing these stories today, the Book of Job and the War Scroll present a sense of identity that, perhaps, was difficult to conceptualize at the time—hence the need to grasp it through written language. How do these stories express the early Jewish peoples' and the Essenes' understanding of and relationship with God, and, in turn, create a sense of identity? Eva Mroczek, in *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity*, and Michael L. Satlow, in *Creating Judaism: History, Tradition, Practice*, provide theoretical frameworks for the origins of Jewish theology. Satlow argues that "stories help to create 'imagined communities;' they articulate a compelling link between people whose actual connections might be tenuous."[13] Satlow goes on to argue that the creation and sharing of stories within and across communities "testifies to the

[11] This understanding of "identity" is a modern construction and this essay does not pretend to know the minds of the people who wrote each story, nor does it claim that they had this understanding of themselves. This paper will address what is found in each text, and, by filtering this content through the historical context of each story, will offer insight into the potential of each to profess a moral identity.

[12] A modern interpretation of the Book of Job and the War Scroll can, in no way, prove continuity of a Jewish sense of identity from the time of the stories' construction to the present moment; it can, however, offer some insight into the possible drives of ancient communities.

[13] A note on the canonization of the Bible will clarify the influence of the Book of Job (which was canonized) versus the War Scroll (which was not). Before the emergence of a completely bounded canon, the sacred writings of early Judaism took on fundamentally different shapes, such that the texts themselves were "actors in an unfolding narrative," in which the history of Israel is intertwined with the history of its writing. Mroczek references Jonathan Z. Smith, who describes the phenomenon of canon: "the arbitrary fixing of a limited number of 'texts' as immutable and authoritative…is the 'sponsor of innovation.'" In a history marked by limitation, the creation and closing of canon expressed the ingenuity of the early Jewish people. Michael L. Satlow, *Creating Judaism: History, Tradition, Practice,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 79; Eva Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity*, (Sheridan, USA: Oxford University Press, 2016), 188, 180.

formation of a distinctive…identity."[14] It is within this theoretical outlook that this paper will understand how these two stories exemplified distinctive group identities for the early Jewish people and the Essences.

The Bible plays a central role in Judaism today, as it points back to the religion of its authors. Existing as a link to early Jewish traditions, the Bible has contributed to the practicing of a religion today "that would have been unrecognizable to its authors."[15] Though the closing of the canon set limits on what the Jewish people could regard as holy scripture, "finite text is infinitely interpretable and therefore continuously vital,"[16] and so, past narratives have served to shape the worldview of many modern traditions of Judaism. This leads to the second research question of this paper: what are the implications of these stories (specifically, the Book of Job and the War Scroll) for the practice of Judaism today and for modern Jewish identity? To answer these research questions, this paper will be organized into two main sections: The Book of Job and The War Scroll. These sections will more specifically address the stories themselves; their structure and literary form; contextual details regarding authorship, history, and dating of the texts; and various analyses or interpretations of the texts to provide a contextualized understanding of identity formation by way of written, immortalized suffering.

II. The Book of Job

The Book of Job, one of "The Writings," or Ketuvim, of the Tanak, is more specifically classified as a "Wisdom Book."[17] In general, the Wisdom Books offer a critical view of the balance of good and evil in the world and are defined by their "quest for self-understanding in

[14] Satlow, *Creating Judaism*, 79.
[15] Satlow, *Creating Judaism,* 71.
[16] Eva Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity*, (Sheridan, USA: Oxford University Press, 2016), 182.
[17] Schofield, "RLGS 3001: Judaism, Class Lectures."

terms of relationships with things, people, and the Creator."[18] The problem of suffering, injustice, and the potential for the existence of disinterested righteousness is most clearly articulated in the Book of Job.[19] The Jewish identity expressed through the Book of Job is that of a collective group who maintained that faith in God and moral behavior would protect them from the external oppression, understood as unjustified suffering, they faced.

Though the author(s), referred to as the "Joban Poet,"[20] is/are unknown and scholars disagree regarding the dating of the text, a potential clue to the timeframe of the book occurs in Ezekiel.[21] Since the Book of Ezekiel refers to the "legend of Job"[22] and Leo G. Perdue, in *Wisdom in Revolt: Metaphorical Theology in the Book of Job*, claims with certainty that Ezekiel's comments occur shortly before the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE, it is believed that portions of the Book of Job were written and known as early as the 6th century BCE. Perdue suggests that the three portions of the story—beginning prose narrative, middle poetic dialogues, and ending speeches of Elihu—were written at different times and possibly by different authors. The prose narrative was written during the monarchy of King David (1000 BCE – 961 BCE), the poetic dialogues were written during the Babylonian Exile (586 BCE – 539 BCE), and the Elihu speeches at the end of Job were written after the exile and during Persian rule (539 BCE – 332 BCE). The general timeframe of the story positions it and its authors within a period of suffering for the Jewish people, in which suffering was broadly defined as "punishment from God [and] only by means of repentance will they be assured of

[18] James L. Crenshaw, "Method in Determining Wisdom Influence upon 'Historical' Literature," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 88, no. 2 (1969): 132.
[19] Crenshaw, *The Old Testament Wisdom.*
[20] Leo G. Perdue, *Wisdom in Revolt: Metaphorical Theology in the Book of Job*, (Decatur, GA: The Almond Press, 1991).
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ezekiel 14:14 and 14:20.

life."[23] The dialogue, story structure, and literary form of the Book of Job present a sense of an early Jewish relationship with God. Nothing else in the Bible "approaches the Book of Job for narrative drama and sheer ability to shatter long-held assumptions"[24] of biblical explanations of suffering.

The tripartite structure of the Book of Job serves to "emphasize the three distinct levels at which the theodicy of Job is conceived"[25] and to challenge the reader to draw the connections between them. First, God boasts of Job's integrity to his companions in Heaven and the Adversary (Satan) engages God in a divine wager; the Adversary argues Job's righteousness is due to God's blessing of Job's work, but if God were to "stretch out [His] hand and touch all that he has…he will curse you to your face."[26] God then allows Satan to cause the loss of Job's cattle, children, and health, "corrupting his body and disturbing his mind."[27] Job refuses to curse God directly—despite his wife's wishes—but instead curses the day of his birth or creation, and so, cursing God covertly.[28] Second, the poetic dialogues of three of Job's friends (the comforters: Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar) amount to an emotional debate regarding the nature of Job's suffering; all three friends call Job "wicked," claim God's justice is intact, and place blame on Job.[29] Job, maintaining "his suffering is not just punishment for his sin,"[30] demands an answer from God, who silences Job with His "mighty interrogations [and] the unquestionable wonder

[23] David Kraemer, *Responses to Suffering in Classical Rabbinic Literature*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), 18-21.
[24] Ibid., 29-30.
[25] Jonathan Lamb, "The Rhetoric of Suffering: Reading the Book of Job in the Eighteenth Century," *Oxford Scholarship Online* (2011): 1-45. DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198182641.001.0001.
[26] Job 1:10-12
[27] Lamb, "The Rhetoric of Suffering"
[28] It is significant that Job curses God in a roundabout way (by cursing the day of his birth) because it speaks to the Jobian identity: a moral individual who has done no wrong and who has always had faith in God is punished for unanswerable reasons. As a moral character, he still suffers, causing him to curse God and distance himself from his previous moral identity.
[29] Job 4; Job 8; Job 11; Job 15; Job 18; Job 20; Job 22; Job 25
[30] Kraemer, *Responses to Suffering in Classical Rabbinic Literature*, 31.

and self-identity of His creation."[31] Job ultimately responds in the third section that he had spoken without understanding and he is rewarded for his constancy while the comforters are criticized for their incorrect assumptions regarding God and their general foolishness. The story of Job concludes with the restoration of his livestock and family, and him living 140 more years "and full of days."[32]

Before addressing the literary form of Job, a note on the relationship between its different structures is necessary to understand further the intentions of the author(s) in writing this particular story. The relationship between the prose narrative and the poetic dialogues has been strongly debated among literary scholars. One hypothesis regarding their relationship posits that the narrative was written in the monarchial or pre-monarchial period of King David, possibly originating as an adaptation of a Canaanite hero epic. It is hypothesized that this epic was later taken by a poet who used the story "to introduce new text that repudiates the narrative's theology of suffering as divine discipline."[33] A second hypothesis argues that the narrative and the dialogues were separate pieces brought together by a later editor to be seen by the readers as a continuous story, or possibly to juxtapose two distinct theological trains of thought. In either scenario, the prose additions of the first scene in Heaven and the final restoration are designed to give a "perfunctory symmetry to the turbulent but inconclusive poetry of the dialogues."[34]

Though the dating of each portion of the text is unclear, the majority of scholars agree that the prose narrative and the poetic dialogues were written at separate times (and by different

[31] Lamb, "The Rhetoric of Suffering"
[32] *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2001), Job 42:17.
[33] Perdue, *Wisdom in Revolt*, 82.
[34] Lamb, "The Rhetoric of Suffering"

authors).[35] Assuming either of these is accurate, the connection of new poetic dialogues to an older wisdom tale gives the story a specific theological reading to be gleaned by modern Jewish thinkers. Modern theological interpretations of the Book of Job suggest that this choice to make a unified story from the prose narratives and the poetic dialogues addressed the ancient Jewish thought that the blind acceptance of suffering realized as divine punishment was a nonsensical understanding of their tumultuous lives during the time of the Babylonian Holocaust.[36] Further, modern thinkers argue that the aggregated story professed the idea that righteous existence in the world was contingent on challenging God's decisions regarding human fate; essentially, modern interpreters view the Book of Job as an argument for early Jewish people to push back against God's punishment.[37]

In order for modern thinkers to derive further theological understanding from the story of Job, it must be interpreted within the tradition of wisdom literature, since the "literary form has important implications for understanding the metaphorical theology of the book."[38] Compared to the genres of cult, law, and wisdom literature, the literary form of the Book of Job is comprised of three literary trajectories: didactic narrative, lament, and disputation.[39] Disagreement within contemporary literary scholarship regarding the form of Job's story is due, in part, to the Joban author(s') combination of historian and story-teller techniques, as well as the interlacing of various structural components. There are debates regarding the specific form of the story of Job,

[35] A third hypothesis claims that the narrative and dialogues were written by the same author and intended to be read together, though this is not popular consensus. Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Perdue, *Wisdom in Revolt.*
[38] Ibid., 80.
[39] Ibid.

though the combination of genres, literary trajectories, and structural components is what contributes to its exceptionality and to its profound theological implications. [40]

To better grasp the literary form of the Book of Job, the literary trajectories of the story (those of didactic narrative, lament, and disputation) need closer analysis to grasp the poet(s') creative, but structured shaping of the story. As expressed through the literary trajectories, the Book of Job encompasses a war of worlds between a famous hero of the wisdom tradition and the Creator of Heaven and Earth.[41] Hans-Peter Muller identified the literary trajectory of "sapiental, didactic narrative,"[42] whereby a hero is introduced to the reader as having a particular ability or virtue. Then, the hero engages in an action that confirms his/her virtue, and the hero becomes the anti-hero after his/her virtue leads the character to partake in a deceitful action, causing the hero misfortune. The climax of the story results in a judgement scene that restores the hero to a place of honor. Job embodies two virtues that are valued in the wisdom tradition—those of righteousness and of challenging injustice. As it addresses the theological question of unanswerable suffering, the narrative of Job highlights how Job's virtues are of significance to the human experience. As God tells the friends that they have not spoken about Him correctly, as Job did, we are presented with the "unambiguous realization that the explanations offered by Job's colleagues were *not* necessary."[43] Thus, God does not require that we blindly defend the

[40] Claiming the literary form of Job is that of cult literature, Claus Westermann argues Job is a dramatized lament, whereby the dialogues of Job's friends are that of consolation speeches structurally, but the content of which is disputational. Heinz Richter argues that the book reflects Hebrew jurisprudence, claiming the Book of Job should be classified as law literature. George Fohrer argues the Book of Job is purely wisdom literature, however, since he sees it as a disputation between sages, each seeking to prove their positions and dismiss the arguments of their opponent. In contrast with those who view the Book of Job through a two-dimensional lens, a variety of literary scholars understand the story through the "New Criticism" approach as unique literary composition that cannot be confined to a single form. For instance, J.W. Whedbee argues the story of Job is that of a comedy composed of two elements: a vision of the ridiculous; and a happy-ending story in which the hero's relationship with God is restored and he returns to human society. Ibid.

[41] Perdue, *Wisdom in Revolt.*

[42] Ibid., 78.

[43] Kraemer, *Responses to Suffering in Classical Rabbinic Literature*, 33.

divine system of justice, but that the pious individual may legitimately challenge and question. Furthermore, the friends' insistence on God's legitimate justice and Job's wickedness, instead of enhancing their argument, serves to undermine the pieties they express and discredit their worldview. Therefore, this literary trajectory can show the theological conclusion that the pious individual is not bound to dutiful acceptance of God's ill-will, but has the freedom to contest and will be rewarded for his/her respectful rejection of unjustified suffering.

Lament, the second literary trajectory, presents the common theme of the righteous sufferer through a first-person narrative. This trajectory consists of significant features, such as complaints, reproachful questions, the assertion of innocence, and the acknowledgement of divine response. The Book of Job incorporates this trajectory most notably in Job's two soliloquies that introduce and conclude the poetic dialogues. This literary trajectory of lament begs the question: is the Job that survives this ordeal the same Job who was originally bet on by God?[44] Further, is it possible that Job, who had not sinned previously, begins to sin with the introduction of unjustified suffering?[45] In the court of Heaven, God positions Job's body against Satan's ability to harm in a contest that resembles the temptations of Adam and Eve.[46] Modern scholars encourage the idea that the issue of predestination is contested here, due to Job's ability to choose to be good: if God is "truly taking a chance on an outcome he has not determined, then Satan has in effect already won the bet."[47] The identification of an unpredictable element between the Creator and the created (i.e. Job's choice) means that Satan has proven a "margin of doubt," and already won the bet. On the other hand, if God is not taking a chance and the issue of predestination is *not* contested, then why is Job unjustly suffering? Satan would win the bet,

[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Lamb, "The Rhetoric of Suffering"
[47] Ibid.

"having correctly predicted that circumstances alter cases,"[48] if Job's sufferings had transformed him to such a degree that he no longer resembled his former self. As it is, there is no defined winner—since Job neither became a sinner nor continued along in righteous piety, but challenged his Creator. The gamble, then, "is a metaphor of our uncertainty, not God's"[49]: since infinite wisdom (i.e. God's explanations) must be unaccountable, the story of Job highlights for modern Jewish thinkers the unexplainable circumstances of suffering that has informed Jewish thought and contributed to a sense of Jewish identity.

The final literary trajectory of disputation is, by far, the most dominant trajectory in the Book of Job. The formal structure of disputation is as follows: there is an address of the opponent, an ensuing accusation and argument, and a concluding summary statement. The canonical shape of Job is dominated by disputation as the three lengthy debates between Job and his friends end without a resolution, as does the dispute with God at the climax. What is apparent from this dominant trajectory is that the story of Job "insists that suffering may be left unexplained."[50] As Job is faced with intolerable circumstances, the readers are faced with the theological predicament of how to respond to injustice. Further, as pious followers, the readers must ascertain whether absolute acceptance of one's fate, or challenges to perceived unfairness is the legitimate response. As God responds to Job's accusations without explanation, "we are faced, if we are to follow the Jobian direction, to be agnostic with respect to the matter of theodicy."[51]

[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Kraemer, *Responses to Suffering in Classical Rabbinic Literature*, 33.
[51] Ibid.

Modern interpretations of the Book of Job affirm the notion that early Jewish identity was shaped by the misunderstood conceptions of suffering at the time, and by the peoples' ambiguous relationship with God. As a method to understanding their suffering, contemporary Jewish scholarship claims that "if God did not care, God would not punish,"[52] meaning those who are punished must be God's people and nation. As expressed in Job, early Jewish identity is largely characterized by suffering, which "test[s], refine[s], and ultimately improve[s] the sufferer."[53]

While some modern scholars see the final theophany and response as an affirmation of God's mysterious and inarticulable ways, others claim Job's response demonstrates to the readers that "only faith may form a proper and adequate answer."[54] Regardless, the story of Job is a critique of conventional ancient Near Eastern wisdom and mythology.[55] While this mythology claims the moral orders and natural orders of the universe are directly related, the story of Job shows that God is not bound by human-imposed morality and humanity is defined by struggles for justice. Thus, modern interpreters of Job claim that the reality of suffering is beyond human morality.[56] Ultimately, contemporary Jewish theologians conclude that early Jewish identity was understood through the lens of suffering. Though it would be impossible to track a continuous thought process or sense of identity from ancient Jewish people to contemporary Jewish people, a contemporary understanding of the Book of Job relies on the

[52] Ibid., 23.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid., 32.
[55] Ibid.; Perdue, *Wisdom in Revolt.*
[56] Ibid.

ancient reality of suffering to have proposed a theodicy of unequal providence, the purpose of which "will unfold only in the dimension of eternity."[57]

III. The War Scroll

While the Book of Job is a canonized story of early Judaism, the War Scroll (also referred to as the War Rule), is from a collection of scriptural scrolls discovered in Qumran in 1947, and believed to be written by the Essenes, a Jewish religious sect of the Second Temple Era (150 BCE – 70 CE).[58] While the Essene scrolls were found throughout eleven caves, all but one of the war scrolls (a group of 70 parchment fragments) were found in caves 1 and 4.[59] Around the 4th century BCE, the Qumran community suffered a violent fire that destroyed many of their scrolls; to safeguard the community's scroll collection, they utilized cave four as a working library, scholars hypothesize. To date the War Scroll, scholars argue that since the author made use of the Book of Daniel (which was written shortly after 164 BCE), the War Scroll was written sometime between the middle of the 1st century BCE and the beginning of the 1st century CE.[60] A more accurate dating requires an investigation of the war tactics and strategy outlined in the scroll, which describe Roman, rather than Greek, practices.[61] The discovery of the Qumran scrolls, in general, has afforded direct insight into the "creative literary-religious process"[62] at work within the variegated Judaism before the rise of modern Jewish traditions. By understanding the religious beliefs and background of the Essenes, the theological implications

[57] This quote is referring to Jonathan Lamb's discussion of the unaccountability of infinite wisdom. Essentially, he argues that it is not possible to know the intentions of God (defined here as "Infinite Wisdom"). A contemporary understanding of Job relies on the early Jewish peoples' fascination with theodicy. Lamb, "The Rhetoric of Suffering."
[58] Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English: Revised Edition*, (New York: Penguin Classics, 2011).
[59] Brian Marc Schultz, *Conquering the World: The War Scroll (1QM) Reconsidered*, (Leiden, Boston: BRILL, 2009).
[60] Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English.*
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid., 23.

of the War Scroll as they pertain to Jewish sectarianism and Essene identity can be better expressed. The Essene identity pertains to this religious sect who believed in the fated day in which God would offer salvation to the righteous.

The Essenes' esoteric writing portrays prophecy and apocalyptic thought since they strongly believed they were living in "the end of days,"[63] the period wherein all people would experience either judgement or salvation. There is evidence to suggest that the Essenes attempted to calculate the precise time of the end, while they devoted their exile in the wilderness to the study of the Bible.[64] They believed in fate over freedom of will and envisioned, through their writings, a spiritual afterlife. As just one of the various Jewish sects of the time period, the Essenes believed themselves to be "the final remnant [in] the 'age of wrath,'"[65] and it was up to them alone to correctly interpret the Holy Scriptures, since they believed their writings were the "last interpretation[s] of the law."[66] The Qumran writers interpreted the chaos of their lives as the fulfilment of biblical predictions, and, meditating on various Holy scriptures of the soon-to-be canonized Bible, characterized by covenant ideology, they foresaw in their stories "the fulfilment of the prophetic expectations concerning the salvation of the righteous."[67]

The War Scroll is characterized by "scribal creative freedom, [indicating that] redactor-copyists felt free to improve the composition which they were reproducing."[68] The War Scroll is composed of nineteen badly mutilated columns found in cave 1, and six additional columns found in cave 4. This implies that the War Scroll is not necessarily the work of one author;

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[63] James Vanderkam and Peter Flint, *The Meaning of The Dead Sea Scrolls: Their Significance for Understanding The Bible, Judaism, Jesus, and Christianity*, (London: T&T Clark International, 2002), 264.
[64] Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English.*
[65] Ibid., 69.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid., 84.
[68] Ibid., 23.

rather, some scholars hypothesize that columns 1-9 were more primitive and columns 10-19 were added shortly after the 1st century BCE.[69] J. van der Ploeg argues a different hypothesis. He claims that columns 1 and 15-19 were additions to the middle columns 2-14: columns 1 and 15-19 describe a prophetic, eschatological battle inspired by the Book of Daniel, whereas columns 2-14 describe rules of military and religious preparation associated with the "conduct of fighting."[70] Determining the chronology of the War Scroll portions is imperative to understanding what the Essenes' found necessary to add. For instance, Brian Schultz, in *Conquering the World: The War Scroll (1QM) Rediscovered*, argues that the author of the War Scroll intended to have a two-stage eschatological war (as described in column 1 and expanded on in column 2) since the arrival of the Romans onto the "sectarians' political horizon"[71] demanded the envisioning of a bolder, more miraculous war. A deeper analysis of the contents of the War Scroll will illuminate the theology and an understanding of identity that can be gleaned from the writing.

In general, the War Scroll describes the ultimate eschatological war between the forces of good (Sons of Light) and forces of evil (Sons of Darkness) lasting 40 years, and details a series of battles complete with descriptions of chronological considerations, divisions of the armies, tactical issues, types of weaponry, and instructions for priests and ritual practices, "all for the purpose of insuring victory to the Sons of Light."[72] The outline of the War Scroll can be split into three broad sections. Column 1 describes the eschatological war, annihilation of the Sons of Darkness, and service to God during the war years. Columns 2-14 detail descriptions of the trumpets, banners, shields, divisions of the armies, cavalry, recruitment age of soldiers, ministry

[69] Schultz, *Conquering the World.*
[70] Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English,* 164.
[71] Schultz, *Conquering the World,* 402.
[72] Ibid., 11.

of the Priests and Levites, maneuvers of the battle divisions, prayers, and blessings.[73] Columns 15-19 describe the "Final Battle,"[74] divided into seven rounds,[75] the Thanksgiving for the final victory, and the ceremony after the Final Battle.

Though there are scholarly disagreements over the form and theological implications of the story presented in the War Scroll, scholars agree that the original length of the text is not known[76] and some portions were added at a later date—either the middle portion (columns 2-14) or the first and last portions (columns 1, 15-19). Contemporary scholarship claims that the additions indicate that the author(s) felt they were necessary to address the chaos of the particular moment in their history.[77] Thus, modern Jewish scholars can offer insight into the theological implications of the War Scroll.

Geza Vermes, in *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English: Revised Edition*, argues that the War Scroll "should not be mistaken for a manual of military warfare;"[78] instead, it symbolizes the eternal struggle between equally matched, opposing spirits of light and darkness. Born into a world of "eschatological ferment, of intense expectation of the end,"[79] the Essenes envisioned a universal war that would destroy their oppressors and return them to their holy land of Israel from their place in exile. Detailed in the War Scroll, the Sons of Light are identified as the tribes of Levi, Judah, and Benjamin, "those exiled to the wilderness"[80]—a metaphorical hint

[73] Vanderkam and Flint, *The Meaning of The Dead Sea Scrolls.*
[74] Ibid., 366.
[75] The seven rounds are further subdivided: three in which the Sons of Light have the upper-hand, followed by three in which the Sons of Darkness are superior, and concluding with the final victory of the Sons of Light in round seven due to "God's miraculous intervention." Schultz, *Conquering the World,* 402.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English,* 165.
[79] Ibid., 84.
[80] Vanderkam and Flint, *The Meaning of The Dead Sea Scrolls,* 220.

toward the spiritual exile felt by the Essenes—with the Angel Michael as their "Prince of Light."[81]

The Sons of Darkness are given many names throughout the War Scroll, starting out as Israel's neighbors, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Amalek, and Philistia. They are eventually identified as the "kittim of Asshur [Assyria],"[82] the kittim of Egypt, and the kings of the north, with Belial as the "prince of the dominion of wickedness."[83] As a historical designation for a non-Jewish group, "kittim" usually refers to either the Greeks or the Romans. In the War Scroll, however, "kittim" implies the final opponents of the eschatological Israel are the Seleucids (another Jewish sect of the time).[84] Seeing themselves in opposition to the Seleucids, the Essenes devised a prophetic future, written in the War Scroll, whereby all "people of God"[85] who have returned from exile and who have not aligned themselves with the Seleucids will fight a 40-year war. Some scholars have argued the Essenes' desire for eschatological war and God's ultimate intervention on their behalf reflects the oppression they felt from Roman imposition, not anger toward the Seleucids.[86] Or perhaps, their desire for eschatological war was a reaction to their experience of oppression. Regardless, after the victory, the Sons of Light will "go up,"[87] implying they will return to Jerusalem and the spiritual exile from God will have been lifted.

The 40-year war is subdivided so that five are sabbatical years, six are set aside for a fight between the entire congregation and the entire kittim, and the remaining 29 years are a "War of Divisions," during which the Sons of Light will fight against specific enemies (who are listed

[81] John J. Collins, "The Mythology of Holy War in Daniel and the Qumran War Scroll: A Point of Transition in Jewish Apocalyptic," *Vetus Testamentum*, 25, Fasc. 3 (1975): 609.
[82] Vanderkam and Flint, *The Meaning of The Dead Sea Scrolls,* 220.
[83] Collins, "The Mythology of Holy War in Daniel and the Qumran War Scroll," 609.
[84] Schultz, *Conquering the World*; Vanderkam and Flint, *The Meaning of The Dead Sea Scrolls.*
[85] Schultz, *Conquering the World*, 394.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.

based on the genealogies of Noah's son).[88] The strict schedule outlined in the War Scroll "assumes that there can be no defeat or even set-backs for the Sons of Light…as if victory is guaranteed ahead of time."[89] The entire War Scroll is predicated on the idea that "the pattern for the final struggle has already been determined and will transpire according to plan."[90] This Essene belief has strong implications regarding their sense of identity and their view of others, as it "distinguishes their theology from the views of the other major groups in Jewish society at the time."[91]

James Vanderkam and Peter Flint, in *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Their Significance for Understanding The Bible, Judaism, Jesus, and Christianity*, challenge Vermes' claim, arguing that the War Scroll "is not a true apocalypse, but rather a rule book that closely resembles Greco-Roman tactical manuals on how a war should be conducted."[92] Modern scholars suggest that this interpretation of the War Scroll could imply the Essenes' identification with the Greco-Roman rule.[93] Even with this claim, they then argue that the ancient military treatises within the scroll have strong theological implications, in which the final war is a ritual of a "predestined end."[94] Despite scholarly quarrels regarding the theological implications of the War Scroll, its basic mythic pattern expresses the concept of dualism, which modern scholars have suggested contributes to shaping Essene thought and identity.

The mythical foundation of the War Scroll is dualistic, in that the period of struggle is shared equally by the two spirits. In traditional Jewish mythology, holy war describes wars on

[88] Vanderkam and Flint, *The Meaning of The Dead Sea Scrolls.*
[89] Schultz, *Conquering the World,* 395.
[90] Vanderkam and Flint, *The Meaning of The Dead Sea Scrolls,* 244.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Vanderkam and Flint, *The Meaning of The Dead Sea Scrolls,* 365.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid., 221.

Earth as reflections of wars between the divinities in Heaven, such that "nationalism was given a mythological expression."[95] Furthermore, the mythic pattern of conflict between a god and a monster (representing chaos) is a central motif in early Jewish apocalyptic literature. The War Scroll, however, does not derive its basic structure from that of a chaos myth, but rather from the "Persian dualism of light and darkness."[96] It is believed that the Persian rule (539 BCE – 312 BCE) ended before the assumed writing of the War Scroll (1st century BCE); however, Persian mythology influenced the writings and thoughts of early Judaism, and its various sects. The War Scroll is an example of the combination and modification of early Israelite traditions and Persian myth.[97]

The implications of Persian influence are threefold: the Essenes identified themselves as dependent on God's intervention for their ultimate survival; evil is ever-present in the world but not as unjustified suffering; and the dualism of the eschatological battle is not ethnic or nationalistic, but moralistic.[98] First, regarding identity, the Essenes viewed God as their divine warrior who would liberate the chaos that had fallen on the Israelites.[99] Thus, the fate of the Essenes was dependent on God's intervention and their identities were directly tied to God's choices.[100] Second, the equal warring of light and dark implies that "evil has a place in the constitution of the world, not merely as a chaos which occasionally erupts, but as an ever-present factor."[101] Theologically, this implies that the Essenes were not experiencing divine punishment by the catastrophes of the present situation, but were merely undergoing a period of moral

[95] Collins, "The Mythology of Holy War in Daniel and the Qumran War Scroll," 598.
[96] Ibid., 604.
[97] Ibid., 596-612.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.
[100] They believed in the salvation of the righteous: if God chose to save them, then it would have meant they were behaving in accordance with His wishes, and that they were professing a moral identity.
[101] Collins, "The Mythology of Holy War in Daniel and the Qumran War Scroll," 608.

darkness that would end in their favor with God's interjection. Third, the lack of ethnicity or national identity among the good and evil forces implies a new criterion for self-identification of the Essenes and of the opposing forces, opening "the way for a universalistic religion."[102] Contemporary scholarship offers the insight that the Essene identity was characterized most notably by their belief in the end of days; rather than believing that they would succumb to the chaos, the Essenes viewed themselves as the last great interpreters.[103] Therefore, modern scholarship believes that their Essene identity was as equally dependent on God as the Jewish identity presented in the Book of Job.[104]

IV. Conclusion

Though the Book of Job and the War Scroll present identity through different genres, both provide meaning for contemporary Jewish traditions, as they exemplify how the experience of suffering and chaos informed early Jewish and Essene thought. The Book of Job and its concept of suffering was preserved through its canonization. The War Scroll and its concept of external oppression was preserved through its safekeeping in the Qumran library. Both were significant enough to go to lengths to ensure their words would live on after them.

Focusing on unjustified misery, the Book of Job highlights the element of suffering within early Jewish identity, since "there is something in us that resists the spectacle of a destruction that is not in some sense a punishment."[105] The story of Job addressed this human

[102] This rigid dichotomy of good and evil may be seen as a "gross oversimplification of the human condition;" however, for the Essenes, it expressed their faith in God that they would be delivered from the evil rulers and that the exiles would return to the land of Jerusalem. Furthermore, this faith was related to their sense of identity: as long as they acted morally and believed in God and His ability to intervene righteously in their lives, their identity was distinct from the other Jewish sects at the time. Ibid., 612.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Alan Mintz, *Hurban: Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1996), 18.

dilemma for the Jewish people of early antiquity; modern scholars and theologians argue that early Jewish stories (such as the Book of Job) continue to inform Jewish thought since, "centuries later, [people] read the Bible and [seek] explanations for their own suffering, on both the personal and national level."[106] The path by which the story of Job leads the readers to the possible conclusion of unexplainable suffering is important to consider for the Jewish traditions today who understand this story as a "permanent part of the authoritative Jewish literature."[107] Modern theologians claim that the story aims at speaking truthfully about God.[108] From the standpoint of a group of people who view their identity as interlaced with God's identity, the ability to speak honestly about God was of the utmost importance. Viewed through a contemporary lens, the Book of Job is theological, as it is believed that the author(s) attempted to understand the "language about and to God."[109] Further, modern scholars believe the story affirms disinterested righteousness, to place the blame of undeserved suffering on God's shoulders, and to "acknowledge vexing instances that lack a positive correlation between sin and punishment."[110]

Though the findings at Qumran, and the War Scroll specifically, are not part of the canonized Bible (like the Book of Job), they have "substantially altered [the] views concerning the *text* and *canon of the Bible*."[111] Variation in structure characterized these scrolls, though the scriptural message of Essene response to their surroundings remained intact.[112] The findings at

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[106] Kraemer, *Responses to Suffering in Classical Rabbinic Literature*, 22.
[107] Ibid., 30.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Perdue, *Wisdom in Revolt*, 75.
[110] Crenshaw, *The Old Testament Wisdom,* 103.
[111] *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English: Revised Edition*, translated by Geza Vermes, (New York: Penguin Classics, 2011), 15.
[112] Since, at the time of the Qumran writings, there was a hazy concept of 'Bible,' the Qumran scriptural scrolls are characterized by extreme fluidity. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 17; Schofield, "RLGS 3001: Judaism, Class Lectures."

Qumran contributed greatly to the understanding that modern Judaism cannot be wholly understood independent of its history, which was characterized by sectarian splits. The War Scroll's apocalyptic nature reflected the dynamic of oppression and suffering in the moment that it was authored. The War Scroll expresses the identity of the Essenes as the last righteous interpreters of God, who will not succumb to the surrounding chaos. The Book of Job expresses the identity of the early Jewish people as moral challengers to unjustified suffering. Both stories place emphasis on the groups' freedom from external oppression/unjustified suffering due to God's intervention as long as they maintain a moral identity.

While it is apparent that the Book of Job and the War Scroll are wildly different in form, content, and contextual history, both had literary additions[113] and were responses to the external struggles each group faced.[114] The Book of Job, as Wisdom literature, addressed the issue of theodicy and early Jewish identity,[115] and the War Scroll, as apocalyptic literature, addressed the end times and Essene identity.[116] Despite differing approaches, both of these scriptural texts reflected the external political chaos of each group during the time of authorship. Though there is discontinuity in practice of the contemporary Jewish traditions and early Judaism, there is continuity in the experience of suffering as informing their thought. [117] This is articulated by the writing of, and the continued faith in, past stories of suffering.

[113] Modern scholars suggest that this process of adding elements to preexisting stories could reveal elements of identity at the time it was written. Satlow, *Creating Judaism.*
[114] Ibid.
[115] Early Jewish identity, as understood through the Book of Job, is that of the collective group, dispersed outside their homeland, who maintained that faith in God and moral behavior would protect them from the external oppression they faced.
[116] The Essene identity, as understood through the War Scroll, is that of the collective group that believed in God's ultimate annihilation of the wicked. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English,* 69.
[117] As discussed in the introduction of this paper, the discontinuity in practice of the contemporary Jewish traditions and early Jewish traditions refers to the transition from a place-based religion, which emphasized ritual sacrifice, to a book-based religion, which emphasizes the study of Torah and ritual practices.

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