

The Eschatological Literary Structure of the Old Testament¹

Richard M. Davidson

This chapter builds upon two insightful studies by John Sailhamer which provide a compositional analysis of the macrostructure of the Old Testament.² I will first review the major points made by Sailhamer that are relevant to this study, and then suggest several possible additions and refinements to his excellent work in this area. Much of our attention will be upon the structure of the Pentateuch, but brief attention will also be given to the overall structure of the Old Testament as revealed in the seams between the major blocks of biblical material as they were placed in their final canonical arrangement. The thesis of this study is that the entire Old Testament has been placed in an eschatological casting by the inspired writers/compilers who brought the Old Testament into its final canonical compositional shape. The Old Testament is eschatological not only in much of its content, but also in its overall literary structure. Let us turn first to the Pentateuch.

Sailhamer has clearly pointed out how the Pentateuch is composed of four major literary types: narrative, poetry, law and genealogy. He notes that while the genealogies provide structure to the earlier sections of the

¹I dedicate this study to my friend and colleague, Jacques Doukhan, whose profound and beautiful insights into biblical eschatology have been a rich source of inspiration in my own research, teaching, and writing.

²See John H. Sailhamer, "The Canonical Approach to the OT: Its Effect on Understanding Prophecy," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 30/3 (September 1987): 307-315; and idem, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).

Pentateuch, especially Genesis, they do not serve to structure the Pentateuch as a whole. Likewise, the legal portions of the Pentateuch are clustered in the center of the Pentateuch, but again these collections of laws are not the means for shaping the Pentateuch as a whole. We will return later to the law sections, but first we continue to follow the argument of Sailhamer regarding the Pentateuchal juxtaposition of the two remaining literary genres, i.e., narrative and poetry.

Sailhamer points to a number of examples in the Old Testament outside the Pentateuch where the technique has been employed of using a poetic speech followed by a short epilogue.³ He also lists numerous examples of this technique in the Pentateuch itself.⁴ These examples actually point to a three-fold sequence: (1) narrative, (2) poetic speech, (3) epilogue. Already, in the opening chapters of Genesis, this literary sequence may be observed. The creation account of Gen 1 - 2:22 is narrative, followed by the poetic speech of Adam (2:23) and a short epilogue (2:24). Likewise, the account of the Fall in Gen 3:1-13 is a narrative, followed by a divine poetic speech (Gen 3:14-19) and an epilogue (Gen 3:20-24). The fact that this structuring

³See Josh 10:12-13; Judg 5:1-30; 1 Sam 2:1-10; 2 Sam 22:1 - 23:7; Neh 9:1-37. Perhaps implied by Sailhamer, but not explicitly noted, these poetic speeches are actually part of a larger literary compositional structure in the sequence of narrative, poetic speech, and epilogue: Josh 10:1-11 (narrative of the sun standing still), Josh 10:12-13a (poetic speech by Joshua), and Josh 10:13b-15 (epilogue); Judges 4 (narrative of battle of Deborah and Barak against Sisera), Judg 5:1-31a (poetic speech of Deborah and Barak), and 5:31b (epilogue); 1 Samuel 1 (narrative of birth of Samuel); 1 Sam 2:1-10 (poetic utterance of Hannah), and 1 Sam 2:11 (epilogue); 2 Sam 21:1-22:1 (narrative of David's final conquests), 2 Sam 22:2 - 23:7 (poetic utterances of David), and 2 Sam 23:8 - 24:25 (epilogue); and Neh 8 - 9:4 (narrative of Feast of Tabernacles under the direction of Ezra), Neh 9:5-38 (poetic utterance of the Levites), and Neh 10:1-39 (epilogue).

⁴See the following: Gen 4:1-22 (narrative), Gen 4:23-24 (poetic discourse), and Gen 4:25-26 (epilogue); Gen 6:5 - 8:21 (narrative), 8:22 (poetry), 9:1-17 (epilogue); 9:18-24 (narrative), 9:25-27 (poetry), 9:28-29 (epilogue); 14:1-18 (narrative), 14:19-20 (poetry), 14:21-24 (epilogue); 16:1-10 (narrative), 16:11-12 (poetry), 16:13-16 (epilogue); 24:1-59 (narrative), 24:60 (poetry), 24:61-67 (epilogue); 25:1-22 (narrative), 25:23 (poetry), 25:24-26 (epilogue); 27:1-26 (narrative), 27:27-29 (poetry), 27:30-38 (narrative), 27:39-40 (poetry), 27:41-45 (epilogue); 37:1 - 48:14 (narrative), 48:15-16 (poetry), 48:17-22 (epilogue).

sequence of narrative/poetic speech/epilogue is found so frequently in the Pentateuch on the microstructural level suggests the possibility that this same technique may be employed in structuring the Pentateuch as a whole.

Sailhamer has demonstrated that such is the case. The major Pentateuchal narrative blocks are punctuated by four major poetic texts, each then followed by an epilogue. First, the patriarchal narratives of Genesis are concluded by the major poetic text of Genesis 49 followed by an epilogue (Genesis 50). Second, the Exodus narrative block (Exodus 1-14) is capped off by another major poetic text (Moses' and Miriam's songs in Exod 15:1-21) followed by an epilogue (Exod 15:22-27). Third, the narrative block of Israel's experience in the wilderness (Numbers 1-22) is climaxed by the poetic oracles of Balaam (Numbers 23-24) and an epilogue (Numbers 25). Finally, as Sailhamer puts it, "the pattern can be seen to embrace the whole of the Pentateuch in that the whole of the narrative of the Pentateuch, which stretches from Genesis 1 through Deuteronomy, is concluded by the poetic Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32-33) and the epilogue of chap. 34."⁵

Sailhamer focuses his attention upon three of these "macrostructural junctures" in the Pentateuch: namely Genesis 49, Numbers 24, and Deuteronomy 31. He points out how in all of these junctures the material which connects the poetic sections to the preceding narrative sections contains similar terminology and motifs. In each there is (1) a central narrative figure (Jacob, Balaam, Moses), who (2) calls together an audience in the imperative (Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Deut 31:28), (3) to proclaim (cohortative) (Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Deut 31:28) (4) what will happen (Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Deut 31:29) (5) in "the end of days" (Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Deut 31:29).

Sailhamer has argued that the phrase *bē'ahārīt hayyāmīm* "in the end of days" or "in the last days" provides the indication that the meaning of the poetic passages is "eschatological." By "eschatological," Sailhamer seems to mean indefinite future time, but which also embraces the ultimate eschatological consummation of salvation history.

⁵Sailhamer, "Canonical Approach to the OT," 309.

Sailhamer further argues that by placing the “eschatological” poetic speeches after the narrative sections, the author is seeking to point out that the narratives are also to be seen as having eschatological significance. As Sailhamer states it, “In sum, the apparent overall strategy of the author in these three segments suggests that one of the central concerns lying behind the final shape of the Pentateuch is an attempt to uncover an inherent relationship between the past and the future. That which happened to God’s people in the past portends of future events. . . . Because of the terminology he uses (viz., ‘the end of days’), we could call it an eschatological reading of his historical narratives. The narrative texts of past events are presented as pointers to future events. Past events foreshadow the future.”⁶ Sailhamer labels this feature “narrative typology.”⁷

I will not seek to further substantiate Sailhamer’s basic thesis, which I believe is already on a sound footing. Rather, in the remainder of this chapter, I will suggest how the outworking of this thesis may illuminate the overall eschatological literary structure and content of the Pentateuch in more detail and greater comprehensiveness than Sailhamer has described so far (at least from what I have seen in print).

First, let us look more closely at the three poetic seams coming at the three macrostructural junctures in the Pentateuchal narratives that Sailhamer focuses upon as noted above: Genesis 49, Numbers 23-24, and Deuteronomy

⁶Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 37. In his original *JETS* article, “Canonical Approach to the OT,” 311, Sailhamer adds an intriguing footnote which bolsters his conclusion of an eschatological outlook to the whole Pentateuch. He argues that the author of the Pentateuch had an eschatological purpose behind his choice of the particular word for “in the beginning” in Genesis 1:1, while elsewhere in Genesis two other Hebrew words for “in the beginning” are used and never this one (cf. Gen 13:3, 4). The Hebrew *rēš’it* (“beginning”) occurs regularly in the Hebrew Bible as an antonym of *’āharit* (“last,” e.g., Isa 46:10: “I declare the end from the beginning.”). Sailhamer concludes his footnote: “Thus the author’s choice of the first word in the Pentateuch strikes a note of anticipation of his last words, which turn the reader’s attention toward the ‘end of the days’ (*’aḥārīt hayyāmim*). The ‘last days’ (*Endzeit*) are like the ‘first days’ (*Urzeit*).”

⁷*Ibid.*, 37-44.

32-33.⁸ We have already noted the “eschatological” context of each poetic seam with the repeated use of the expression “in the last days.” I recognize that this expression can refer to open-ended future time, but like Sailhamer I find that the “last days” also includes a glimpse of the ultimate eschatological fulfillment in salvation history. This is especially underscored, I believe, by the messianic references in each of the poetic passages. In fact, these passages reveal that the very heart of the eschatological focus in the Torah is upon the coming Messiah.

In the *first* poetic passage (*Genesis 49*), Jacob’s last words of blessing are introduced as being given to his twelve sons individually (v. 1), but the conclusion of the blessing reveals that Jacob also had in mind “the twelve tribes of Israel,” not just the individual sons (v. 28). Among the blessings upon each tribe, two tribes are singled out by Jacob for extended blessing: viz., Judah and Joseph. Close reading of these two extended blessings indicates that both point beyond the tribe to a future messianic figure that will come “in the last days” [*bē’ahārīt hayyāmîm*].

In Gen 49:10, Jacob predicts: “The scepter [*šēbet*]⁹ shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver [*mēhōqeq*]¹⁰ from between his feet, until [*‘ad kî*] Shiloh [*šīlōh*] comes; and to him shall be the obedience of the people.” This verse indicates a succession in the royal line of Judah that will not be interrupted till the appearance of Shiloh. The appellation Shiloh, probably coming from the Hebrew verb *šlh*, “to be at ease, quiet, tranquil, to prosper,”¹¹ in contrast points to a future royal messianic figure who would

⁸Refer to chart 1, p. 18, as we proceed.

⁹For parallels with this meaning, see Num 24:17; Judg 5:14; Pss 2:9; 45:7 (v. 6, Eng.); Ezek 19:11; Zech 10:11; cf. Willem A. VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 4:26-29; R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 2:897. The translations in this chapter largely follow the NKJV, but are sometimes modified in light of my understanding of the Hebrew original.

¹⁰Or “commander’s staff”; cf. Num 21:18; Ps 60:9 (v. 7, Eng.); 108:9 (v. 8, Eng.).

¹¹See Jerusalem Talmud *Sanhedrin* 98b, and the extended discussion by C. F. Keil, “The First Book of Moses,” in *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, vol. 1, *The Pentateuch: Three Volumes in One*, trans. James

usher in an age of peace and prosperity and obedience to his rule. The picture of the Messiah is highlighted in the preceding verses (vv. 8-9), with the imagery of a warrior victorious over his enemies, and a lion resting after taking his prey. It is also further developed in the succeeding verses (vv. 11-12) with the imagery of an exuberant, invigorating, abundant Golden Age (with choice vines so plentiful they are used as the Messiah's hitching posts for his donkey; and wine so abundant it is used for washing the Messiah's clothes).

The whole cluster of messianic imagery in this passage is picked up by later Old Testament writers with reference to the Messiah (see Zech 9:9 [cf. Matt 21:2, 5]; Isa 63:1-6) and in particular by John the Revelator in the New Testament in describing Christ. It is interesting to note that Revelation's usage of this imagery refers first to the Messiah's coronation/inauguration at the commencement of his heavenly reign (Rev 5:5, 9; see the imagery of Lion, Judah, triumph, blood, nations). It also refers to the consummation of history at his second coming (Rev 19:11-15; see the robe dipped in blood and the treading of the wine press). Both the inauguration and consummation of Christ's salvation history is envisaged in the fulfillment of this imagery.

In this same chapter of Genesis 49, the other son of Jacob who receives an extended blessing is Joseph (vv. 22-26), and again close reading of these verses reveals messianic allusions. According to 1 Chr 5:1-2, even though it was Judah who would be the ruler, it was Joseph who received the spiritual birthright of the double blessing (note the incorporation of both of his sons as separate tribes as a result of Jacob's blessing of them in Gen 48:8-22). The indication of the messianic nature of the blessing to Joseph comes to the fore in v. 24, with what Derek Kidner notes is an "abrupt aside and impersonal reference to God, for no apparent reason."¹² The verse reads literally with my suggested interpretation, "But his [Joseph's] bow remained in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the

Martin (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 1:393-401.

¹²Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 221.

Mighty One of Jacob—[and now the abrupt aside] from there [*miššâm*; i.e., from the Mighty One of Jacob] is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel [i.e., the Messiah].” This allusion seems to underscore the divine character of the Messiah—he will be the Shepherd and Stone of Israel (titles of divinity elsewhere in Scripture).¹³

A messianic allusion is also apparent in v. 26 in the use of the term used for Joseph, *nāzîr*, which has been translated “consecrated” or “separated,” but elsewhere *nzr* has reference to priestly/royal functions¹⁴ and here seems to point forward to a royal/priestly line of the Messiah. Furthermore, the descriptions of the future of Joseph, like those of Judah, highlight the fruitfulness and blessings of the Messianic Age: v. 22, a fruitful bough by a well with branches running over the wall; vv. 25-26, the blessings of the heaven and the deep, the breasts and womb, exceeding all the blessings of his ancestors.

But there is also a hint of the sufferings of the Messiah, in the description of Joseph’s experience in v. 23: “The archers have bitterly grieved him, shot at him and hated him.” From this reference (and other allusions to the sufferings of Joseph in Scripture¹⁵), rabbinic interpreters came to the conclusion that there would be two Messiahs, one the kingly Messiah son of David (of the line of Judah), and the other the suffering Messiah son of Joseph. Christian interpreters, building on Old Testament passages such as Daniel 9 and the messianic references in Isaiah and Zechariah, see the royal and suffering motifs converge in a single messianic figure, Jesus, as proclaimed in the New Testament.¹⁶

¹³See Pss 23:1; 80:1; Eccl 12:11; Isa 8:14; 28:16; 1 Pet 2:7-8.

¹⁴Cf. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 634; Deut 33:17; Exod 29:6; 39:30; Lev 8:9.

¹⁵See especially Gen 40:15; Ps 105:17-18; Amos 6:6; Zech 10:6.

¹⁶For specific references to rabbinic and Christian sources, and further discussion and substantiation of points made here regarding the messianic interpretation of the blessing upon Joseph in Genesis 49, see Jan Å. Sigvartsen, “Messiah Son of Joseph: Genesis 49:22-26” (M.A. thesis, Andrews University, 1998).

Moving now from Genesis 49, I would like to focus briefly on the last of the major Pentateuchal poetic passages pointed out by Sailhamer, i.e., *Deuteronomy 32-33*. Especially in Deuteronomy 33, we have another blessing of the twelve tribes, paralleling that of Genesis 49, but this time by Moses before his death. As we have seen, this blessing is also in context of the “end of the days” (Deut 31:22), which points to the indefinite future but also seems to include the Messianic Age to Come. In his blessing Moses (like Jacob) singles out two tribes for extended attention, again Joseph, but also Levi (not Judah as in Genesis 49). The use of the term *nāzîr* in reference to Joseph (v. 16) appears to have the same messianic implications as in Genesis 49, which we have already discussed. With regard to Levi, the use of the term *hāsîd* “holy one” in v. 8 seems to suggest messianic implications, especially in light of the intertextual linkage of this term with a divine Messiah elsewhere in the OT.¹⁷ By alluding to the Messiah in connection with Levi, Moses provides another typological window into the nature of the eschatological messianic role—the Messiah is to be the antitypical Priest, who is cultic mediator and offerer of sacrifice, as well as the Teacher of Torah to Israel (v. 10 mentions all these functions).

So far we have seen that the first and last poetic macroseams in the Pentateuch are not only eschatological but focus specifically upon the person and work of the Messiah in the eschatological Age to Come.

Let us now turn to the *third* poetic seam discussed by Sailhamer, viz., *Numbers 23-24*. Sailhamer has penetratingly analyzed the four oracles of Balaam,¹⁸ and shown how the first two (Numbers 23) point back to Israel’s past while the last two (Numbers 24) focus upon the eschatological future messianic king. The distinction between the two sets of oracles is already

¹⁷See the discussion of this term with reference to the Messiah by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 33-34. Kaiser notes in particular that according to Deut 33:8 the “*hāsîd*” was the one tested at Massah, but in the narrative account in Exod 17:2, 7 (cf. Num 20:13) the one who was tested was Yahweh himself. Thus the *hāsîd* is associated with divinity. Kaiser also examines the messianic overtones in the use of *hāsîd* in Hannah’s prayer (1 Sam 2:9-10) and David’s prayer (Ps 16:10).

¹⁸Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 408.

apparent from their introductions. The first two oracles are both introduced by a simple statement: “Then Balaam uttered his oracle” (Num 23:7, 18); but the last two oracles are both introduced with an additional elaborate reference to their visionary character: “Then he uttered his oracle: The oracle of Balaam son of Beor, the oracle of one whose eye sees clearly, the oracle of one who hears the words of God, who sees a vision from the Almighty, who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened” (Num 24:3, 15).

Sailhamer points to many parallels between the two sets of oracles, but the most striking parallel deals with the great salvific event of the Exodus. In Num 23:22, Balaam says of Israel’s past: “God bings *them* [plural] out Egypt; He has strength like a wild ox.” But in Num 24:8, Balaam repeats the exact same line in Hebrew, except he utilizes the singular form, applying it to the future king he has introduced in v 7: “God brings *him* [singular, not plural] out of Egypt; He has strength like a wild ox.” The identity of the “him” as conquering king is further clarified in vv. 8b-9 with the description of his conquering his enemies, the nations (“He shall consume the nations, his enemies”).

His eschatological messianic character is confirmed in the fourth oracle which immediately follows after an introductory reference to “the last days” (v. 14). In the fourth oracle the “him” of the third oracle is now unmistakably the Messiah: “I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; a Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel . . . and destroy all the sons of tumult” (v. 17). As recognized by many evangelical scholars, this is clearly a prediction of the eschatological royal reign of the Messiah and his victory over the forces of evil.

What emerges from this juxtapositioning of Balaamic oracles is that the messianic king is portrayed as experiencing a new eschatological Exodus, recapitulating in his life the events of historical Israel in their Exodus from Egypt and conquest of their enemies.¹⁹

¹⁹For a thorough discussion of these oracles in the context of the New Exodus, with further substantiation of the points made here, see the recent dissertation by Friedbert Ninow, “Indicators of Typology Within The Old Testament: The Exodus Motif” (Ph.D. diss., Andrews University, 1999), 160-169.

We are now in a position to examine the *fourth* of the poetic passages found at the macrostructural junctures of the Pentateuch, i.e., *Exodus 15*. Sailhamer does not give this passage attention when he examines the other three Pentateuchal poetic seams, possibly because it does not contain the same eschatological phrase “in the last days” as the others. But as we noted earlier that Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 32-33 form a pair of poetic passages, both comprising blessings upon the twelve tribes, so now I propose that Exodus 15 and Numbers 23-24 comprise another—inner—pair of poetic passages with a common motif. That motif is the Exodus. Exodus 15 is the Song of Moses, celebrating the Exodus of Israel from Egypt and deliverance from their enemies at the Red Sea. Already in Exodus 15, as Norbert Lohfink has demonstrated and Friedbert Ninow’s dissertation has confirmed, the Exodus is open-ended toward the future, with a description of a future eschatological safe passage of Israel in the midst of their enemies (vv. 14-17) instead of the expected portrayal of passage through the Red Sea.²⁰

This forward-reaching movement in the Song of Moses finds its counterpart in the Balaam oracles, where the Exodus of Israel from Egypt is viewed as prefiguring the Exodus of the messianic king and his conquest of his enemies. Thus, when viewed together, the Song of Moses (Exodus 15) and the Oracles of Balaam (Numbers 23-24) form a pair highlighting the eschatological future and the role of the Messiah in the eschatological New Exodus.

We may conclude that the four poetic passages forming macrostructural seams in the Pentateuch are all eschatological in nature, and together they point to the Messiah at the heart of the eschatological fulfillment. The four poetic passages are framed in a chiasmic arrangement, ABBA, with the matching outer pair focusing on the motif of blessing the twelve tribes, and the matching inner pair focusing on the motif of the Exodus/New Exodus. Taken together, all of these poetic passages, placed after blocks of narrative,

²⁰See Norbert Lohfink, “The Song of Victory at the Sea,” in *The Christian Meaning of the Old Testament*, trans. R. A. Wilson (Milwaukee, WI: Bruce Publishing Co., 1968), 67-86; and Ninow, 141-161.

indicate, as Sailhamer has pointed out, that the narrative portions are to be seen as prefigurative of the eschatological future. Thus, in the compositional strategy of the author of the Pentateuch, the large narrative blocks of the Pentateuch, as well as the poetic seams, are to be read eschatologically, and that eschatology ultimately focuses upon the Messiah. We may therefore speak of the narrative portions of the Pentateuch, along with their poetic seams, as Christocentric eschatology!

What about the major block of the Pentateuch that is not narrative/poetry, namely, the large section of legal material in the central portion of the Torah? I suggest that in the compositional strategy of the Pentateuchal designer, the legal portions of the Pentateuch clustered in its center, especially in the book of Leviticus, are also framed to highlight Christocentric eschatology.

William Shea's detailed analysis of the literary structure of the book of Leviticus reveals that the book is organized in a chiasmic structure.²¹ Members A and A' (chaps. 1-7 and 24-27) deal with sanctuary legislation; members B and B' (chaps. 8-10 and 21-23) deal with priestly legislation; members C and C' (chaps. 11-15 and 17-20) deal with personal legislation. And member D, at the chiasmic climax of Leviticus, is Leviticus 16, the chapter dealing with Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Wilfred Warning, in a recently published doctoral dissertation,²² also arrives at Leviticus 16 as the literary center of the book by means of analyzing the 37 divine speeches that structure the book—18 on each side framing the divine speech in Leviticus 16.

It is beyond the scope of this study to explore in depth the theology of the Day of Atonement, but we can at least point out that this day came at the end of the Hebrew ritual year. Its more accurate name (from Scripture) is not *yôm kippur*, but *yôm hakkippurîm*—the “Day of Atonements,” the “Day of

²¹William H. Shea, “Literary Form and Theological Function in Leviticus,” in *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), 3:131-168. Refer to the center of chart 1, p. 18.

²²Wilfred Warning, *Literary Artistry in Leviticus* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), passim.

Complete or Final Atonement.” All during the year, atonement was made for sins, but this day was the climax of the yearly ritual, in which final atonement was made “for all the sins of Israel” (v. 16) and for the entire sanctuary which had been defiled during the year. It also involved an elimination rite in which the atoned-for sins were eliminated from the camp by means of the Azazel ritual.

The eschatological nature of Leviticus 16 seems implicit in the usage of the word *kālā* “to finish, make an end” in v. 20. Only in this one occurrence in the Pentateuch is there said to be an “end” of atoning work. If the Hebrew ritual year is typological of the entire sweep of salvation history, as many evangelicals have interpreted it, and as a number of clues already in the Old Testament suggest, then the Day of Atonement represents the eschatological climax of salvation history. Jewish interpreters see the Day of Atonement as representing the day of Judgment.²³ In a similar way, the book of Revelation, which is structured around the succession of Levitical sacred times, places the fulfillment of the Day of Atonement in connection with the windup of salvation history through the final eschatological judgment (see Rev 11:19-chap. 20).²⁴ According to the book of Revelation, this antitypical Day of Atonement judgment centers in the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary (Rev 11:19 through Revelation 20) and brings consummation to salvation history. Then can begin the eternal antitypical Feast of Tabernacles in the New Earth (Revelation 21-22).

I tentatively conclude, therefore, that the author/writer/compiler that brought the Pentateuch into its final canonical shape²⁵ had a compositional strategy that cast the entire Pentateuch into an eschatological framework, with the person and work of the coming Messiah at the heart of that

²³Talmud *Rosh Hashanah* 16a, 16b; cf., e.g., Philip Birnbaum, *High Holyday Prayer Book: Yom Kippur* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1960), 282, 506, 508.

²⁴See Richard M. Davidson, “Sanctuary Typology,” in *Symposium on Revelation—Book I*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 6:111-126.

²⁵Though I believe this final “editor” was Moses himself (except for the last chapter of Deuteronomy), my conclusions are not dependent upon Mosaic editorship.

eschatological frame. In a sense, then, the Pentateuch as a whole, from beginning to end, may be seen as messianic eschatology!

I move briefly to the rest of the Old Testament.²⁶ Once again, I am indebted to Sailhamer for foundational insights in what I suggest in the following. In the final two pages of his original article “The Canonical Approach to the OT,” Sailhamer focuses on the seams or stitching that connect the Torah to the Prophets and the Prophets to the Writings.

The stitching that connects Torah to Prophets is, according to Sailhamer, the “last 8 verses of the Torah” (as the Talmud calls it), Deut 34:5-12, which describe the death of Moses, and succession by Joshua. The crucial verse for our purposes in this passage is v. 10: “But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.” This verse is clearly an echo of Deut 18:15-16, which predicts an eschatological prophet to arise in the future. Sailhamer argues that the individualistic description of this prophet in Deut 34:5-7 indicates that this passage was written long after Moses’ time and the next generations after him, and pointed to a specific eschatological prophet, not just the prophetic office. As Sailhamer summarizes, “In the last eight verses of Deuteronomy, however, Moses’ words in chap. 18 are read futuristically and individualistically. In other words, these verses appear to interpret the words of Moses in chap. 18 typologically and eschatologically, precisely the way these words are read in the NT (Acts 3:22; 7:37).”²⁷

Sailhamer does not examine the relationship between the last eight verses of the Torah and Joshua (the person and his book). I suggest that by the positioning of this announcement that no prophet had arisen like Moses immediately after the verse describing Moses’ successor Joshua (Deut 34:9), it is clear that Joshua was not that predicted prophet. At the same time, by juxtapositioning the last eight verses of the Torah just before the book of Joshua, and in harmony with the repetition of numerous descriptions of Joshua in the book of Joshua that are fashioned after those of Moses, it

²⁶Refer to chart 2, p. 19.

²⁷Sailhamer, “The Canonical Approach to the OT,” 315.

becomes apparent that the final editor of the canon (perhaps Ezra) considered Joshua to be a prefiguration along the way to the messianic New Moses that was to arise.²⁸

Furthermore, if God's central charge to Joshua as he took up his responsibilities was to focus upon the Torah (Josh 1:7), and if (as we have already seen) the compositional strategy of Moses throughout the Torah was to highlight messianic eschatology, then this call to focus on the Torah at the beginning of Joshua may provide another eschatological link at the seam between the Torah and the Prophets.

Sailhamer also briefly looks at Mal 3:22-24 [Eng., 4:4-6], the final verses of the Prophets, which he suggests the final shaper of the canon consciously placed at the stitching between the Prophets and the Writings.²⁹ He rightly notes the eschatological focus of these last verses of Malachi with its description of the Day of the Lord.

I would suggest we can go further by recognizing the messianic emphasis of the final chapter of Malachi (3:1-2, Heb. and Eng.) with the Messenger of the Covenant, as well as the messianic reference to the Sun of Righteousness (Mal 3:20; Eng., 4:2). In these final verses of the Prophets (Mal 3:22; Eng., 4:4), we can also see the same call to remember the Torah as appears in the first verses of the Prophets (Josh 1:7-8). Thus an emphasis upon Torah and messianic eschatology emerges from the end of the Prophets.

We may move even further by looking at the beginning of the Writings, with which the Prophets are spliced in the canon. The first book of the Writings is the Psalms. The introduction to the Psalms is comprised of Psalms 1-2. These Psalms are clearly set at the doorway of the Psalms, and in effect, at the doorway of the Writings. It is not without significance that these two introductory psalms highlight the same themes with which the Prophets end—the Torah (Psalm 1) and messianic eschatology (Psalm 2).

²⁸See my discussion of this in my book *In the Footsteps of Joshua* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1995), 24-35; and the passages listed on chart 2, p. 19.

²⁹I don't understand Sailhamer to mean that the final shaper of the canon added these words to Malachi, but that he chose Malachi to be the last book of Prophets at least partly because its final verses provided the perfect stitch with the Writings.

Here again at the juncture of the major canonical blocks of books, attention is drawn back to the Torah (and implicitly its eschatological framework), and explicitly to the Final Eschatological Battle centered in King Messiah.

As a final aspect of the eschatological literary structure of the Old Testament, we may note the canonical “conclusion” of the Hebrew Bible, which is open-ended and actually “begs” to be spliced onto the eschatological and messianic fulfillment of salvation history yet to come. 2 Chronicles 36, the final chapter in the Hebrew Bible, like the other junctures we have examined thus far, climaxes in the eschatological deliverance of Israel from Babylon after the land had “kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years” (2 Chr 36:21). And it ends with the decree of Cyrus, who elsewhere in Scripture is shown to be a type of the Messiah in his final eschatological battle (Isa 44:28; 45:1; Rev 16:12).

In summary and conclusion, the overarching literary macrostructure of the Old Testament may be said to be eschatological, centered in the end-time appearance and work of the Messiah. All the Old Testament Scriptures thus speak of eschatology centered in the Messiah. While we don’t know what Jesus said to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus on Resurrection Sunday, when Luke records that he “expounded to them in *all* the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27), this may not be a hyperbole after all. Moreover, instead of Jesus’ reading back into the Old Testament a meaning foreign to what historical-critical scholars have reconstructed it to be, Jesus’ “hermeneutic” on the way to Emmaus (for that is the word in this verse—*diermeneuō*) may not have been different, after all, than the original eschatological, messianic hermeneutic of the Old Testament writers themselves.

**Chart 1
The Eschatological Literary Structure of the Old Testament: Pentateuch (Torah)**

Literary Block	Prologue	Patriarchal Narrative	Poetry	Epilogue	Exodus Narrative	Poetry	Epilogue	Wilderness Narrative (a)
Scripture	Gen 1-11	Gen 12-48	Gen 49	Gen 50	Exod 1-14	Exod 15a	Exod 15b	Exod 16-40
Eschatological Time	Gen 1:1 "Beginning" Gen 6:13 "End"		"in the last days" Gen 49:1			Future Orientation vv. 16-17		
Person of the Messiah	The "Seed" Gen 3:15	The "Seed" Gen 22:17-18	Shiloh (King) v. 10 Suffering One vv. 22, 24 Divine One vv. 22, 24			[New Exodus]		

Day of Atonement			
16	Personal Legislation	17-20	
11-15	Priestly Legislation	21-23	
8-10	Sanctuary Legislation	24-27	
1-7			
Leviticus			
Eschatological Time: Day of Atonement "end" (16:20) Person of the Messiah: Priest, Sacrifice, Judge			

Literary Block	Wilderness Narrative (b)	Wilderness Narrative (c)	Poetry	Epilogue	Epilogue
Scripture	Num 1-22	Num 23-24	Num 23-24	Num 25	Deut 34
Eschatological Time		"in the last days" 24:14	"in the last days" 31:29		
Person of the Messiah		Conquering King (Star, Scepter), New Exodus 23:22; 24:8, 17-19	The Prophet like Moses Deut 18:15, 18; 34:10	The Levitical Priest 33:8-10	

Chart 2
The Eschatological Literary Structure
of the Old Testament: Prophets and Writings

	Prophets (<i>Nebi'im</i>)		Writings (<i>Kethubim</i>)	
	<i>Introduction</i>	<i>Conclusion</i>	<i>Introduction</i>	<i>Conclusion</i>
	Joshua	Malachi 3-4	Psalms 1-2	2 Chronicles 36
Eschatological Time	Focus on (eschatological) Torah (1:7)	Day of the Lord, focus on (eschatological) Torah (3:22-24 [4:4-6, Eng.])	Focus on (eschatological) Torah (Ps 1) Final Eschatological Battle (Ps 2)	Eschatological deliverance of Israel from Babylon (36:22-23)
Person of the Messiah	Joshua: A type of the eschatological prophet like Moses (1:5; cf. Num 13:8, 16; Deut 18:15-17; 34:10-12; Exod 23:23; Deut 31:3, 23; Isa 49:8)	Messenger of the covenant (3:1-3) Sun of Righteousness (3:20 [4:2, Eng.])	Messianic king (Ps 2)	Cyrus a type of the Messiah (36:22; cf. Isa 44:28; 45:1; Rev 16:12)