

# THE PASCHAL ROLE OF ΠΑΣΧΩ IN THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

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**Abstract.** The word *πάσχω*, “to suffer,” occurs several times in the Wisdom of Solomon, especially in chaps. 11-19, and specifically to refer to the final punishment of the wicked Egyptians through the last plague and the defeat at the Red Sea. Pseudo-Solomon creatively uses this term to subtly evoke a larger understanding of Passover (*πάσχα*), with both temporal and eschatological implications for righteous and wicked individuals. The subsequent *πάσχω* / *πάσχα* wordplay further illustrates three guiding principles that Pseudo-Solomon highlights in the second half of the book. Above all, the wordplay emphasizes that one experiences God’s unified just activity as either reward or punishment depending on one’s disposition and overall response to God.

**Keywords:** Wisdom of Solomon, Passover, suffering, *πάσχω*, *πάσχα*, wordplay.

## 1. Introduction

The story of the Israelites’ liberation from slavery in the Book of Exodus has shaped Jewish worship and identity throughout the ages. This central event in the Torah deeply informs what it means to be a Jew in covenantal relationship with the Almighty God who is not only creator and maintainer of the world as a whole, but also the caretaker and savior of his special chosen people, Israel. Thus, these narratives have served as a touchstone for many Israelites and Jews, as reflected in biblical texts outside the Torah (e.g., Joshua 24:4-7; Psalms 78:12-55; 105:23-45; 135:8-9; 136:10-16; Hosea 2:16-17; Jer 39:20-21; and Isaiah 43:15-17) as well as in late Second Temple Jewish literature (e.g., Jubilees 46-49; 1 Enoch 89:10-27; Pseudo-Philo 9-10; Ezekiel the Tragedian’s *Exagoge*; and Philo’s *On the Life of Moses*). It comes as no surprise then that the author of the Wisdom of Solomon (henceforth, Pseudo-Solomon) uses this central event as a lens by which to view various sapiential themes, but especially the pursuit of righteousness rather than wickedness. In the second half of his work, namely Wis 10:15-19:22, Pseudo-Solomon re-views the events of the exodus from Egypt in terms of the oppression of the righteous Israelites by the wicked Egyptians. In Wis 18:5-19:13, in particular, he focuses on the significance of

God's protection of his people through the first Passover and subsequent escape in stark contrast to the unfolding punishment of the Egyptians through the last plague and the annihilation of Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea. Scholars have conducted a variety of fruitful, in-depth studies on Pseudo-Solomon's treatment of these events;<sup>1</sup> however, one feature of this treatment that has thus far eluded all commentators is that in four instances (Wis 12:27; 18:11, 19; 19:13) Pseudo-Solomon uses derivations of the Greek word *πάσχω*, "to suffer," with reference to the punishment of the Egyptian oppressors of the Israelites.<sup>2</sup> I will argue that he uses this term to create a subtle, yet deliberate, wordplay on the etymologically-unrelated Greek word *πασχα* (*pascha*), which is the LXX's transliteration for the Hebrew word *פסח* (*pesah*), "Passover." This wordplay is significant because it supports several principles asserted throughout the book: 1. the punishment of the wicked is simultaneously a means of blessing for the righteous, 2. sinners are justly punished not only *because of* but also *by means of* the very sins that they commit, and 3. the cosmos / creation itself fights to save and reward the righteous and to afflict and punish the wicked, with an ultimate view toward judgment at the end of time.

## 2. Investigating the *πάσχω* / *πασχα* Wordplay in the Wisdom of Solomon

How do we know that Pseudo-Solomon's fourfold use of *πάσχω* is most likely a deliberate wordplay on the word *πασχα*, which never explicitly occurs in his work? To sufficiently answer this question, we need to be aware of a few general features of the Wisdom of Solomon, and also, to appreciate the unique context in which Pseudo-Solomon uses *πάσχω* in the book in light of its occurrence in the rest of the LXX.

<sup>1</sup> For a study that focuses on Pseudo-Solomon's treatment of Passover in particular, see PRIOTTO, *Prima Pasqua*. For other treatments of this topic within a general investigation of Wisdom 10:15-19:22, see SCHWENK-BRESSLER, *Sapientia Salomonis*, esp. 256-81, 296-314; CHEON, *Exodus Story*, esp. 68-107; ENNS, *Exodus Retold*, esp. 43-134. Notable treatments within key commentaries on the Wisdom of Solomon as a whole include LARCHER, *Livre de la Sagesse*, esp. 3:993-1025, 1043-69; SCARPAT, *Libro della Sapienza*, esp. 3:264-321; WINSTON, *Wisdom of Solomon*, esp. 313-25; MAZZINGHI, *Libro della Sapienza*, 679-733. None of these scholarly works mentions the *πάσχω* / *πασχα* wordplay.

<sup>2</sup> The word *πάσχω* also occurs in Wis 18:1 (as noted by MICHAELIS, "πάσχω," 5:908; GÄRTNER, *Komposition und Wortwahl*, 200), however, in a pluperfect form (*ἔπεπόνθεισαν*). See n. 18 below for my brief treatment of *πάσχω* in this verse.

## 2.1 General Features that Foster Wordplay in the Book

Pseudo-Solomon has a predilection for veiled references and creative use of language, which he exhibits throughout his work. There are several layers to explore here. First, the author regularly alludes to biblical figures, places, and events but rarely uses proper nouns to identify them.<sup>3</sup> The explicit references to the Pentapolis (Πενταπόλεως) in Wis 10:6 and the Red Sea (θάλασσαν ἐρυθράν / ἐρυθρᾶς θαλάσσης) in Wis 10:18; 19:7 are the only exceptions. All other figures and events are identifiable by context if one is familiar with the biblical stories, with the figures falling into one of two camps—either righteous, holy, and wise or unrighteous, ungodly, wicked, and foolish. Pseudo-Solomon even veils his own identity, but he strongly hints by context (especially in Wis 9:8 as builder of the Temple) that he is purportedly wise King Solomon of the distant past. Scholars debate the reason for this veiled retelling of biblical stories. Some, like John Collins, contend that Pseudo-Solomon’s veiled references communicate a universal pursuit of wisdom reflected through “representative type” rather than advocating “historical particularity.”<sup>4</sup> Others, like Randall Chesnutt, astutely note that, while universalist tendencies pervade the book, the lack of specific names and ethnicities does not entirely negate a concurrent historical particularism in which Pseudo-Solomon tends to emphasize Israel and its ancestral heroes as God’s special and righteous people in various ways throughout his work.<sup>5</sup> Regardless of the exact reason for the general lack of names, this feature adds a somewhat riddle-like dimension to the text, so that Pseudo-Solomon’s primary audience of Alexandrian Jews naturally (and perhaps even delightfully) would have “decoded” the identities of the well-known figures of their religious heritage.

Second, Pseudo-Solomon’s notion of wisdom seems to include an ability to understand the veiled references that he alludes to in his work. In Wis 8:4-8, Pseudo-Solomon tries to convince his audience that they should pursue Sophia (wisdom personified as a feminine figure) because she has the experience that can lead them to the most fulfilling life, culminating in immortality and enduring friendship with God. In v. 8, in particular, he states:

<sup>3</sup> REESE, *Hellenistic Influence*, 144; COLLINS, *Jewish Wisdom*, 214; CHEON, *Exodus Story*, 110-11; CHESNUTT, “Covenant,” 224, 239; ZURAWSKI, “Crafted Ambiguity,” 93.

<sup>4</sup> COLLINS, *Jewish Wisdom*, 215. See also REESE, *Hellenistic Influence*, 144-45; ZURAWSKI, “Crafted Ambiguity,” 93, 100.

<sup>5</sup> CHESNUTT, “Covenant,” 246. Winston (*Wisdom of Solomon*, 139) states: “For the author of *Wisdom*, however, the biblical personalities are historical figures and not mere types as they are for Philo.”

But if someone desires much experience,  
 she [i.e., Sophia] knows the things of old and infers the things to come;  
 she understands the subtleties of expression (στροφᾶς λόγων) and  
     the solutions to riddles (λύσεις αἰνιγμάτων);  
 signs and wonders (σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα) she knows in advance,  
 As well as the outcomes of seasons and times.<sup>6</sup>

Sophia knows the past, present, and future, and one who seeks and acquires her will have access to that knowledge as well. For Pseudo-Solomon, knowledge of the past undoubtedly includes the veiled biblical figures and events that he will treat very soon in Wisdom 10-19. Present knowledge includes the ability to understand turns of phrase and to solve riddles. Fittingly, what Pseudo-Solomon means here in itself requires insight. Not only does one require wisdom to understand human modes of communication and to problem-solve, in general, but one also needs wisdom to understand the wordplay and veiled imagery in Pseudo-Solomon's own book, in particular. Knowledge of Scripture, especially understanding and living out the imperishable light of the Law (Wis 18:4), which comes from God through Sophia (Wis 6:18; 9:13-18) and is encapsulated in events recounted in the Pentateuch, predisposes one to better understand the sapiential subtleties of Pseudo-Solomon's message. The reference to "signs and wonders" in Wis 8:8d most likely alludes to this idea as well. Although in this instance σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα, "signs and wonders," seems to refer most immediately to Sophia's future knowledge, throughout the LXX and especially in the Pentateuch, this phrase often refers to the plagues and other mighty deeds that God brings about to save his people from slavery in Egypt.<sup>7</sup> Thus, "signs and wonders" could be another way of reiterating both the "things of old" and "things to come" in v. 8b, since what God has done in the past, he can do again to help his people in every age (Wis 19:22). Furthermore, the "signs and wonders" of Exodus are indeed past events, but in terms of the unfolding of his work, Pseudo-Solomon will recount them in the near future (in general throughout Wisdom 10-19, but he also explicitly uses this stock phrase in Wis 10:16). Thus, one should carefully read his imminent retelling of those events with Sophia's special help, that is, being attuned to "subtleties of speech and solutions to riddles."

Lastly, Pseudo-Solomon regularly plays with language and imagery in profound and inventive ways. Multiple examples of wordplay (*paronomasia*)

<sup>6</sup> All biblical translations are my own unless otherwise noted. The Greek text of the Wisdom of Solomon is from ZIEGLER, *Sapientia Salomonis*. All other texts of the LXX are from Rahlfs, and all texts of the MT are from BHS.

<sup>7</sup> For example, see Exod 7:3; 11:9-10; Deut 4:34; 6:22; 7:19 [in Deuteronomy *et passim*, at least 10 times]; Ps 77:43; 104:27; 134:9; Jer 39:20-21.

occur throughout the book, such as τῆς ἰδίας ἀδιότητος in Wis 2:23 and ὁσίως τὰ ὄσια ὁσιωθήσονται in Wis 6:10.<sup>8</sup> Also, sometimes he uses terms with more than one meaning, but does not always clearly indicate which one he intends.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, perhaps he allows for all possible meanings in order to add depth to his message. One notable example is his use of the term *παῖς*, “servant” and/or “child,” in various passages that treat the righteous one’s relationship with God (Wis 2:13; 9:4; 12:7, 20; 19:6) and, thus, richly evokes a sense of both servanthood and sonship toward the divine.<sup>10</sup> In other instances, Pseudo-Solomon appears to use Greek words for the first (and sometimes only) time or uses well-attested words in new contexts to produce new meanings.<sup>11</sup> Although some scholars see these usages as evidence of his lack of facility with Greek, that is too simplistic an explanation in every case.<sup>12</sup> While reflecting on some of these linguistic considerations, as well as others, Luca Mazzinghi aptly concludes: “...our author [i.e., Pseudo-Solomon] is an authentic creator of language.”<sup>13</sup> Overall, Pseudo-Solomon’s predilection for veiled references and creative use of terms sets the stage for better understanding his unique use of *πάσχω* in the book.

## 2.2 Other Important Context for the *πάσχω* / *πασχα* Wordplay

The terms *πάσχω* (*paschō*) and *πασχα* (*pascha*) sound strikingly similar but are etymologically unrelated. The former is a Greek word attested as early as the works of Homer, where it “means basically ‘to experience something’ which comes from without and which has to be suffered...”<sup>14</sup> The latter term (more precisely, [τὸ] *πασχα*) first occurs in the LXX in Exodus 12 and is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew terms *פסח* (*pesah*), “Passover” (in Exod

<sup>8</sup> For these and lists of many other examples, see REESE, *Hellenistic Influence*, 27-28; WINSTON, *Wisdom of Solomon*, 16 n. 12; LÉONAS, “Poetics,” 102; MAZZINGHI, “Style,” 391.

<sup>9</sup> For an extensive treatment on Pseudo-Solomon’s intentional use of ambiguity, see ZURAWSKI, “Crafted Ambiguity,” 89-107.

<sup>10</sup> For these alternative senses of *παῖς*, see LUST *et al.*, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 2:347. For other examples of Pseudo-Solomon’s use of polyvalent terms, see GLICKSMAN, “Wisdom of Solomon: Greek,” 488.

<sup>11</sup> For examples, see GLICKSMAN, “Wisdom of Solomon: Greek,” 486-87.

<sup>12</sup> For critiques of Pseudo-Solomon’s use of Greek, see GOODRICK, *Book of Wisdom*, 70-72, 294; REIDER, *Book of Wisdom*, 27-28. See Reese’s (*Hellenistic Influence*, 28-29) defense of Pseudo-Solomon’s use of Greek. For my own assessment, see GLICKSMAN, “Wisdom of Solomon: Greek,” 487.

<sup>13</sup> MAZZINGHI, “Style,” 388.

<sup>14</sup> MICHAELIS, “*πάσχω*,” 5:904. As examples, he offers Odyssey 8.490; 16.275. Also see LUST *et al.*, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 2:361 where they specifically render the use of *πάσχω* in Wis 12:27 as “to suffer punishment” and in Wis 18:19 (more specifically, *κακῶς πάσχουσιν*) as “they are badly off, they are in a terrible plight.”

12:11, 27, 48) and  $\text{פסח}$  (*happasah*), “the Passover” (in Exod 12:21, 43).<sup>15</sup> The Hebrew terms refer both to the event of God’s salvation of the Israelites from (and through) the last plague as well as to the lamb sacrifice that is to be offered, both originally and in future commemorations of that same salvific event.<sup>16</sup> Since Pseudo-Solomon was a Greek-speaking Jew, he would have been familiar with this transliterated Greek term for Passover as it occurs in Exodus 12 and elsewhere in the LXX.<sup>17</sup> Yet, he never explicitly uses the word  $\text{πασχα}$  (or even most of the vocabulary from LXX Exodus 12) when specifically talking about the first Passover in Wis 18:5-19, though he does use the similar-sounding Greek verb  $\text{πάσχω}$  two times (Wis 18:11, 19) in this passage.

The base form of this word ( $\text{πάσχ-}$ ) never occurs in the Pentateuch, only twice in protocanonical texts (Amos 6:6 and Zech 11:5), and seven times in deuterocanonical texts other than the Wisdom of Solomon (2 Macc 6:30; 7:18, 32; 4 Macc 9:8; 10:10; 14:9; and Sir 38:16).<sup>18</sup> Aside from the Wisdom of Solomon, in the rest of the LXX, it never occurs in contexts that treat the Passover specifically or even the exodus from Egypt generally. In the Wisdom of Solomon, it exclusively appears in a Passover context and only in the second half of the book (chaps. 11-19) where Pseudo-Solomon comments on that event. In all of the texts that I listed from 2 and 4 Maccabees,  $\text{πάσχω}$  refers to the suffering of Jewish martyrs at the hands of their Greek persecutors. In stark contrast, in the Wisdom of Solomon, the term consistently describes the suffering of Israel’s wicked Egyptian oppressors.<sup>19</sup> So, while  $\text{πάσχω}$  is not a

<sup>15</sup> More precisely, Lust *et al.* (*Greek-English Lexicon*, 2:361) identify  $\text{πασχα}$  as the Greek transliteration of the Aramaic loanword  $\text{פסח}$ .

<sup>16</sup> These Hebrew terms derive from the expression  $\text{פָּסַח}$ , “to limp by,” “to pass by,” “to spare,” but also “to leap,” “to hop,” and “to protect,” which occurs in Exodus 12:13, 23, 27 with God as subject, thereby describing his activity during the last plague. The LXX renders this Hebrew phrase in two ways:  $\text{σκεπάζω}$ , “to cover” or “to shelter” (Exod 12:13, 27) and  $\text{παρέρχομαι}$ , “to pass by” (Exod 12:23).

<sup>17</sup> For other occurrences of  $\text{πασχα}$  in the LXX, see Lev 23:5; Num 9:2-14; 28:16; 33:3; Deut 16:1-6; Jos 5:10; 2 Kgs 23:21-23; Ezr 6:19-21; Ezek 45:21.

<sup>18</sup> Other forms of the root  $\text{πάσχω}$ , such as variants of the second aorist  $\text{ἔπαθον}$  occur elsewhere in the LXX (e.g., 2 Macc 9:28; Ezek 16:5; also in the Letter of Jeremiah 1:33). However, the occurrence of the base form  $\text{πάσχ-}$  is most relevant for this discussion since it sounds similar to  $\text{πασχα}$ . In Wis 18:1, Pseudo-Solomon uses the word  $\text{ἐπεπόνθεισαν}$ , which is a pluperfect form of  $\text{πάσχω}$ . Even so, in this case the word is negated and further affirms that the righteous Israelites did not suffer in the same way as their Egyptian oppressors. Thus, Pseudo-Solomon only uses the root  $\text{πάσχω}$  and its non-negated derivations to refer to the suffering of the wicked.

<sup>19</sup> Pseudo-Solomon uses a variety of terms to express different modes of “suffering” throughout the book, e.g., “punishing” ( $\text{κολάζω}$ ), “tormenting” ( $\text{βασανίζω}$ ), “afflicting” ( $\text{θλίβω}$ ), “disciplining” or “correcting” ( $\text{παιδεύω}$  /  $\text{παιδεία}$ ), “testing” ( $\text{πειράζω}$  and  $\text{δοκιμάζω}$ ), and “convicting” ( $\text{ἐλέγχω}$  /  $\text{ἐλεγχοῦ}$ ). For a more extensive list of the occurrence of these and

term traditionally used to recount the events of the exodus from Egypt, Pseudo-Solomon uses it multiple times to do so and, specifically, to talk about the final fate of the wicked Egyptians during the salvation of the Israelites at Passover (*πάσχω*).

In order to further appreciate Pseudo-Solomon's comprehensive usage of the term *πάσχω*, which includes the other two occurrences in Wis 12:27 and 19:13, it is helpful to have a better sense of his understanding of the Passover event. Pseudo-Solomon considers the last plague—the death of the firstborn Egyptian males (Exodus 12)—to be inextricably bound to the destruction of Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea (Exodus 14-15).<sup>20</sup> Just before he comments upon the circumstances of the last plague, in Wis 18:5, Pseudo-Solomon states:

But when they [i.e., the Egyptians] resolved to murder the infants of the holy ones...  
as reproof, you took away a multitude of their children  
and destroyed them as one in violent water.

Through this introductory verse to his treatment of Passover in Wis 18:5-25, Pseudo-Solomon indicates that the Egyptians incurred a double, yet closely unified, punishment for killing the Israelite male infants a generation earlier by casting them into the Nile river (see Exod 1:22). Pseudo-Solomon interprets this combined catastrophe as poetic justice for Egypt's crimes insofar as the last plague includes the death of some of their little children and the defeat of Pharaoh's army at the Sea involves the drowning of some of their adult, male progeny.<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, Pseudo-Solomon uses the word *πάσχω* only in passages that specifically mention these final events, thereby providing a unified sense of Passover.

similar terms in the Wisdom of Solomon, see ZURAWSKI, "Paideia," 204 n. 24. For an extensive treatment of the term *κολάζω*, "to punish," especially when it occurs with the term *εὐεργετέω*, "to benefit," see MAZZINGHI, "Antithetical Pair," 237-49. Some of these terms are at times applied both to the righteous Israelites and to the wicked Egyptians; however, Pseudo-Solomon only uses *πάσχω* (especially in its unnegated form) when speaking about the Egyptians.

<sup>20</sup> In his structural analysis of Wisdom 11-19, Addison Wright ("Structure of Wisdom 11-19," 32, esp. n. 12) also asserts that Pseudo-Solomon views the two events together. As a result, Wright lists Wis 18:5-19 and Wis 19:1-5 as part of the same comparative diptych.

<sup>21</sup> Wis 19:1-5 also emphasizes the close relationship between the two events. One flows from the other and together they serve as the Egyptians' final and fitting punishment.

### 3. Significance of the *πάσχω* / *πασχα* Wordplay in the Wisdom of Solomon

Although Pseudo-Solomon never uses the word *πασχα* to talk about the events that make up his unified sense of Passover (like most of the unnamed figures in the book), he subtly and creatively identifies the Passover by context clues and, especially, through his use of the word *πάσχω* on four occasions (Wis 12:27; 18:11, 19; 19:13). This *πάσχω* / *πασχα* wordplay is more than just delightful ornamentation in the text, rather it enhances some key principles that are part of Pseudo-Solomon's main message.

First, Pseudo-Solomon presents the principle that the punishment of the wicked is at the same time a blessing for the righteous, which he clearly illustrates with special emphasis throughout the second half of the book (e.g., Wis 11:5-10, 13; 18:8).<sup>22</sup> He first explicitly expresses this idea in Wis 11:5: "For through the things by which their enemies were punished, / through these [very same] things they, being in need, were shown kindness." This statement occurs at the beginning of the first of five (or seven) major comparisons (*synkrisis*) or "antitheses" that Pseudo-Solomon presents between the righteous Israelites and the wicked Egyptians.<sup>23</sup> Thus, it serves as a major thesis or focal point in the latter half of the book wherein he treats the events of the exodus from Egypt and the subsequent wilderness tradition. The blessing of the Israelites through the punishment of the Egyptians culminates in the unified event of Passover in Wisdom 18:5-19 and 19:1-13, wherein God finally liberates the Israelites from slavery by means of the double humiliating death (18:12; 19:5, 13) of the Egyptians. The first of these two passages especially highlights this first principle both explicitly and implicitly:

<sup>22</sup> Sometimes, when the Egyptians suffer, the Israelites benefit by seeing their own suffering in a new light. For example, in Wis 11:6-10, through their thirsting in the wilderness, the Israelites see what it is like to thirst like the wicked Egyptians (v. 8) and from this experience perceive God's mercy to them when he eventually gives them water from the rock and generally deals graciously with them as a disciplining, yet loving, father (vv. 9-10). See also Wis 16:4-7.

<sup>23</sup> Wright ("Structure of Wisdom 11-19," 31-32) notes that some scholars enumerate seven antitheses (e.g., 11:2-14; 11:15-16:4; 16:5-14; 16:15-29; 17:1-18:4; 18:5-25; 19:1-5) with some debate on the limits of certain sections, but he himself outlines five antitheses (or "diptychs") in chaps. 11-19 (i.e., 11:6-14; 11:15-16:14 [with three digressions]; 16:15-29; 17:1-18:4; 18:5-19:5 [with one digression]). Most scholars posit seven antitheses / diptychs. A few notable examples are LARCHER, *Livre de la Sagesse*, 1:122-23; WINSTON, *Wisdom of Solomon*, 11-12; and MAZZINGHI, *Libro della Sapienza*, 410-11.

6. That night was known in advance by our fathers,  
so that they might rejoice, knowing with certainty  
the oaths in which they had trusted.
7. By your people was expected,  
On the one hand, salvation of the righteous and, on the other hand, destruction of  
[their] enemies.
8. For by that which you punished the adversaries,  
by this [very same thing] you called us to yourself and glorified [us].
9. For in secret holy children of good people offered sacrifice  
and enacted the divine law with one accord  
that the holy ones should partake of  
both the same good things and dangers alike,  
already beginning to sing the praises of the fathers.
10. But the discordant cry of their enemies echoed back,  
and the pitiable sound of [their] mourning for children spread.
11. Slave together with master were being punished with the same kind of penalty,  
and commoner suffering (*πάσχων*) the same as king,
12. But all unified in one form of death  
they had innumerable corpses.  
For there were not even enough living people to bury [them]....
19. for the dreams that were troubling them indicated this in advance,  
so that they might not perish without knowing why they were  
suffering (*πάσχουσιν*) severely.

In this passage, the foreknowledge of the Israelites' imminent salvation (vv. 6-7) and their unity in keeping God's commands concerning the Passover (v. 9) stand in stark contrast to the unity of death that the Egyptians experience (vv. 11-12) in addition to their advanced knowledge about the reason for their death (v. 19).<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, in Wis 18:8, Pseudo-Solomon explicitly shows that the Passover reiterates the key principle of Wis 11:5. The author also emphasizes this same principle, albeit implicitly, through the wordplay in the double use of *πάσχω* in 18:11, 19. The salvation of the Israelites through the

<sup>24</sup> The foreknowledge of the Israelites in Wis 18:6 parallels Sophia's own foreknowledge of signs and wonders in Wis 8:8. The same basic verb (*προγινώσκω*) occurs in both cases, while slightly different verbal expressions (*...προεμήνυσαν, / ἵνα μὴ ἀγνοοῦντες...*) occur with respect to the Egyptians' foreknowledge. This subtly implies that the Israelites' foreknowledge is rooted in wisdom and righteousness and will lead them toward life / immortality, while the Egyptians' foreknowledge has a different purpose, namely, to emphasize God's justice in meting out their punishment. Concerning the matter of unity, God's people also exhibit unity of action in Wis 10:20, when they praise God "with one accord" (*ὁμοθυμαδόν*) for their salvation at the Red Sea. In contrast, the same term (*ὁμοθυμαδόν*) in Wis 18:5, 12 emphasizes the unity with which the Egyptians experience punishment. Wis 18:5 refers to the death of the Egyptians at the Red Sea, and Wis 18:12 refers to the last plague. Thus, the three occurrences of the term *ὁμοθυμαδόν* further reflect that the events of the last plague (Wis 18:12) and the Red Sea (Wis 10:20; 18:5) are closely connected as a unified *πασχα / πάσχω* event.

Passover is at the same time an experience of intense and unique suffering for the Egyptians. In other words, the Israelites' *πάσχα* and Egyptians' *πάσχω* are two sides of the same coin—one is benefitted, the other punished, through the same unified event.

Second, Pseudo-Solomon maintains that God's punishment of the wicked justly fits their crime (e.g., Wis 11:6-7a; 12:26; 16:1, 9; 17:2-3; 18:4-5; 19:4, 13) and, more specifically, that sinners are fittingly punished through the very sins that they commit (e.g., Wis 11:15-16; 12:23, 27; 16:1; 17:7-11; 18:4). This second principle first appears in 11:15-16, which serves as a key for understanding the other occurrences:

For because of their senseless and unrighteous thoughts,  
by which they were led astray to worship irrational reptiles and worthless pests,  
you sent upon them a multitude of irrational creatures as retribution  
So that they might know that by which someone sins through those  
[very] things one is punished.

In this case, Pseudo-Solomon perceives that the various plagues on the Egyptians—some involving “reptiles” (namely, frogs in Exod 8:2-14) and “pests” (most likely, gnats and flies in Exod 8:16-31 and locusts in Exod 10:12-20)—were a result of their unreasonable cultic acts in worshiping similar “irrational” and “worthless” creatures.<sup>25</sup> In an effort to maintain the same line of reasoning in the midst of the two digressions in Wis 11:17-12:22 (on God's mercy) and in Wis 13:1-15:17 (on the evils of idolatry), Pseudo-Solomon revisits the same argument in Wis 12:23-27 and Wis 15:18-16:1, where he doubles down and even heightens the description of the worshiped animals' despicable nature. The structure below illustrates the most relevant parts of the second major antithesis, according to Addison Wright's enumeration:<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> While the Egyptians worshiped various reptiles and insects (see REIDER, *Book of Wisdom*, 144), it is not clear that they worshiped all the creatures that afflicted them in the plagues as recounted in Exodus 7-10. As Reider (*Book of Wisdom*, 144) notes: “...to prove our author's theory of punishment of like by like it would be necessary to prove that the Egyptians had worshipped such beasts as were sent to plague them—lice, flies, and locusts; but such proof is wanting.” Winston (*Wisdom of Solomon*, 231-32) provides examples of Greco-Roman mockery of the Egyptians' worship of animals in general. Perhaps, then, Pseudo-Solomon's main point is that because the Egyptians worshiped irrational and worthless creatures, they were punished by similar (but not necessarily the very same) types.

<sup>26</sup> WRIGHT, “Structure of Wisdom 11-19,” 31.

11:15-16 - Egyptian Worship of Creatures and Their Subsequent Punishment

11:17-12:22 - Digression on God's Mercy

12:23-27 - Resumes Thought of 11:15-16

13:1-15:17 - Digression on the Evils of Idolatry

15:18-16:4 - Resumes Thought of 11:15-16 and 12:23-27.

Wis 12:23-27, in particular, serves as a brief interlude or transitional passage between the two digressions, and it is here, in the passage's final verse, that the word *πάσχω* first occurs in the book. In order to understand the significance of the function of *πάσχω* in this passage, it is worth quoting Wis 12:23-27 at length:

23. Therefore also those who lived in folly of life,  
through their own abominations you tormented
24. For they strayed far beyond the paths of error,  
taking as gods the [most] despised creatures even among disgraceful ones,  
being deceived in [the] manner of foolish infants.
25. Therefore, as to unreasoning children,  
you sent the judgment as a mockery.
26. But they who did not heed a playful critique,  
will experience the worthy judgment of God.
27. For they were indignant because of [those creatures] by which they  
were suffering (*πάσχοντες*),  
being punished because of them whom they deemed [to be] gods,  
they came to recognize the true God, knowing him whom previously they  
refused to know.  
For this reason, the utmost condemnation (*τὸ τέρμα τῆς καταδίκης*) came  
upon them.

In vv. 23 and 27, this passage primarily emphasizes how God punishes the Egyptians on account of and by means of their own sinful behavior of worshiping the most base creatures. Continuing the theme of God's mercy in the first digression, Pseudo-Solomon presents this initial punishment against the Egyptians more as disciplinary warning than as harsh and final condemnation. The idea here is that God is giving the Egyptians an opportunity to recognize their wrongdoing so that they might turn to him in repentance (see Wis 11:23; 12:2). However, the Egyptians remain obdurate, even indignant, in the midst of their suffering (*πάσχοντες*) despite recognizing the true God (v. 27). As a result, Pseudo-Solomon points out that God will soon justly punish them to the greatest extent (vv. 26b, 27d). Here, then, he foreshadows the events of the unified Passover that I discussed above—salvation for the righteous Israelites but a twofold humiliating death for the Egyptians. At this point, the discerning reader can already recognize “the deserved divine judgment” (v. 26b) and “utmost condemnation” (v. 27d) of which the author subtly speaks, since in v.

27a he uses the word *πάσχοντες*, thereby evoking the theme of *πασχα*. The rest of the book builds up to this final judgment for the Egyptians and ultimate salvation for the Israelites in Wisdom 18-19. And so, the word *πάσχω* appropriately occurs again, along with similar themes, near the very end of the book in Wis 19:13-16, where Pseudo-Solomon evaluates the death of the Egyptians at the Red Sea:

13. And the punishments came upon the sinners  
not without signs occurring beforehand by the pounding of thunderbolts,  
for they suffered (*ἔπασχον*) justly for their wicked acts,  
because they practiced a harsher hatred of foreigners.
14. For, on the one hand, those [i.e., the Sodomites], not knowing others who  
showed up, were not welcoming [of them],  
But these [i.e., the Egyptians] were enslaving foreign benefactors,
15. And not only that, but a considerable reckoning (*ἐπισκοπή*) will be theirs,  
since they were receiving foreigners hatefully.
16. But these [i.e., the Egyptians] with festivities  
having welcomed those [i.e., the Israelites] who already shared their  
rights, mistreated [them] by hard labors.

Although v. 13 may be a summarizing verse and “punishments” here could refer to all the plagues, I think that this verse probably still alludes to the Red Sea event, in particular, as part of the unified sense of Passover.<sup>27</sup> Again,

<sup>27</sup> In commenting on Wis 19:13, Mazzinghi (*Libro della Sapienza*, 736) remarks upon the various occurrences of *πάσχω* throughout the book and that its final use in this verse presents “an interesting thematic crescendo” (*un interessante crescendo tematico*) in which it refers to the death of the Egyptians at the Red Sea. See also LARCHER, *Livre de la Sagesse*, 3:1069-72. For the alternative interpretation in which v. 13 refers to all the plagues in general, see SCHWENK-BRESSLER, *Sapientia Salomonis*, 317. The reason why I read v. 13 as primarily referring to the death of the Egyptians at the Red Sea is that such an interpretation follows the logical sequence in Wis 19:1-12. The foreknowledge of God in Wis 19:1 and the fittingness of the Egyptians’ punishment in Wis 19:4, parallel similar themes revisited in v. 13. Then, v. 5a summarizes the salvation of the Israelites at the Red Sea with an expansion in vv. 6-9, and v. 5b treats the corresponding death of the Egyptians with an expansion that most naturally occurs in v. 13. In between those two expansions, vv. 10-12 highlight the benefits that come upon the Israelites through water. While v. 10 serves as a flashback about the plagues that the Israelites have while rejoicing at the sea, vv. 11-12 foretell that God will soon miraculously provide them with quail, seemingly from the same sea. The quail “going up from the sea” (*ἐκ θαλάσσης ἀνέβη*) is a fitting contrasting image to the “punishments came upon” (*τιμωρία... ἐπῆλθον*) in 19:13—perhaps a way of subtly referring to the double unified punishment of God’s descending word meting out the last plague (18:15-16) and, most immediately, a veiled reference to the sea’s waves crashing upon the Egyptian army. Furthermore, this very same verb (*ἐπῆλθεν*) occurs in Wis 12:27 (elsewhere only in Wis 16:5), which foretells God’s final punishment of the Egyptians, and the word “punishments” (*τιμωρία*) in 19:13 recalls the verb *ἐτιμωρήσω* in Wis 18:8 (elsewhere only in Wis 12:20) which refers to God’s punishment of

we encounter the theme of warning and foreknowledge that precedes just judgment. The punishment of the Egyptians is entirely fair and fitting not only because God warned them in advance by ominous thunderbolts, but also because they egregiously transgressed the most basic standards of hospitality (even more so than the Sodomites of Genesis 19) by enslaving the Israelites who were originally their equals and contributed positively to Egyptian society.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, the *πάσχω* / *πασχα* wordplay is closely linked with Pseudo-Solomon's principle that the cosmos / creation (*κόσμος* / *κτίσις*) itself fights to punish the wicked and to protect the righteous (Wis 16:17, 24; 19:6, 18-21; see also the eschatological application earlier in Wis 5:15-23). In some sense, this principle is an expansion of the first one mentioned above, namely, the righteous are benefitted through the chastisements that the wicked suffer. One could even say that the cosmos, imbued with God's wisdom / word (cf. Wis 9:1-2), seeks to bring about a unified act of justice through the unified Passover event that the righteous and wicked experience and respond to in different ways. While both Israelites and Egyptians suffer in a variety of ways in the events recounted in chaps. 11-19, what seals their ultimate fate is not that suffering itself, but rather their response to God in the midst of that suffering. In contexts where *πάσχω* occurs, the Egyptians receive warnings about (Wis 19:13) and reasons for (Wis 18:19) their suffering. In addition, they recognize the true God (Wis 12:27) and Israel's special status (Wis 18:11-13) through their suffering, but such hardship and the knowledge that comes from it only elicits their further indignation (Wis 12:26)—and, by implication, their rejection of God—rather than their repentance. Conversely, when the Israelites suffer (which, again, is never expressed by *πάσχω* in the book), they grow closer to God through the knowledge gained in hardship (e.g., Wis 12:22; 16:3d-7, 10-12; 18:20-25). They encounter both “good things and dangers alike” (Wis 18:9), but their general disposition and ultimate response to those events differ significantly from the reaction of the wicked Egyptians. In this way, the Israelites and Egyptians

the Egyptians in the context of Passover. With regard to the thunderings in v. 13, this, too, could refer to the Red Sea event since Winston (*Wisdom of Solomon*, 327) and Larcher (*Livre de la Sagesse*, 3:1071) note that such storming occurred at the Sea in other Jewish interpretive traditions.

<sup>28</sup> Concerning the idea that the Israelites were originally “foreign benefactors” to the Egyptians and “shared their rights,” Pseudo-Solomon most likely alludes here to the story of Joseph's accomplishments on behalf of Egypt and especially Pharaoh (e.g., Gen 41:14-36, 46-57; 47:13-26) and the honors and privileges that Pharaoh extends to Joseph and his brothers (e.g., Gen 40:38-45; 47:1-6). Also, the claim that the Israelites once shared similar rights with the Egyptians might be a veiled reference to a situation in Pseudo-Solomon's own day in which certain tax privileges of Alexandrian Jews were rescinded by Greco-Roman authorities. See my discussion in GLICKSMAN, *Wisdom of Solomon* 10, 14-22.

experience God's just actions through the cosmos / creation towards them differently, both temporally and eschatologically.

Michael Kolarcik has demonstrated how the themes of cosmos / creation, exodus, and eschatological judgment are intertwined in each major section of the Wisdom of Solomon (i.e., Wis 1:1-6:21; 6:22-10:21; and 11:1-19:22).<sup>29</sup> In the first part of the book, Pseudo-Solomon illustrates this principle in highly eschatological terms (Wis 5:15-23). The description of creation fighting for the righteous and punishing the wicked as part of the final judgment, ostensibly in the hereafter, bears striking parallels with the imagery of Pseudo-Solomon's retelling of the exodus in Wis 10:15-19:22. He presents a unified *πάσχω* / *πασχα* as the climactic moment of the exodus events, and thus, in a special way, Passover has eschatological significance. As the apex of temporal punishment and salvation in the book, *πάσχω* / *πασχα* mirrors ultimate condemnation and reward in the afterlife. Since *πάσχω* refers to the deserved and ultimate suffering of the Egyptians in a temporal context through a unified and ignominious physical death, the term also ultimately points to an even worse fate that awaits them at the final judgment, namely, the fate of the unrighteous dead that Pseudo-Solomon describes in Wis 4:19. Of particular note in this verse is the expression *καὶ ἕως ἑσχάτου χερσωθήσονται*, "and they will be dried up until the end / to the utmost" (4:19e). Similar eschatological judgment language and imagery occur in close proximity to the use of *πάσχω* in Wis 12:27 and 19:13. At first glance, the "worthy judgment of God" (*ἄξιαν θεοῦ κρίσιν*) in Wis 12:26; "the utmost condemnation" (*τὸ τέρμα τῆς καταδίκης*) in 12:27; and the "considerable reckoning" (*τις ἐπισκοπή*) that "will be theirs" in 19:15—all occurring in the future—may simply refer to the Egyptians' imminent physical death.<sup>30</sup> However, such dramatic language most likely also hints at a much worse fate that will befall them in the afterlife. This seems to be the case because the term *ἐπισκοπή*, "visitation" or "reckoning," in 19:15 elsewhere refers to eschatological judgment (cf. in a positive sense for the righteous in Wis 3:7, 13; 4:15; and in a negative sense for the idols of the nations in Wis 14:11) and also because some of the same cosmic elements that God uses to punish the Egyptians occur in God's punishment of the wicked in the eschatological scene in Wisdom 5.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the Egyptians' *πάσχω* stands as

<sup>29</sup> KOLARCIK, "Creation and Salvation," 97-107. See also Gilbert's ("Last Pages," 272-76) helpful summary of how various scholars present the exodus events in Wisdom 11-19 as having eschatological ramifications.

<sup>30</sup> Larcher (*Livre de la Sagesse*, 3:1076-79) presents an excellent discussion of the complexities of Wis 19:15 and why the "reckoning" here probably refers to the eschatological punishment that will befall both the Sodomites and Egyptians.

<sup>31</sup> Most notable here are the sharpening of God's "sword" in Wis 5:20a and the "sharp sword" (Wis 18:15c) of God's word that brings about the last plague; "shafts of lightnings" (5:21a)

both a temporal and eschatological warning for all those who reject God and persecute the righteous. Conversely, by implication, what awaits the righteous Israelites (and those like them) is temporal and eschatological salvation (*σωτηρία* in Wis 5:2; 18:7) and protection and reward by God's hand (*χείρ* in Wis 3:1; 5:16; 10:20; 19:8), which is reflected in the events of the climactic, yet unnamed, *πασχα*. In particular, the cosmos / creation plays a key role in saving the righteous through the Passover event as well, especially at the Red Sea when "...land creatures [i.e., the Israelites and their cattle] were turned into water creatures" (Wis 19:19a).<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, regarding this last point, the *πάσχω* / *πασχα* wordplay conforms to the music theory that Pseudo-Solomon uses in Wis 19:18 to explain how the cosmos benefits the righteous and punishes the wicked through a transposition of natural elements:

For as on a harp the notes vary the nature of the rhythm,  
while each note always keeps to its sound,  
so the elements changed places with one another,  
as may be accurately inferred from the sight of the things that happened (*NETS*).

Scholars have long debated how to accurately render this verse in light of Greek musical theory. A careful treatment of how best to translate it is beyond the scope of the present study. Whatever the precise translation should be, Pseudo-Solomon seems to communicate here, through music theory, that there is something that remains constant in the midst of something that changes. In most renderings of the verse, the pitch or sound of the notes remain constant while the changing element is either the 1. melody / tune; 2. harmonic succession / mode / key; or 3. rhythm / beat / tempo.<sup>33</sup> Pseudo-Solomon then uses this analogy to

and "violence of thunderbolts" (Wis 19:13b); the "leaping" of the lightning from the bow of clouds in Wis 5:21b and the "leaping" of God's word into the land of Egypt in Wis 18:15b; the raging "water of the sea" against the unrighteous in Wis 5:22b and the "drowning" and "casting up...out of the depths of the abyss" of the Egyptians in Wis 10:19.

<sup>32</sup> For this interpretation, see REIDER, *Book of Wisdom*, 223; LARCHER, *Livre de la Sagesse*, 3:1090. For the interpretation that the land creatures refer to the Egyptian army, see LÉONAS, "Poetics," 101. I think the latter is less likely because they do not survive the ordeal.

<sup>33</sup> Proponents of the first option (i.e., change in melody / tune) include Reider (*Book of Wisdom*, 223) and NABRE (though, the latter presents "flow of music" as the constant). Scarpat (*Libro della Sapienza*, 3:305, 307, 311, 326) seems to allow for a complex combination of the first (melody) and second (harmony) options. See his different renderings on p. 305 ("il tipo di musica") and p. 311 ("il tipo di armonia") coupled with his discussion on p. 307 that *ῥυθμός* includes a sense of "melodia." The second (i.e., change in key) and third (i.e., rhythm / beat) options both seem possible to Winston (*Wisdom of Solomon*, 330-31). The third option (i.e., rhythm) is posited by a vast majority of modern translations and commentators: e.g., *NETS*; *NRSV*; LARCHER, *Livre de la Sagesse*, 3:1082; COLLINS, *Jewish Wisdom*, 216; PISTONE,

explain how the elements within creation (i.e., air, earth, fire, and water) can change their power or effect to benefit the righteous and punish the wicked.<sup>34</sup> The *πάσχω* / *πασχα* wordplay further reflects this same analogy. Although these two terms sound very similar, representing two effects of the same Passover event, they are experienced differently depending on either one's righteous or wicked disposition. In other words, the same unified Passover event produces different effects in different types of people. Thus, God's powerful and just activity in creation remains constant, but the way that people perceive and experience it can change—either as life for the righteous or death for the unrighteous.<sup>35</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

In the second half of the Wisdom of Solomon, Pseudo-Solomon uses the term *πάσχω* four times in reference to the suffering that the wicked Egyptians experience through both the last plague and the destruction of Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea. Thus, he presents a double punitive suffering (*πάσχω*) of the Egyptians that serves as a double blessing for the Israelites in a unified understanding of the Passover event (*πασχα*). The *πάσχω* / *πασχα* wordplay ties into Pseudo-Solomon's general creative use of language as well as his tendency to use veiled references that require wisdom to identify and mine them for their deeper significance. In addition to contributing to the Wisdom of Solomon's imaginative and delightful style, the *πάσχω* / *πασχα* wordplay reinforces several major principles that Pseudo-Solomon especially emphasizes in chaps. 11-19: the punishment of the wicked is simultaneously a reward for the righteous; God fittingly punishes the wicked through the very means by which they sin; and the cosmos plays a role in meting out God's just condemnation and salvation, both temporally and eschatologically. Most importantly, Pseudo-Solomon subtly uses *πάσχω* to implicitly posit a unified sense of Passover, with temporal and

"Lyre," 204-5; MAZZINGHI, *Libro della Sapienza*, 743-46. For extensive treatments of various approaches to this passage, see LARCHER, *Livre de la Sagesse*, 3:1084-89; SCARPAT, *Libro della Sapienza*, 3:304-8, 325-26; PISTONE, "Lyre," 195-217.

<sup>34</sup> See also Wis 16:24, where Pseudo-Solomon appears to use another musical analogy to describe the way that creation "tightens" (*ἐπιτείνεται*) to punish the wicked and "slackens" (*ἀνίεται*) to benefit the righteous, perhaps like strings on an instrument. Thus, he seems to make a similar point to Wis 19:18 since the strings themselves remain constant but the tension on them changes to produce different notes. See PISTONE, "Lyre," 210.

<sup>35</sup> See also Sir 39:27. Reflecting on both Sir 39:27 and Wisdom 11-19 (esp. on 11:15), Collins (*Jewish Wisdom*, 217) aptly remarks, "The claim is that people experience nature, and history, differently in accordance with their characters."

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eschatological implications, further highlighting God's unified just action in the world. One's disposition and the way that one responds to God in either righteousness or wickedness ultimately determine whether one will encounter his righteous power as creative renewal and immortality or as destruction and eternal condemnation.

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