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“AT THE END OF THE DAYS”: AN ESCHATOLOGICAL TECHNICAL TERM?

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This expression occurs 14 times in the Tanak. In the past there has been considerable debate over this term. Older scholars assumed that it was a technical term for eschatological concepts. If scholars dated these early, then the term was understood to provide evidence for early eschatology since it occurs in pre-exilic texts (Gressman). If the scholars considered eschatology a post-exilic phenomenon, then pre-exilic occurrences of this term were considered late editorial insertions (Mowinckel). More recently scholars have shorn the term of any developed eschatological content (Kosmala, Jenni), suggesting that the term simply refers to an indefinite future period (“in days to come”). This study re-examines this question by considering each of the 14 instances of the term in the Tanak and suggests that there is a remarkable similarity of context that evokes strong eschatological content. Early pre-exilic uses sketch out eschatological overtones which are more fully developed in the post-exilic period. This points to a more fully developed eschatology in the pre-exilic period than previously thought.