

# 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 (*Πασχα*), with both temporal and eschatological implications for righteous and wicked individuals. The subsequent *πάσχω* / *Πασχα* 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*, *Πασχα*, 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