

# **WHEN JUDAISM LOST THE TEMPLE**

**CRISIS AND RESPONSE IN 4 EZRA AND 2 BARUCH**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis is a study of religious thought in two Jewish apocalypses, 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, written around the end of the first century as a response to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Romans in 70 CE. The true nature of the crisis is the perceived loss of covenantal relationship between God and Israel, and the Jewish identity that is under threat. Discussions of various aspects of thoughts, including those conventionally termed theodicy, particularism and universalism, anthropology and soteriology, are subordinated under and contextualized within the larger issue of how the ancient authors propose to mend the traditional Deuteronomic covenantal theology now under crisis.

Both 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch advocate a two-pronged solution of Torah and eschatology at the centre of their scheme to restore that covenant relationship in the absence of the Temple. Both maintain the Mosaic tradition as the bulwark for Israel's future survival and revival; whereas 4 Ezra aims to implant its eschatology into the Sinaitic tradition and make it part of the Mosaic Law, 2 Baruch extends the Deuteronomic scheme of reward and retribution into an eschatological context, making the rewards of the end-time a solution to the cycle of sins and punishments of this age.

Both texts are read as coherent works with a sophisticated literary structure, skillfully composed to convey authorial intentions. As such, the overall intended message can only be grasped after one has understood the development of the narrative structure. Considerable emphases are also placed on the significance of the portrayals of the pseudonymous protagonists, Ezra and Baruch, the use of symbolism in the two texts as scriptural exegesis, as well as their relationship with each other and links with the Hebrew Bible and other Jewish and Christian writings.





# **DECLARATION**

This thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

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## WHEN JUDAISM LOST THE TEMPLE

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Glory to God for all things!

Bright Week, 2017

# ABBREVIATIONS

|               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| AB            | Anchor Bible                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| AGJU          | Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums                                                                                                                                             |
| AJEC          | Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity                                                                                                                                                                           |
| AUSS          | <i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>                                                                                                                                                                       |
| APOT          | <i>The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament: with Introductions and Critical and Explanatory Notes to the Several Books.</i> Edited by R. H. Charles. 2 Vols. 1913. Repr., Oxford: Clarendon, 1998. |
| BIS           | Biblical Interpretation Series                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| CBET          | Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology                                                                                                                                                                  |
| CBQ           | <i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>                                                                                                                                                                               |
| CBR           | <i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>                                                                                                                                                                             |
| DSD           | <i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| EJL           | Early Judaism and Its Literature                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| FRLANT        | Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments                                                                                                                                            |
| GCS           | Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten [drei] Jahrhunderte                                                                                                                                      |
| <i>HeyJ</i>   | <i>Haythrop Journal</i>                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <i>HistTh</i> | <i>History and Theory</i>                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| HSS           | Harvard Semitic Studies                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| HTR           | <i>Harvard Theological Review</i>                                                                                                                                                                                |
| IEJ           | <i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>                                                                                                                                                                                |
| ISACR         | Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Culture and Religion                                                                                                                                                        |
| JAAR          | <i>Journal for the American Academy of Religion</i>                                                                                                                                                              |
| JBL           | <i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>                                                                                                                                                                            |
| JJS           | <i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| JR            | <i>Journal of Religion</i>                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| JRS           | <i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| JSJ           | <i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>                                                                                                                           |
| JSJSup        | Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplement Series                                                                                                                                                               |
| JSNT          | <i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>                                                                                                                                                                |
| JSNTSup       | Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series                                                                                                                                                     |
| JSP           | <i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>                                                                                                                                                               |
| JSPSup        | Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series                                                                                                                                                    |
| JSQ           | <i>Jewish Studies Quarterly</i>                                                                                                                                                                                  |

## ABBREVIATIONS

|                   |                                                                                                               |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>JSS</i>        | <i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>                                                                             |
| <i>JTS</i>        | <i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>                                                                         |
| LSTS              | Library of Second Temple Studies                                                                              |
| <i>NovT</i>       | <i>Novum Testamentum</i>                                                                                      |
| <i>Numen</i>      | <i>Numen: International Review for the History of Religions</i>                                               |
| <i>OTP</i>        | <i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . Edited by James H. Charlesworth 2 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1983, 1985 |
| <i>PAAJR</i>      | <i>Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research</i>                                                 |
| <i>Prooftexts</i> | <i>Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History</i>                                                       |
| <i>RGG</i>        | <i>Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart</i>                                                                   |
| <i>RRJ</i>        | <i>Review of Rabbinic Judaism</i>                                                                             |
| SBLDS             | Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series                                                            |
| SHR               | Studies in the History of Religion                                                                            |
| SJSHRZ            | Studien zu den jüdischen Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit                                           |
| <i>SR</i>         | <i>Studies in Religion</i>                                                                                    |
| SVTP              | Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigraphica                                                                 |
| TBN               | Themes in Biblical Narrative                                                                                  |
| <i>TDNT</i>       | <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>                                                            |
| TSAJ              | Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum                                                                        |
| USFSJH            | University of South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism                                                 |
| <i>VT</i>         | <i>Vetus Testamentum</i>                                                                                      |
| WMANT             | Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament                                                  |
| WUNT              | Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament                                                          |
| ZAW               | <i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>                                                     |

# INTRODUCTION





# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION:

### 4 EZRA AND 2 BARUCH IN THEIR HISTORICAL, RELIGIOUS AND LITERARY CONTEXTS

A study of Jewish response to the crisis of the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE most certainly requires some attention on 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch. Both books, written around the end of the first century, some three decades after the event, have survived long centuries of oblivion and now speak to us as testimonies to the aftermath of the disaster.<sup>1</sup> Despite their importance to modern scholarship in ancient Jewish history, however, their authorships are pseudepigraphic, their literary settings fictional, and in no way can they be described as historiography. What, then, can they tell us about the nature of the crisis that the Jewish religion was under at the end of the first century? What solutions and coping mechanisms do the authors of the texts propose? To what extent can these solutions be seen as continuity with Judaism before 70 CE and/or a change of direction because of the new challenge?

#### *1.1 The Crisis: The Destruction of the Second Temple—4 Ezra and 2 Baruch in Their Historical Context*

##### *1.1.1 The Significance of 70 CE for Jewish Religion*

The ambiguity in the Jewish attitude to history has long been observed. On the one hand, the ancient Jewish people showed a deep concern with history and the interpretation of its meaning, yet on the other hand little interest was displayed in recording historical events.<sup>2</sup> This paradox is particularly illustrated in the sparse historiography (Josephus excepted) after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple. On the ninth day of the month of Av on the Jewish calendar,<sup>3</sup> which is late

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<sup>1</sup> For discussions of their dating, authorship and provenance and for English translations, see Michael Stone and Matthias Henze, *4 Ezra and 2 Baruch: Translations, Introductions, and Notes* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), xiv–xv; 21. See also the observation of Jacob Neusner in his “The Religious Uses of History: Judaism in First-Century A.D. Palestine and Third-Century Babylonia,” *HistTh* 5 (1966): 153–71; as well as idem, *The Idea of History in Rabbinic Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> It was the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av according to rabbinic tradition (m. Ta’an. 4:6). According to Josephus it was the 10<sup>th</sup> of Av (*J.W.* 6.250). Both Josephus and the rabbis, however, hold that both the First and the Second Temples were destroyed on the same day. In a recent article, Meir Ben Shohar argues that the common date for both destructions was a theological and ideological construct by both Josephus and the rabbis,

July in 70 CE, after months of siege, the Roman army finally penetrated the northern wall protecting the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, where the Jewish rebels held up their last resistance. The Jewish Temple was torched to the ground, city-wide massacre and looting ensued, and the first Jewish rebellion against Roman imperial power, which began three years and half earlier, came to a catastrophic end.

Was 70 CE a watershed in the development of Jewish religion and social history? Its significance, which was always taken as a given, has recently been placed under questioning.<sup>4</sup> I do not intend by any means to argue that the destruction of the Temple created an abrupt discontinuity or rupture in Jewish exegetical and liturgical traditions and/or leadership and communal lives; however, the significance of the loss of the Second Temple in Jewish history is not to be underestimated, even if that significance was not manifest immediately after the event.

One argument put forward in order to deemphasize its impact is that the Temple was always expected to be rebuilt soon after its destruction; in other words, it is only in hindsight that we know its permanent loss, and therefore attach a significance to the event basing on knowledge that was inaccessible to the Jewish nation at the time.<sup>5</sup> While it is correct to presume that expectation of having the Temple rebuilt must have been high among the Jews, it is nonetheless important to recognize the full force of the effect such an event brought upon the nation. There is no doubt about the pivotal role the Temple played as a symbol of Jewish identity and the centre of Jewish national life that encompassed political, economic and religious spectrums as an inseparable whole. Among many points of significance is the belief that the Temple, being the centre of the universe, was somehow inevitably linked with the fortune of not only the Jewish nation but the whole world. Its destruction was associated with the concept of the coming End. As a matter of fact, 70 CE did not see for the first time the Second

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though in different perceptions (“When Was the Second Temple Destroyed? Chronology and Ideology in Josephus and in Rabbinic Literature” in *JSJ* 46 [2015]: 547–73).

<sup>4</sup> See the volume dedicated to this topic, *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History? On Jews and Judaism before and after the Destruction of the Second Temple*, ed. Daniel R. Schwartz and Zeev Weiss, AGJU 78 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), especially Daniel R. Schwartz’s “Introduction: Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History? Three Stages of Modern Scholarship, and a Renewed Effort,” 1–19.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Goodman proposes that both the Jewish diaspora uprising of 115–117 and the second revolt of 132–135 in Judaea should be understood as directly related to the frustration and desire of the Jews to see their Temple rebuilt and the sacrificial cult resumed. This is certainly a very reasonable thought. However, as I will argue below, the trauma of losing the Temple and its impact are not least minimized despite expectations of its rebuilding. See Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilisations* (London: Penguin, 2007), 476–91; also in his “Religious Reactions to 70: the Limitations of the Evidence,” in Schwartz and Weiss, *Was 70 CE a Watershed?*, 509–16.

Temple being threatened with destruction. The desecration of the Temple by Antiochus IV in 167 BCE triggered strong expressions of eschatological sentiments and prophecies in popular works such as the Book of Daniel and the Dream Vision of 1 Enoch (chapters 85–90). Given the influence and authority of the Book of Daniel, expectations of the end-time associated with the desolation of the Temple<sup>6</sup> must have been widely held, not merely as a curious idea entertained by small, marginalized groups of radicals.

After the destruction of the Temple, therefore, expectation of its rebuilding must have been coupled with expectation of the long anticipated coming of the end. All three apocalyptic works written between the two Jewish wars which have been preserved to our days, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch and the Revelation of John, anticipate the coming of the end of this world or age. In 2 Baruch, when the protagonist heard that the Temple was to be destroyed, he asked God, “should the world return to its [original] nature, and the world [or: age] again go to [primeval] silence?” (3:7).<sup>7</sup> In its fictional setting of the destruction of the First Temple, Baruch predicted the short existence and imminent demise of a second Temple – hinting the time of the work’s composition. He further prophesied that only in the World or Age to Come the Temple will be renewed and will be “in glory and completed forever” (32:2–4). This expression is in agreement with Ezra’s vision in 4 Ezra (10:25–58), in which regaining the Temple was only achieved at the end of the world. What Ezra saw in his vision after his bitter mourning could only be the transformed heavenly Jerusalem, a city not made by man, where “no work of man’s building could endure” (10:54). Similarly, in Revelation, the anticipated new Jerusalem is also a heavenly city (21:9–22:5); however, there is “no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb” (21:22). What is in common in these three examples is that they demonstrate how the destruction of the Temple had catastrophic associations, and its rebuilding eschatological connotations, in the Second Temple period Jewish psyche.

Although eschatological expectations cannot be seen as a direct cause for Jewish revolts against the Romans,<sup>8</sup> it is reasonable to think that the hope for a new temple

<sup>6</sup> See the dreams and visions of Daniel in Dan 7–12, particularly references to the desolation of the Temple and predictions for the end, e.g. in 7:25–28; 8:13–17; 9:24–27; and 12:5–13.

<sup>7</sup> All English translation of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch are taken from Stone and Henze, *4 Ezra and 2 Baruch*.

<sup>8</sup> See the argument of Tessa Rajak in “Jewish Millenarian Expectations,” in *The First Jewish Revolt: Archaeology, History, and Ideology*, ed. Andrea M. Berlin and J. Andrew Overman (London: Routledge, 2002), 164–88.

was no ordinary hope but one with eschatological colouring. Perhaps it was no coincidence that the Bar Kochba revolt (132–135) as an attempt to regain Zion and the Temple was no ordinary uprising, but a messianic movement.<sup>9</sup> Even in later rabbinic Judaism the building of the Third Temple has all the connotations of the coming of the Messiah. It is said that the Messiah was born the day the Temple was destroyed in Jerusalem.<sup>10</sup> The high level of significance attached to the Temple means the impact of its destruction in 70 CE could only have been massive, despite the fact that no one could have foreseen what was yet to eventuate and many hoped for the sanctuary itself to be rebuilt.

Another argument in order to deemphasize the significance of 70 CE is that the Temple was not necessarily the centre of religious life of most Jews living in the diaspora, who remained passive during the first Jewish War (66–70 CE) and did not voice any support to the rebellion. Therefore, though it was a calamity for Jews in Judea and Jerusalem in particular, its impact on other parts of Jewish life and Judaism should not be exaggerated.<sup>11</sup>

It is probably true that the war itself did not immediately affect life for diaspora Jews, yet the calamity of its failure was felt by the entire Jewish world in its aftermath.<sup>12</sup> It is difficult to ascertain how commonly diaspora Jews participated in the Temple services when it was still standing, but it can be clearly seen in literary evidence that the Temple in Jerusalem was considered the centre of Judaism as a whole. Writing in the mid first century in Alexandria, Philo called Jerusalem the mother-city of all Jews (*Flacc.* 46). When writing about Jewish Law in *Contra*

<sup>9</sup> Even an authority figure such as Rabbi Akiba hailed Bar Kochba as the Messiah. See y. Taanit 4:5. The dispute is not over whether the Messiah is coming, but rather, over whether he is identified correctly. On the topic of Jewish messianic speculations, see Gershom Scholem, "Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea," in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York: Schocken, 1971), 1–36.

<sup>10</sup> A story in y. Berakhot 2:4 tells of the birth of the Messiah to an impoverished mother near Bethlehem on the day the Temple was destroyed. See Jacob Neusner, *In the Aftermath of Catastrophe: Founding Judaism 70–640* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 85–86. Also Abraham Berger, "Captivity at the Gate of Rome: The Story of a Messianic Motif," *PAAJR*, 44 (1977): 1–17; 2–3.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Michael Tuval's downplay of the role of the Jerusalem Temple in the religious lives of wider diaspora Jews in his "Doing without the Temple: Paradigms in Judaic Literature of the Diaspora," in Schwartz and Weiss, *Was 70 CE a Watershed?*, 181–239. Opposite views are offered by Jutta Leonhardt-Balzer, "Priests and Priesthood in Philo: Could He Have Done without Them?" (127–53) and Noah Hacham, "Sanctity and the Attitude towards the Temple in Hellenistic Judaism" (155–79) in the same volume.

<sup>12</sup> As Martin Goodman indicates, even those diaspora Jews within the Roman empire were profoundly affected by the consequences of the war. See his "Diaspora Reactions to the Destruction of the Temple," in *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135*, ed. James D. G. Dunn, WUNT 66 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 27–38.

*Apionem* as an expatriate Jew in Rome in the nineties, Josephus made the Temple cult the first element of Jewish worship (*C. Ap.* 2.193–8). It was Judaea, the mother of all Jews, and symbols of Judaism that were the object of humiliation in the triumphal procession and imperial iconography after the Flavian father and sons secured their political supremacy. The defeat of the Jewish was a token of Roman power and prestige, which was further turned into Flavian propaganda to illustrate their glory.<sup>13</sup> Such anti-Jewish propaganda for Flavian political gain occurred in a variety of forms: the arches of Titus, the arch to Isis (*ARCUS AD ISIS*), and Olympia and Sabratha imperial sculptures, and in particular the *Judaea Capta* coins.<sup>14</sup> On the obverse of the coins is usually a large head of the Emperor Vespasian or Titus, whereas on the reverse is commonly found a captive woman, representing Judaea, sitting or standing next to a palm tree. As Edwards observes, although previous Roman defeat of Judaea was also presented in Roman iconography, the victory in 70 CE “took on much greater significance as it became one of the primary symbols for Flavian power and prestige under Vespasian and Titus,” since “never had Jews *as a nation* and *an ethnos* had to deal with symbolism that singled out their defeat with consistent iconographic and rhetorical displays *across the breadth of the Roman empire* for the better part of twelve years.”<sup>15</sup> It was also after the defeat of the First Revolt that Rome introduced the *fiscus Iudaicus*. A heavy burden of an annual 2 *denarii* per head was imposed on the entire Jewish population indiscriminate of age, gender, social status, citizenship, or geographical location. With an aim of humiliating the entire Jewish race, the tax was to be used for the construction of the Temple of Jupiter in Rome. This collective punishment was meted out upon Jews in the diaspora as well as in Palestine.<sup>16</sup> Jewish revolts in issuing years (115–117 CE) in Egypt, Cyprus and Babylon should probably be seen as eruptions of the wide-spread resentment and frustration against Roman anti-Jewish policies in the wake of the failed Jewish rebellion and the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple.

<sup>13</sup> See Douglas R. Edwards, “Religion, Power and Politics: Jewish Defeats by the Romans in Iconography and Josephus,” in *Diaspora Jews and Judaism: Essays in Honor of, and in Dialogue with, A. Thomas Kraabel*, ed. J. Andrew Overman and Robert S. MacLennan, USFSJH 41 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1992), 293–310. Also, J. Andrew Overman, “The First Revolt and Flavian Politics,” in *The First Jewish Revolt*, ed. Berlin and Overman (London: Routledge, 2002), 214–9.

<sup>14</sup> Edwards, “Religion, Power and Politics,” 301.

<sup>15</sup> Edwards, “Religion, Power and Politics,” 305–6; my added emphasis.

<sup>16</sup> On issues related to the Jewish Tax, see Martin Goodman, “Nerva, the *fiscus Iudaicus* and the Jewish Identity,” *JRS* 79 (1989): 40–4; also Marius Heemstra, *The Fiscus Iudaicus and the Parting of the Ways*, WUNT 277 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

## CHAPTER ONE

It has also been argued that the effects of the single event of 70 CE on Jewish religion should not be exaggerated, as comparative practices before and after the destruction of the Temple demonstrate no dramatic changes.<sup>17</sup> Religious changes certainly did not take place overnight; but the loss of the Temple indeed presented a vacuum that had to be filled with other alternatives that the religious system could provide. Second Temple Judaism by that time had already paved the way for such a transition: the prominent position of Torah obedience within the religious system, a high level of textualization of the Torah, a class of scribes and teachers specializing in Torah interpretation, and extra-Temple rites consisting of the concept of the community as Temple and the practice of spiritual sacrifice in the form of prayers and loving kindness. The failure of the second Jewish revolt in 135 CE lent further impetus to the transformation of the Jewish religion from Temple cult-based to Scripture-based. The goals and strategies of the rabbinic reform can be summed up as building a national identity which was under threat, and a religious life that fulfills the requirements of the Torah without a physical cultic centre, whilst striving to maintain scriptural and traditional continuity.<sup>18</sup> Religious transformation could only occur as a process. 70 CE alone did not bring about the changes, but it cannot be doubted that it marked the beginning of a series of events that worked as catalyst for such a transformation. 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch represent Jewish thoughts in the window period between the destruction and the rise of rabbinic Judaism.

Historians are often warned against over reliance on hindsight in their interpretation of the past.<sup>19</sup> This is a fair warning. Historical outcomes are knowledge only to people after the events had occurred. Events and outcomes do not always have causal relationships. As Martin Goodman has demonstrated, the occurrence of the first

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<sup>17</sup> This is the major thrust of argument made by the majority of contributors in Schwartz and Weiss, *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History?* that answer negatively to the question.

<sup>18</sup> For examples of Rabbinic implementations of extra-Temple rites in order to meet the challenge of Temple loss, see Baruch M. Bokser, "Rabbinic Responses to Catastrophe: From Continuity to Discontinuity," in *PAAJR* 50 (1983): 37–61. He also provides a list of other detailed studies of this topic in his footnote 1.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, the warning of Michael Stanislawski, "Eastern European Jewry in the Modern Period: 1750–1939," in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*, ed. Martin Goodman (Oxford: OUP, 2002), 396–411; here 397; or the words of Martin Goodman, "The Politics of the Fifties: Jewish Leadership and the Jews of Corinth in the Time of 2 Corinthians," in *Second Corinthians in the Perspective of Late Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Reimund Bieringer, Emmanuel Nathan, Didier Pollefeyt and Peter J. Tomson (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 26–35; here 27.

revolt against Rome in 66 CE was far from being inevitable.<sup>20</sup> In the two decades before the war, the emperors Claudius and Nero appeared to have adopted a consistent policy in favour of Jewish priesthood in Jerusalem.<sup>21</sup> Yet on the flip side, the study of history cannot take place without hindsight. The historian must be positioned somewhere in the present to get a perspective on the past. In a sense it is only through hindsight that a trajectory can be drawn and the significance of a past event can be interpreted. In a way, using hindsight was exactly what ancient Jewish thinkers including the authors of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch did. They invoked their past to make sense of their present and to create a possibility for the future; understanding of a current crisis is at the same time an interpretation of the past. As we shall see, their interpretation on the significance of the destruction of the Second Temple was intrinsically tied to the significance of the loss of the First Temple. In doing so, they also gave existence and shape to past traditions that may have otherwise remained insignificant and amorphous.

### *1.1.2 The Nature of the Crisis*

The destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, as I have argued above, created a deep crisis for the Jewish nation. Despite the severe political as well as socio-economic consequences, the most significant challenge was presented in the realm of Jewish religion. Yet, the loss of the Temple building, its priesthood, and even the sacrificial cult itself was not at the core of the crisis, as Second Temple Judaism by then had developed alternative resources to deal with such a loss, for example, the establishment of synagogue worship, offering of prayers, study of scriptures and acts of loving-kindness as fulfillments of the Law, even though they had been regarded as auxiliary and contingent extra-Temple rites, rather than replacement of the sacrificial cult.<sup>22</sup> After the loss of the Temple, these peripheral rites were given a more central role to play. The words of Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai recorded in Avot of Rabbi Nathan are worth quoting:

Once as Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai was coming forth from Jerusalem, Rabbi Joshua followed after him and beheld the Temple in ruins.

<sup>20</sup> Martin Goodman, "Current Scholarship on the First Revolt," in Berlin and Overman, *The First Jewish Revolt*, 15–24; also his *Rome and Jerusalem*.

<sup>21</sup> Paul McKechnie, "Judaean Embassies and Cases before Roman Emperors, AD 44–66," in *JTS* 56 (2005): 339–61.

<sup>22</sup> Religious life of the community detached from the Jerusalem Temple described in the Dead Sea Scrolls is a good example of such extra-Temple rites in use out of necessity, rather than as replacements.

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“Woe unto us!” Rabbi Joshua cried, “that this, the place where the iniquities of Israel were atoned for, is laid waste!”

“My son,” Rabban Johanan said to him, “be not grieved; we have another atonement as effective as this. And what is it? It is acts of loving-kindness, as it is said, *For I desire mercy and not sacrifice*” (Hos. 6:6).<sup>23</sup>

This was exactly how the rabbis dealt with the crisis in a practical sense as they gradually brought about innovations in the following centuries; namely, to elevate what had been secondary, out-of-necessity, extra-sacrificial rites and private, supplementary means of piety to heightened, public roles.<sup>24</sup> They achieved this innovation by restructuring pre-existing religious elements and patterns without introducing seemingly new ideas, thus maintaining a continuity of religious identity despite the fundamental changes brought about by the crisis.<sup>25</sup>

It was a crisis, I argue, not because early Judaism was “shattered” by the disappearance of its Temple,<sup>26</sup> but because it shook the confidence in a God that was thought to be faithful to his covenant with Israel. If God allowed his own Temple to be destroyed by Gentiles, did it mean he had withdrawn his favour from his chosen people? If the Jerusalem Temple, his only chosen dwelling place, was no more, where could the Jewish nation, called his people, access divine presence? Did the destruction of the Temple signify God’s abandonment of Israel? Did it indicate that God’s covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is made void? In other words, the true crisis was a crisis of loss of divine presence and Jewish self-identity. The present study will show that 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch were written precisely to address such a crisis.

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<sup>23</sup> *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*, trans. Judah Goldin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 34.

<sup>24</sup> Bokser, “Rabbinic Responses to the Catastrophe,” particularly 40–2. For other studies of rabbinic response to the loss of the Temple, see Robert Goldenberg, “The Broken Axis: Rabbinic Judaism and the Fall of Jerusalem,” *JAAR* 14.3 Supplement (1977): 869–82; Robert Kirschner compares rabbinic response in Lam. Rab. with 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch in his “Apocalyptic and Rabbinic Responses to the Destruction of 70,” *HTR* 78 (1985): 27–46.

<sup>25</sup> Ben Zion Rosenfeld observes that one such rabbinic device was to liken the Sages and their teaching to the Temple and its values. See “Sage and Temple in Rabbinic Thought after the Destruction of the Second Temple,” in *JSJ* 28 (1997): 437–64.

<sup>26</sup> To quote Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 15–16, 10–10, 175, cited in Jonathan Klawans, “Josephus, the Rabbis, and Responses to Catastrophes Ancient and Modern,” *JQR* 100 (2010): 278–309; here 280.



*1.2 Jewish Response: Judaism between the Two Temples—4 Ezra and 2 Baruch in Their Religious Context*

*1.2.1 Different Responses to the Destruction of the Two Temples*

The destruction of the Second Temple naturally calls into mind the destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. The link between the two events set apart by over six centuries does not only seem obvious to modern historians; there was and has always been a conscious association of the two Temples in the Jewish psyche. It has been observed that there always existed a thought among the Jews even while the Second Temple was standing that the Babylonian exile had never truly ended.<sup>27</sup> Josephus made a deliberate comment in his history of the Jewish War that it was on the same date of the destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians that the Second Temple was burned down by the Romans (*J.W.* 6.250). The rabbis, too, declared Tisha b'Av, the 9<sup>th</sup> day of the month Av, a day of commemoration of the fall of both temples (*m. Ta'an.* 4:6),<sup>28</sup> a day observed with fasting and reflection among Jewish people till modern time. On this point, 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch stood in common ground with Josephus and the rabbis in that both authors see the event of 70 CE through the lens of the destruction of the First Temple, in their own case by means of their pseudepigraphic settings.

Despite the close association of the two events, Jewish reaction to the second destruction appeared to be in sharp contrast to the first in at least three ways.<sup>29</sup> Firstly, whereas after the destruction of the First Temple, there was an abundance of literary activities, expressing emotions, offering explanations, and pronouncing expectations; after the destruction of the second Temple, at least as far as our extant sources suggest, there was an overwhelming lacuna in contemporary Jewish literature.

After the destruction of 586 BCE, there were the Deuteronomic and priestly historians, major prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah; the immediate

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<sup>27</sup> This observation can perhaps be traced to Michael A. Knibb, "The Exile in the Literature of the Intertestamental Period," *HeyJ* 17 (1976): 253–72, reprinted in Knibb, *Essays on the Book of Enoch and Other Early Jewish Texts and Traditions*, SVTP 22 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 191–212, as well as to Jean-Claude Picard, "La chute de Jérusalem et la mémoire de l'Exil. Courants de l'historiographie juive aux époques perses et hellénistiques," *Annuaire de l'École pratique des hautes études—Section des Sciences religieuses* 99 (1990–1991): 195–200, cited in Pierluigi Piovaneli, "Why Ezra and Not Enoch? Rewriting the Script of the First Exile with the Hope for a Prompt Restoration of Zion's Fortunes," *Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch: Reconstruction after the Fall*, ed. Matthias Henze and Gabriele Boccaccini, JSJSup 164 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 237–49; here 238.

<sup>28</sup> The day of destruction was different from Josephus from the rabbis. See note 3 above.

<sup>29</sup> For a study of the response to the destruction of the First Temple, see Peter R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration: A Study of the Hebrew Thought in the Sixth Century BC* (London: SCM, 1968).

postexilic period saw the production of the Chronicles, some Psalms, Trito-Isaiah, minor prophets such as Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. That is to say, the period after the destruction of the First Temple eventually gave rise to the scriptures—the Law, the Prophets and part of the Writings. The entirety of Israel’s past was interpreted and presented from the perspective of the exilic age, in the light of what happened to the First Temple.

Given the high impact of the event in 70 CE on Jewish religion and life, on the other hand, the shortage of historical sources documenting it presents a stark contrast. It is true that Josephus Flavius published his account of the *Jewish War* within ten years of the event; and it is equally true that other works may have been written by the Jews but were simply lost.<sup>30</sup> Yet the fact that no other such work survived, and the writing of Josephus was totally forgotten by his own people and was only preserved by the Christians simply makes the point more poignant. The rabbis themselves, too, for over a century and half after the event, remained silent about the cause, the unfolding, and the effects of the tragedy of 70 CE.<sup>31</sup> Only in the Amoraic (200–400 CE) and post-Amoraic (400–700 CE) periods did they break the silence and told numerous anecdotes, legends and sermons about the destruction.<sup>32</sup> Yet the Talmudic and Midrashic literature reveals little if any interest in preserving any record of the events, but only presenting “lessons” of the past.<sup>33</sup> 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, therefore, represent important and rare evidence that fills a gap, written as direct Jewish response to the event within decades.<sup>34</sup>

The second contrast lies in Jewish thinking about the cause for the destruction. After the First Temple was destroyed, Jewish sources show unanimous acknowledgement of the tragedy as God’s just punishment for Israel’s sins. After the

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<sup>30</sup> The book written by the Hellenistic Jew and an opponent of Josephus in the Galilee, Justus of Tiberias, is an example. He is mentioned by Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.10.8) and by Jerome (*Vir. ill.* 14), probably following Josephus (*Vita* 336–367). Mireille Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem against Rome*, trans. R. Fréchet, ISACR 7 (Leuven-Dudley: Peeters, 2006), 110.

<sup>31</sup> As Shaye J. D. Cohen (“The Destruction: From Scripture to Midrash” in *Prooftexts* 2 [1982]: 18–39) comments, for unclear reasons, either out of shock and despair or out of determination, the Tannaim (70–200) said absolutely nothing about the tragedies of the two Jewish revolts, but buried themselves with the production of law and exegesis instead (18).

<sup>32</sup> Cohen, “The Destruction,” 19. Anthony J. Saldarini (“Varieties of Rabbinic Response to the Destruction of the Temple,” *SBL Seminar Papers* 21 [Chico: Scholars, 1982]: 437–58) provides analysis of four anecdotes and stories related to rabbinic reactions: ARNA, ARNB, t. B. Gittin and Lam. Rab.

<sup>33</sup> Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem against Rome*, 111.

<sup>34</sup> The destruction of the Second Temple also forms the background to or appears as allusion in other works such as 3 Baruch, 4 Baruch, Sibylline Oracles 4 and 5, Apocalypse of Abraham and LAB (Pseudo-Philo), but it lacks the depth of treatment as in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch.

destruction of the Second Temple, however, there was palpable perplexity as to why a disaster in such excessive proportions had been allowed to happen. Granted, Josephus seems to be very clear about why the Temple was destroyed. He puts the blame squarely upon the violence, internecine struggles as well as the desecration of the holy precincts in Jerusalem by the rebels. However, his link with the Flavian dynasty and his political agenda means that his words should be taken with a pinch of salt. It should be acknowledged that after the second destruction Jewish thoughts about the cause did not depart from the traditional Deuteronomic view of retribution; thus “Israel sinned” is acknowledged, even in rabbinic writings. Yet what were supposed to be Israel’s sinful deeds that led to the annihilation? The specific reason was never as clearly indicated as after the first destruction. When giving a cause for the disaster, the Babylonian Talmud states:

Why was the first Sanctuary destroyed? Because of three [evil] things which prevailed there: idolatry, immorality, bloodshed. ... But why was the second Sanctuary destroyed, seeing that in its time they were occupying themselves with Torah, [observance of] precepts, and the practice of charity? Because therein prevailed hatred without cause. (b. Yoma 9b)<sup>35</sup>

When the rabbis are asked: since hatred also prevailed at the time of the First Temple, was Israel then better than Israel at the time of the Second Temple, their answer is positive, based on the fact that the Second Temple was not allowed to be rebuilt as was the First Temple. In other words, the faith that divine punishment is always triggered by Israel’s sin cannot be shaken, yet there was no clear indication of the nature of the sin and why the punishment was so out of proportion.<sup>36</sup> 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch agree with Josephus and the rabbis in attributing the cause of destruction to Israel’s sin, but what exactly was the sin is left unanswered.<sup>37</sup> In the case of 4 Ezra, the

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<sup>35</sup> *Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud*, vol. 7 Yoma, tran. Leo Jung, ed. I. Epstein (London: Soncino, 1974).

<sup>36</sup> Robert Goldenburg (“Early Rabbinic Explanations of the Destruction of Jerusalem,” in *Essays in Honour of Yigael Yadin*, ed. Gezer Vermes and Jacob Neusner [Oxford: Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, 1982], 517–25) argues that the Talmud has evidence to show that leading early rabbis had serious doubt about the notion that Israel’s sin led to the destruction of the Temple.

<sup>37</sup> It is also the view of Jonathan Klawans (“Responses to Catastrophes”) that Josephus, the rabbis and the apocalyptic authors “agree on these few, not insignificant points: the destruction was orchestrated by God, to punish a sinful people, in a way that recalls earlier catastrophes, especially that of 586 B.C.E. (307).” However, I think Klawans has underestimated the traumatic effects of the destruction of the Second Temple when he says that “for both Josephus and the later rabbis, the regrettable loss of the temple is to be mourned, but it is at the same time easily explainable, for the answers are all there in the Hebrew Bible (301).” The Deuteronomic principle of retribution was an obvious biblical notion, but how it was to be applied specifically to explain the disaster of 70 CE was no easy task for the rabbis. 4 Ezra and 2 Bar also demonstrate their authors’ struggle to make sense, even though they confess that Israel’s sin brought about the disaster.

question is directly thrown at God: even if Israel sinned, “are the deeds of Babylon better than those of Zion? (3:31)” The shock and incomprehension is perhaps what lay beneath the wide silence after the tragedy.

Thirdly, following the destruction of the First Temple, a clear message of recovery and renewal was detectable even immediately after the initial shock and distress. Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah, while condemning Israel’s sins, all pronounced her restoration in their prophetic oracles. Both Deuteronomic and Priestly historiographers gave their response as to what the nation had done wrong and what should be done to remedy the loss and revert her fortune. Revival was seen as a real possibility, to happen in this world, within history. In the literature after 70 CE, however, the solution offered is an eschatological one—that is, it will happen when human history comes to an end, when God will renew this world that is in decay and reverse Israel’s fortune; and the end is near. The rebuilding of the Temple was certainly anticipated; yet available Jewish writings written in the aftermath of the event instead offer a vision of a renewed Temple that is heavenly rather than earthly, at the end of this age, and associate it with God’s intervention through the rule of his Messiah. 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch and the Revelation of John, all three of which were written around the end of the first century, present the renewed Temple as an eschatological one. Rabbinic literature also bears witness to the belief in the association of the destruction of the Second Temple with the Messiah.

### *1.2.2 Judaism between the Two Temples*

How should we explain the sharp contrast in the responses to the two destructions? What had happened during the six and half centuries between the two Temples? Michael Stone speaks about three closely interrelated transformations in Judaism during the Second Temple period: the writing down of Israel’s tradition to become sacred Scripture, the development of an abstract conception of historical process, and the adoption of a cosmic and mythical view of redemption at the end of human history.<sup>38</sup>

Firstly, as the Torah as a written document played an increasingly crucial role in Judaism, it gained authority derived from divine authorship, thus claiming its own

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<sup>38</sup> Michael E. Stone, “Three Transformations in Judaism: Scripture, History and Redemption,” *Numen* 32 (1985): 218–35, reprinted in Stone, *Selected Studies in Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha with Special Reference to the Armenian Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 439–56.

share of divine presence from the Temple, as a symbol of God's covenant with Israel—Torah was with God in the cosmic realm, but in this world it was to Israel that it was revealed. As part of the process of textualization, oracles and prophecies as direct words of God also waned;<sup>39</sup> divine inspiration came in the form of Bible interpretation. The authority of the priestly office was gradually encroached by the authority of the teachers of scriptures, scribes and sages. Needless to say, the future of Judaism lay with the rabbis, who were the interpreters and teachers of the Bible, and was built upon biblical exegesis. In the event of the loss of the Temple, both authors of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch instinctively chose to focus on Israel's holy written tradition as the source of divine presence and as the marker of Israel's identity as covenant people.

The second transformation was changed Jewish attitude to history, thus the absent interest in recording any specifics of the event of 70 CE and beyond. Even in the exilic and return period historiography was certainly far from being mundane interest in knowing about a past; history was written as theophany and historical events were to be interpreted in the light of Israel's encounters with the divine. Nevertheless, historical reality is clearly discernible in the biblical narratives, with characters and events being treated as specific, not just types.<sup>40</sup> In the Second Temple period, historical process was viewed with an increasingly higher level of abstraction and in its completeness.<sup>41</sup> On the one hand, a paradigmatic view of history was developed, in which past events and characters were explored as abstract types, and on the other hand, there developed a meta-historical eschatology.<sup>42</sup> The rabbis' seeming indifference to contemporary historical events has been explained as arising from their understanding of Scripture—that the past recorded in the Bible already contains the revealed pattern of history;<sup>43</sup> and their pursuit of more decisive matters—fulfilling their terms of the covenant as their role to play in the redemptive drama.<sup>44</sup> The rabbis' view on history and Israel's role in it was anticipated in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch. In both works the event of 586 BCE is used as the setting and a literary type; ancient teachers of the Law and scribes, Ezra and Baruch function as mouthpieces; Babylon becomes a

<sup>39</sup> "Since the deaths of Haggai, Zachariah and Malachi, the Holy Spirit has ceased in Israel"—for rabbinic comments on the cease of prophecy, see t. Sotah 13; b. Sotah 48b, b. Yoma 9b, b. Sanhedrin 11a. A belief in the cessation of prophecies is also stated in 1 Macc, e.g. 4:46, 9:27 and 14:41.

<sup>40</sup> Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 12–3.

<sup>41</sup> Stone, "Three Transformations in Judaism," 224 (445 in reprint).

<sup>42</sup> Stone, "Three Transformations in Judaism," 224 (445 in reprint).

<sup>43</sup> As Yerushalmi words it in *Zakhor*, "the biblical past was known, the messianic future assured; the in-between-time was obscure (24)."

<sup>44</sup> Neusner, "The Religious Use of History", 170–1.

symbol of Rome, or any worldly empires that may come afterwards for that matter. It is no coincidence that many previous studies of the two pseudepigrapha as Jewish response to the destruction of the Temple remark on their inward look and disinterest in the Roman empire;<sup>45</sup> 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch are not about a political response, but rather a response to God on account of Israel's situation. In their response the two works are truly characteristic of the spirit of Second Temple Judaism, both in their view of history and in their use of history.

The third transformation in Second Temple Judaism is concerned with the concept of cosmic redemption.<sup>46</sup> In biblical writings it is in this world and in human history that the throne of David's descendants will be reestablished and the fortune of Israel will be reversed. Even with its highly symbolic language which was later interpreted as basis for eschatological prophecies, Isaiah essentially speaks about return and restoration in the Jewish homeland, the rebuilding of the sanctuary in the earthly Jerusalem, and redemption of Israel in concrete terms as salvation from slavery under Israel's worldly oppressors; God acts and interacts with Israel in history. Second Temple Judaism saw this historical view of redemption transformed to take on a cosmic dimension instead. With human history being viewed more and more in abstraction, this world/age came into sharp contrast with the trans-mundane. God was further removed to above the human historical process.<sup>47</sup> He is still in control, but the pre-ordained world from the time of creation must first run its course. If it is the biblical account of human history that provides the beginning of the mystical creation, it is Second Temple Judaism at the close of the biblical scriptures that developed the *eschaton* as the mystical end. The redemption of Israel became part of cosmic redemption belonging to the meta-historical end. The yearning for redemption went hand in hand with heightened eschatological expectations, in which the promise of the Davidic Messiah, the Temple and Jerusalem became other-worldly and transcendent. The rabbis, for the survival and preservation of the Jewish nation after the disaster of Bar Kokhba revolt, played down such expectations, yet their faith in the Messiah and

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<sup>45</sup> For example, Frederick J. Murphy, "2 Baruch and the Romans," *JBL* 104 (1985): 663–9; J. Edward Wright, "The Social Setting of the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch," *JSP* 16 (1997): 81–96; Philip F. Esler, "The Social Function of 4 Ezra," *JSNT* 53 (1994): 99–123; Bruce W. Longenecker, "Locating 4 Ezra: A Consideration of Its Social Setting and Function," *JSJ* 28 (1997): 271–93; Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem against Rome*; and Kenneth R. Jones, *Jewish Reactions to the Destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70: Apocalypses and Related Pseudepigrapha*, *JSJSup* 151 (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

<sup>46</sup> Stone, "Three Transformations in Judaism," 225 (446 in reprint).

<sup>47</sup> Stone, "Three Transformations in Judaism," 224 (445 in reprint).

Israel's redemption at the *eschaton* was unmoved. In 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, however, one sees full expressions of such expectations. Both authors responded to the event of 70 CE with a hope of eschatological redemption.

Therefore, in their response to the crisis of 70 CE, 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch bear witness to the transformations in Jewish religious thought in the Second Temple period, even though they were written after the Second Temple was destroyed. It is the task of the following chapters to further demonstrate this.

### *1.3 The Sister Texts: Origins, Relationship, and Genre—4 Ezra and 2 Baruch in Their Literary Context*

#### *1.3.1 Origins and Relationship*

4 Ezra and 2 Baruch are sometimes called “sister texts” or “twin texts” for their shared congruencies.<sup>48</sup> Both were composed around the end of the first century in Palestine by Jewish authors in response to the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple.<sup>49</sup> Both works have a literary setting after the destruction of the First Temple, using biblical figures associated with that setting: the scribe Ezra in Ezra-Nehemiah for the former,<sup>50</sup> and Baruch son of Neriah, the scribe of the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 32, 36, 43 and 45) for the latter. It is also believed that both texts were originally written in Hebrew and translated into Greek, and subsequently into other languages.<sup>51</sup> While 4 Ezra has been preserved in Latin as chapters 3–14 of 2 Esdras of the Apocrypha (4 Esdras of the

<sup>48</sup> Matthias Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism in Late First Century Israel: Reading Second Baruch in Context*, TSAJ 142 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 127.

<sup>49</sup> For the dating of 4 Ezra, see Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 9–10. The vision in chapters 11–12 about the destruction of the eagle by the lion is particularly useful in the dating of the author's time of writing. The eagle's wings and little wings are symbolic of various Roman emperors, Augustus, Vespasian, Titus and Domitian. 4 Ezra was thus probably composed in the latter part of Domitian's reign (81–96 CE). Regarding the post-70 dating of 2 Baruch, despite broad consensus there are also voices of doubt. Martin Goodman, for example, thinks there is a real possibility that it was written before 70 CE; for him the post-70 dating is influenced by reading 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra together. See his argument in “The Date of 2 Baruch,” *Revealed Wisdom: Studies in Apocalyptic in Honour of Christopher Rowland*, ed. John Ashton, AJEC 88 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 116–21. However, Matthias Henze has raised two points of reference in 2 Baruch which provide a post-70 dating. The first is Baruch's prediction of the destruction of a second temple after the first (2 Bar 32:1–6); and the other is Remiel's interpretation of Baruch's second vision, foreseeing the restoration of the temple ministry, but “not as fully as in former times” (68: 5–7). See Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 193 and n 27.

<sup>50</sup> Ezra in 4 Ezra is named Salatiel, also called Ezra, and is placed in the exile in Babylon rather than the Persian period. However, in light of his being a great figure that restored the Torah, it seems beyond any doubt that he is Ezra the Scribe. It is thought that “Salatiel,” which means “I asked God” in Hebrew, refers to his role as an inquirer of God in the first half of the book. See Stone, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of the Fourth Ezra*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 37–8, 55–6.

<sup>51</sup> Stone and Henze, *4 Ezra and 2 Baruch*, 4–6, 16–17.

Vulgate)<sup>52</sup> and is attested in numerous versions in other languages,<sup>53</sup> 2 Baruch remained in obscurity over centuries until it was rediscovered in the 1860s in a single Syriac manuscript. While the complete version is only extant in Syriac, a single fragment of it is also preserved in Greek Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 403 and an incomplete version also exists in Arabic.<sup>54</sup>

More importantly, scholarship has also often commented how the two works are intrinsically linked in form and content as well as linguistic expressions, and are thus often read in reference to each other. Both feature a narrative framework, incorporating extensive dialogues, lamentations, prayers and apocalyptic visions. Whereas 4 Ezra has a clearly defined heptadic structure, the structure of 2 Baruch is more ambiguous; it also ends with an epistle which marks it as different from 4 Ezra. In content the two books are also thought to shadow each other, showing the same thematic development from lamentation to consolation, with special attention paid to questions such as theodicy, Israel's election, human sin, and soteriology. Both authors, in their response to the crisis posed by the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, raise eschatological hopes and Torah obedience as remedies for their devastated communities.

Despite the similarities, important, albeit nuanced, differences exist as well, which will be subject to analysis in the following chapters. The two authors do not always seem to agree with each other in every theological viewpoint, and give different emphases in their responses. In scholarship 4 Ezra is usually preferred over 2 Baruch for its perceived theological and intellectual vigour, as demonstrated in Ezra's unrelenting questioning about theodicy and human salvation,<sup>55</sup> whereas 2 Baruch is described as more pastoral—a feature associated with Baruch's speeches to his people and his detailed letter to communities in wider diaspora.

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<sup>52</sup> In the Latin version, two other "Ezra" works were prefaced and affixed to 4 Ezra by Christian editor(s), perhaps as early as the second century, for form chapters 1–2 known as 5 Ezra and chapters 15–16 known as 6 Ezra. 5 Ezra and 6 Ezra are believed to be prophecies authored by Christians, and not related to 4 Ezra originally. See Theodore A. Bergren, *Fifth Ezra: The Text, Origin and Early History* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1990), and *idem*, *Sixth Ezra: The Text and Origin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>53</sup> For details of manuscript tradition and other issues regarding the origins of 4 Ezra, see the comprehensive work of Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 1–9.

<sup>54</sup> 2 Baruch was reintroduced into the world by Antonio Maria Ceriani, "Apocalypsis Baruch, olim de graeco in syriacum, et numc de syriaco in latinum translate," in *Monumenta sacra et profana ex codicibus praesertim Bibliothecae Ambrosianae* 1.2 (Milan: Bibliotheca Ambrosiane Mediolani, 1866), 73–95. For a general introduction on 2 Baruch, see Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, especially "Chapter 2 Prolegomena," 16–70.

<sup>55</sup> See Matthias Henze, "4 Ezra and 2 Baruch: The *Status Quaestionis*," in Henze and Boccaccini, *Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch*, 3–27; 12–5.



Multiple attempts have been offered to explain the parallels and differences between the two works. Theories have been forwarded to make one work the literary source for the other,<sup>56</sup> or 2 Baruch as a response to or refutation of 4 Ezra,<sup>57</sup> or that both used another work, *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (LAB, or Pseudo-Philo), as a common source.<sup>58</sup> The current consensus is well summed up by Michael Stone when he observes that “an intimate relationship is quite obvious, but the direction of dependence is very difficult to determine”, as no arguments offered so far have been decisive.<sup>59</sup> Matthias Henze has proposed using new approaches such as considering the role of oral performance and shared Jewish intellectual background in the transmission and formation of the works to explain the sources of their commonalities.<sup>60</sup> Henze’s proposal opens up a new perspective to look at relationships of related ancient works where the conventional source and textual criticisms prove inadequate. In the case of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, however, we must consider a situation rather different from the formations of the Christian Gospels; there would not have been a long process of multiple oral performances and transmissions if we consider the two works as responses within three decades after the event of 70 CE.<sup>61</sup> Shared traditions were certainly in the background of their commonalities, but their affinity seems to go beyond a simple question of shared traditions, oral or written; the authors appear to be in dialogue. Suffice to say that the relationship between 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch deserves further attention without resorting to a simplistic solution of source dependency.

In summary, in the study of both texts for Jewish response to the destruction of the Temple, it is important, on the one hand, to read each in its own right without subordinating its sense to the other; and to read them in conversation with each other

<sup>56</sup> E.g. Bruno Violet, *Die Apokalypsen des Esra und des Baruch in deutscher Gestalt*, GCS 32 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1924), lv and lxxxi–xc, which concludes that 4 Ezra served as a source for 2 Baruch; for those who hold the opposite view, see Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, *L’Apocalypse syriaque de Baruch* (Paris: Cerf, 1969), I: 25–6. For a most up-to-date summary of the debate, see Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 148–59.

<sup>57</sup> E.g. Bruce M. Metzger, “The Fourth Book of Ezra,” in *OTP*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1983), I: 517–59; here 522. Or the view of John J. Collins (*The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 224) that “it is difficult to avoid the impression that one is deliberately taking issue with the other, although it need not have been written exclusively as a response.”

<sup>58</sup> E.g. M. R. James, *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo* (London: SPCK, 1917), 46–53, and Violet, *Die Apokalypsen des Esra und des Baruch*, liv–lv and lxxxi.

<sup>59</sup> Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 39.

<sup>60</sup> Matthias Henze, “4 Ezra and 2 Baruch: Literary Composition and Oral Performance in First-Century Apocalyptic Literature,” *JBL* 131 (2012): 181–200; also his *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 181–6.

<sup>61</sup> See n 46 above for their dating.

as well as within the wider religious and literary context of Second Temple Judaism, on the other.

### 1.3.2. *Apocalypse as Genre*

One feature that particularly joins 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch closely together is their literary genre. They are widely regarded as the highest achievements of the apocalyptic genre characteristic of the Second Temple period, from the earliest Enochic books in the third century BCE to the end of the first century CE.<sup>62</sup> It is necessary, however, to delineate what is meant by “apocalyptic”. “Apocalyptic” in biblical scholarship may be used to refer to a range of categories: literary genre, socio-religious movement, or eschatological worldview.<sup>63</sup> Needless to say, this is an extremely complex issue which involves both ancient and modern usages; but here I will only be concerned with the apocalyptic genre. Only the term “apocalyptic literature” or the noun “apocalypse” will be used to avoid ambiguity.<sup>64</sup>

I will adopt the definition by John J. Collins, who defines “apocalypse” as

a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.<sup>65</sup>

The common features of apocalypses are thought to be: a broad narrative framework that often describes otherworldly journeys; discourses or dialogues; an *angelus interpretes* as guide to visions or heavenly tour; a pseudonymous visionary who is a venerable figure from the distant past.<sup>66</sup> Two sub-categories within the genre are further identified; these are the “other-worldly journeys”, such as the journeys in 1 Enoch (*Book of Watchers*, chs 12–16; 20–32) and the “historical apocalypses”, into which 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch fall.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Also the Book of Revelation, written around the same time.

<sup>63</sup> It has been observed that the term has been and continues to be used by many without any differentiation between the apocalyptic genre, the apocalyptic worldview and description of the End. See the Introduction by Benjamin E. Reynolds and Loren T. Stuckenbruck to their edited volume, *The Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition and the Shaping of New Testament Thought* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2017), 1–12.

<sup>64</sup> For a comprehensive review of modern scholarships in ancient apocalypses and apocalypticism, see Lorenzo DiTommaso, “Apocalypses and Apocalypticism in Antiquity: Parts I and II,” *CBR* 5 (2007): 235–86, 367–432.

<sup>65</sup> *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 5.

<sup>66</sup> Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 5.

<sup>67</sup> Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 6–7.

Such a definition is certainly not without any problems. Collins himself indicates that the limitation of such a genre is its descriptive nature. Others have challenged its sufficiency on the grounds that for each criterion there are notable exceptions.<sup>68</sup> For example, not all apocalypses necessarily feature a dualistic worldview, transcendent reality and/or eschatological outlook. Or at least these features are not necessarily a central concern in every apocalypse.<sup>69</sup> Even for pseudonymity there are exceptions; the author of Revelation signed his own name at the beginning of his work.<sup>70</sup> The Book of Daniel also stands out from others in that, though pseudonymous, the visionary is not a known biblical figure from the distant past but a legendary figure in the exilic period that was later incorporated into the Bible because of the apocalypse itself.

A question worth asking at this point is, “Did ancient authors entertain the concept of ‘apocalypse’ as a genre?” In other words, did they perceive the existence of an ancient literary form with its inherent expectations and conventions, to which they conformed? Or is “apocalypse” as a genre purely a construct of modern scholarship based on observation and generalization of known texts? There is evidence that ancient authors may have been aware they were writing a particular type of text. The Book of Revelation begins with Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Apocalypse of Jesus Christ); 2 Baruch, on the other hand, opens with ܩܒܠ ܕܟܬܒܐ ܕܒܪܚܝܐ ܒܢ ܢܪܝܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܫܘܥ ܕܒܪ ܢܪܝܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ (The book of the revelation of Baruch son of Neriah. Translated from Greek into Syriac). Since it was translated from Greek into Syriac – and this is now confirmed by the Greek fragment on Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 403, one can assume that, for the Syriac equivalent ܡܠܟܐ, Ἀποκάλυψις was the original Greek word. As Ἀποκάλυψις derives from the verb ἀποκαλύπτω, “to uncover, reveal, bring to light,” ܡܠܟܐ is of the verbal root ܡܠܟ, “to uncover, reveal, lay open.” Hence the English translation, “revelation.”

<sup>68</sup> For debates on these issues, see Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982); Lester L. Grabbe (ed.), *Knowing the End from the Beginning: The Prophetic, the Apocalyptic and Their Relationships*, JSPSup 46 (London: T&T Clark, 2003).

<sup>69</sup> Compare, for example, Daniel with the early chapters of 1 Enoch. See Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 26; 71.

<sup>70</sup> The issue of the lack of pseudonymity and the apocalyptic genre of Revelation is explored in John J. Collins, “Pseudonymity, Historical Reviews and the Genre of the Revelation of John,” *CBQ* 39 (1977): 329–43. For a recent discussion on the same issue, see Lorenzo DiTommaso, “Pseudonymity and the Revelation of John,” in Ashton, *Revealed Wisdom*, 305–15.

## CHAPTER ONE

The word “apocalypse” is often regarded as equivalent to “vision”, thus the Latin word “*visio*” in the titles of later Latin translations of apocalyptic works, such as the “*Visio Beati Esdrae*.” The Hebrew word רָאָה, “vision”, of the root, רָאָה, “to see”, is also used for the Hebrew translation of the word “revelation”. רָאָה is almost exclusively used in the prophetic books in the Hebrew Bible to refer to visions of the prophets. On many occasions the word is used to open a book of prophetic oracles; thus רָאָה, “vision”, has a close link to the concept of prophecy.<sup>71</sup> As an example to demonstrate the link of prophetic vision with prophetic word, we may quote the opening verses of Isaiah 1:1–2:

The vision (רָאָה) of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw (רָאָה) concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord has spoken (דָּבַר), I have reared and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. (NRSV)

While the book begins with the word רָאָה, what follows is essentially prophetic proclamations, rather than a vision in the strict sense. More importantly רָאָה is the term used in the apocalyptic sections of the Book of Daniel (9:24, 10:14, 11:14) to refer to Daniel’s apocalyptic visions. No clear distinction seems to be drawn between seeing and hearing. Similarly, in the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Bible, different forms of the word ὁράω, “to see,” are used to refer to the concept of visions in both the prophetic books and in the Book of Daniel.

The absence of the word, ἀποκάλυψις, in the Greek translations of the prophetic books and Daniel seems to indicate its coming into common use later than the Septuagint and at a time that also saw the development of a particular common worldview associated with it. In the New Testament ἀποκάλυψις mostly appears in Pauline epistles to reflect a religious outlook that sees truth as that which, though previously hidden, God has made known.<sup>72</sup> What underlies it is the worldview often labeled as “apocalypticism” in scholarship; one in which “supernatural revelation, the heavenly world, and eschatological judgment played essential parts.”<sup>73</sup> Thus “apocalypticism” as worldview transcends the apocalyptic genre. Secondly, and more relevant to the discussion of literary genre, ἀποκάλυψις uniquely appears in the title of

<sup>71</sup> רָאָה is used in 1 Sam 3:1; Isa 1:1, 29:7; Jer 14:14, 23:16; Eze 7:13, 26, 12:22, 23, 24, 13:16; Hos 12:11; Oba 1:1; Nah 1:1; Hab 2:2, 3; Lam 2:9; and Dan 1:17, 8:1, 9:24, 10:14, 11:14.

<sup>72</sup> ἀποκάλυψις appears in Rom 2:5, 8:19, 16:25; 1 Cor 1:7, 14:6, 14:26; 2 Cor 12:1, 12:7; Gal 1:12, 2:2; Eph 1:17, 3:3; 2 Thess 1:7; 1 Per 1:7, 1:13, 4:13.

<sup>73</sup> Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 147.

the Book of Revelation, yet it does not seem to be equated with the word “vision”, as in verse 9:17, where an apocalyptic vision is described as *ὁράσις*.

With the usage of the term described above in mind, *ἀποκάλυψις* may indeed have been a name attached to a literary genre towards the later part of the Second Temple period. Even considering the possibility that the title of 2 Baruch was a later addition, it is clear to me that ancient authors of apocalypses were aware that they were writing a type of text defined by its socio-linguistic conventions.<sup>74</sup> Apocalypse as an ancient genre incorporated visions as major components and was yet larger in scope than visions alone. However, apart from visions, what other components were also considered legitimate forms of “revelation” is unclear to us. This could well be the reason why both 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch have extensive dialogues between the protagonist and a divine being; the Book of Revelation begins with letters to the churches; 2 Baruch concludes with an epistle to Jews in diaspora; and the Book of Daniel (if the author/compiler was also aware of the genre he was writing in) opens with legendary stories about Daniel. It seems that it was the revealed nature of knowledge contained in the works that the word “*ἀποκάλυψις*” intended to emphasize; vision (*חִזְיוֹן*, *رُؤْيَا* or *ὁράσις*) seems to be a major form such revelations took but was far from being exclusive.

Ancient literary conventions are to a large degree not directly accessible to modern readers; besides, literary genres change over time, and therefore even the same genre may not always had the same conventions over a long historical period.<sup>75</sup> However, we can indeed facilitate our study of ancient literature by drawing perceived common features of these works that appear to belong to the same type. The definition by Collins is therefore a useful tool to “clarify particular works by showing both their typical traits and their distinctive elements.”<sup>76</sup>

I will use “apocalypse” throughout this thesis to refer to the literary genre typified by works such as 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch; I will use “eschatological” to specifically describe the worldview and expectations which are commonly, but by no means exclusively, associated with the literary genre of apocalypse.

<sup>74</sup> This is also the view of Martha Himmelfarb (*The Apocalypse: a Brief History* [Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010], 1–2): “... it is clear that the authors of these works write in consciousness of earlier examples of the genre.”

<sup>75</sup> Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, “More on Apocalyptic and Apocalypses,” *JSJ* 18 (1987): 137–44.

<sup>76</sup> Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 8.

### *1.4 Previous Studies on Jewish Response to the Destruction in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch*

Studies of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch for Jewish response to the destruction of the Second Temple have been carried out to reflect a variety of approaches that cover the historical-political, sociological, theological, as well as literary-psychological perspectives.

#### *1.4.1 The Historical-Political Approach*

The historical-political perspective investigates Jewish attitude and relationship to the Roman Empire, with its major concern focused upon the history of the Jews under Roman rule. 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch are usually used only minimally for this purpose; but two recent monographs using this perspective offer comprehensive analyses of pseudepigraphic texts including 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch. Mireille Hadas-Lebel (2006)<sup>77</sup> traces the change of Jewish attitude to Rome from an ally and friend to an arch enemy who wrought havoc to its national life and cultic centre. She finds a strong tendency in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch to attribute the cause of the disaster not to Rome but to Jewish sinfulness. She also detects in the two works the sentiment of submission to the consequences as divine judgment. Kenneth Jones (2011)<sup>78</sup> studies 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch as part of Jewish reaction to life under Roman imperial rule, in light of the humiliation suffered after the defeat of Judaea. Jones seems to concur with studies before him, such as those of F. J. Murphy<sup>79</sup> and J. H. Charlesworth,<sup>80</sup> that there is a general aloofness regarding Rome and a tendency to play down Rome's role in the destruction. This is not a surprising finding, as 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch are first of all to be understood as religious texts expressing Jewish responses to Israel's relationship with God. I will argue that building new connections with God and establishing a national identity based on Israel's understanding of its covenant with God are the focus of both 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, which should in turn become the focus of our study in order to understand their message.

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<sup>77</sup> Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem against Rome*.

<sup>78</sup> Jones, *Jewish Reactions to the Destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70*.

<sup>79</sup> Murphy, "2 Baruch and the Romans," *JBL* 104 (1985): 663–9.

<sup>80</sup> Charlesworth, "The Triumphant Majority as Seen by a Dwindled Minority: The Outsider According to the Insider of the Jewish Apocalypses, 70–130," in *"To See Ourselves as Others See Us": Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs and Caroline McCracken-Flesher (Chico: Scholars, 1985), 285–315.

### 1.4.2 *The Sociological Approach*

The two texts are also studied from a sociological perspective, with a focus on their social settings and inquiries made into the function they played in the communities that produced them. Philip F. Esler<sup>81</sup> carries out comparative studies of 4 Ezra with modern millennial movements under political struggles and colonial oppression in order to understand the response to the devastation and its economic consequences represented in the text of 4 Ezra. He concludes that 4 Ezra was intended to provide a means of managing or eliminating the dissonance between reality and expectation; it was addressed to Israel as a whole, encouraging it to rediscover its corporate identity. Bruce W. Longenecker's study of 4 Ezra<sup>82</sup> locates the text in the mainstream, rabbinic context, identifying the author as an authoritative figure among the ranks of the early rabbinic leaders at Yavneh. For him the text functions as both management of sorrow in the wake of national disaster and management of eschatological fervor in order to keep the nation in safety. His paper is a repudiation of an earlier fallacy which assumes that an apocalyptic work was necessarily the product of a disenfranchised community, a sectarian group alienated from mainstream society with anti-establishment tendencies. He differs from Esler, however, in limiting the intended audience of 4 Ezra to a small leadership group, instead of Israel as a whole, as Esler proffers. The sociological approach was also applied by J. Edward Wright in his study of 2 Baruch.<sup>83</sup> Mindful of the methodological issues involved,<sup>84</sup> Wright identifies within the text's social setting a charismatic individual invested with divinely inspired knowledge about the fate of humanity and the meaning of history as well as exercising an authoritative interpretation of Torah; correspondingly there was also a community of followers who confirmed his role as divinely-authorised intermediary; and the two depended and needed one another. In terms of the Jewish response to the destruction in 70 CE, all these studies identify a Torah-and-*eschaton* dual solution in the texts, as well as what is usually termed "introversionist outlook" or "quietism". In a more

<sup>81</sup> Esler, "The Social Function of 4 Ezra," *JSNT* 53 (1994): 99–123.

<sup>82</sup> Longenecker, "Locating 4 Ezra: A Consideration of Its Social Setting and Function," *JSJ* 28 (1997): 271–93.

<sup>83</sup> Wright, "The Social Setting of the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch," *JSP* 16 (1997): 81–96.

<sup>84</sup> These issues are discussed in Lester L. Grabbe, "The Social Setting of Early Jewish Apocalypticism," *JSP* 4 (1989): 27–47; and David C. Sim, "The Social Setting of Ancient Apocalypticism: A Question of Method," *JSP* 13 (1995): 5–16.

recent article, Lester L. Grabbe,<sup>85</sup> however, indicates that both texts “look to be predecessors of the Bar Kokhva revolt,” as they show “a community in the process of moving from eschatological expectations to actual revolt.”<sup>86</sup>

Despite the importance of these inquiries, I concur with Michael Stone’s comment that little can be known about the social matrix and functions<sup>87</sup> of the texts beyond the basic historical context between the destruction of the Temple by the Romans and the Bar Kochba revolt, and the religious context of Second Temple Period before the coming of age of the rabbinic movement and Christianity. Nevertheless, studies of the social context and function of the texts help us understand their messages, just as an understanding of the structure and content of the texts is essential in the establishment of their social setting and function.

#### *1.4.3 The Theological Approach*

By far the most common approach in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch research is the theological approach. The focus here is to examine theological ideas promulgated in the two books as part of intra-Jewish debate in response to the national crisis following the destruction of the Temple. Great interest is usually drawn to themes such as covenantal theology, messianic eschatology, and the problem of theodicy and human sin—particularly in the case of 4 Ezra. Leaving more detailed reviews to later chapters on specific issues, here I shall only mention a few examples.

Michael Stone’s “Reactions to Destructions of the Second Temple: Theology, Perception and Conversion”<sup>88</sup> places theodicy at the centre of Jewish thought in their post-destruction response. Ideas in 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra are analysed within the traditional Deuteronomic framework and in the context of older sources. For the author of 2 Baruch, the “meta-historical eschatology and the heightened cosmic role of the Temple”<sup>89</sup> are to replace the lost earthly Temple, and in the same process God’s righteousness itself is not questioned. Stone sees a contrast in 4 Ezra, whose author calls God’s creative activity, justice and morality into question. 4 Ezra, therefore, represents a re-examination of basic concepts of the worldview of Judaism.

<sup>85</sup> Grabbe, “4 Ezra and 2 Baruch in Social and Historical Perspective,” in *Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch*, ed. Matthias Henze and Gabriele Boccaccini, JSJSup 164 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 221–35.

<sup>86</sup> Grabbe, “4 Ezra and 2 Baruch in Social and Historical Perspective,” 234.

<sup>87</sup> Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 40–3. His commentary is on 4 Ezra only; but the principle applies to 2 Baruch as well.

<sup>88</sup> Stone, “Reactions to the Destructions of the Second Temple,” *JSJ* 12 (1981): 195–204.

<sup>89</sup> Stone, “Reactions,” 199.



The theme of theodicy is also taken up by Alden Lloyd Thompson<sup>90</sup> and Tom W. Willet. Thompson's work was situated within the debate on the consistency of the theological views of 4 Ezra, and was intended as a rebuttal to Brandenburger and Harnisch<sup>91</sup> who had argued that the voice of the author of 4 Ezra remains with the angel Uriel repudiating the heretical position in the mouth of Ezra the character. Through his analysis of the form and structure of 4 Ezra, Thompson concludes that both the "reputation" of the seer and his complaints matter to the author; although he does not have a coherent rational solution to the "theodicy-problem", he "nevertheless is finally able to claim that God is a righteous judge"; in so doing, the author demonstrates that he belongs "within a well-tested OT and ANE tradition."<sup>92</sup> Willet's study also places theodicy in 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra within the OT framework of disciplinary, probationary or redemptive arguments. He finds that both works are ruled by the doctrine of retribution, and resort to eschatology for the solutions to the problem of theodicy. Differences exist as well. In 2 Baruch not only the righteous are promised retribution in the future, the present suffering is also explained as having a redemptive function; in 4 Ezra, on the other hand, the validity of the eschatological answer is questioned, due to the unresolved problem of human sin.

The theme of covenant and election is another major topic in a number of studies. The monograph of Bruce W. Longenecker<sup>93</sup> is a comparative study of 4 Ezra with Paul's epistle to the Romans, and as an expansion on the insight of E. P. Sanders<sup>94</sup> in his formulation of the covenantal nature of ancient Judaism. Longenecker confirms Sanders's assessment of 4 Ezra in seeing it as an abandonment and rejection of the traditional ethnocentric understanding of Jewish covenantalism.<sup>95</sup> Confronted with the crisis on 70 CE and having to reconcile it with the conviction of a righteous

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<sup>90</sup> Thompson, *Responsibility for Evil in the Theodicy of IV Ezra: A Study Illustrating the Significance of Form and Structure for the Meaning of the Book*, SBLDS 29 (Missoula: Scholars, 1977).

<sup>91</sup> Egon Brandenburger, *Die Verborgenheit Gottes im Weltgeschehen: das literarische und theologische Problem des 4. Esrabuches* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1981). His earlier work, *Adam und Christus: exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Röm 5:12–21*, WMANT 7 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1962) influenced Harnisch. Also Wolfgang Harnisch, *Verhängnis und Verheißung der Geschichte: Untersuchen zum Zeit—und Geschichtsverständnis im 4. Buch Esra und in der syr. Baruchapokalypse* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969). More will be said on this issue in the following chapter.

<sup>92</sup> Thompson, *Responsibility for Evil*, 356.

<sup>93</sup> Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant: A Comparison of 4 Ezra and Romans 1–11*, JSNTSup 57 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991).

<sup>94</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

<sup>95</sup> What Sanders calls "covenantal nomism" is termed "ethnocentric covenantalism" by Longenecker.

God, the author of 4 Ezra instead adopted a new understanding of the Law that rejected Jewish ethnocentrism.

A similar position can be found in the study of P. Richard Choi.<sup>96</sup> In his treatment of the dialogues in 4 Ezra as intra-Jewish debate, Choi argues that the author of 4 Ezra reorders—through the words of Uriel—Israel’s beliefs about covenant, election, and God’s promise to Abraham. The author, in the light of the event of 70 CE, concludes that election does not belong exclusively to Israel, nor does it concern the Gentiles of the present age. According to Choi, the author wants to “divest Judaism of its former deuteronomistic framework,”<sup>97</sup> rejecting both “particularist” and “universalist” ways of thinking about the covenant.

John J. Collins offers a special consideration on the value of the concept of election in a time of crisis.<sup>98</sup> Collins endorses the view of Karina Martin Hogan<sup>99</sup> in seeing the book of 4 Ezra as a three-way rather than two-way debate. In this view, the debate between Ezra and the angel Uriel represents the conflict between “covenantalized wisdom” represented by Ben Sira and “eschatologized wisdom” represented by 4QInstruction; or in other words, the salvation of Israel as a whole by election versus the salvation of individuals by virtue of keeping the Law. Both Ezra’s and Uriel’s views are rejected, however, and replaced by a third, “apocalyptic theology,” revealed in Ezra’s visions. In this third option, the salvation of a small number of the elect is maintained, but it is perceived in the broader context of creation as a whole. Collins finds that, despite its strong advocacy of Israel’s election, the universalist expression makes 4 Ezra an admirable work written at a time of crisis.

2 Baruch, though being a sister text of 4 Ezra, has not received as much attention from scholars. Besides being less well-known and rediscovered later, the main reason could be its lack of tension and conflict that are palpable in the dialogues between Ezra and Uriel in 4 Ezra; accordingly, it has not been given much prominence in theological studies.<sup>100</sup> The monograph of Frederick James Murphy,<sup>101</sup> for example, places an emphasis on establishing the structure of 2 Baruch; he does, however, highlight the

<sup>96</sup> Choi, “The Intra-Jewish Dialogue in 4 Ezra 3:1–9:25,” *AUSS* 41 (2003): 237–54.

<sup>97</sup> Choi, “Intra-Jewish Dialogue,” 253.

<sup>98</sup> Collins, “The Idea of Election in 4 Ezra,” *JSQ* 16 (2009): 83–96.

<sup>99</sup> Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict in 4 Ezra: Wisdom Debate and Apocalyptic Solution*, *JSJSup* 130 (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

<sup>100</sup> See Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism in Late First Century Israel*, 1–8, for a critique on the regrettable lack of scholarly attention for 2 Baruch.

<sup>101</sup> Murphy, *The Structure and Meaning of Second Baruch*, *SBLDS* 78 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1985).

theological concept of the “two worlds” in the text. By locating the Temple and Jerusalem firmly in the present aeon, Murphy finds 2 Baruch relativizing the importance of their destruction. Meanwhile the covenantal idea of reward is moved from earthly prosperity to blessings in the coming age. Another monograph, by Rivka Nir,<sup>102</sup> claims to investigate the link between the destruction of Jerusalem and the idea of redemption in 2 Baruch; it is disappointing that, instead of looking into the theme of redemption in 2 Baruch in its own right, her attention is mistakenly fixed upon proving that it was a Christian rather than a Jewish response to the loss of the Temple. Nir’s position has been unanimously rejected by reviewers.<sup>103</sup> As aptly observed by Matthias Henze, there has long been puzzlement among students of 2 Baruch about its “central theme.” According to Henze himself,<sup>104</sup> the greatest achievement of 2 Baruch is to make two seemingly contradictory promises, i.e. the Deuteronomic promise based on the Torah and the apocalyptic promise based on eschatology, fully compatible in the author’s restoration programme for the post-disaster Jewish community.

As an overview of the theological approach, the various studies of the major themes have deepened our understanding of Jewish thoughts of the concerned historical period, which were particularly intensified when confronted with the catastrophic Temple loss. However, the theological approach risks losing sight of the overall purpose of the texts while focusing on abstract theological points. It is particularly so in the case of 4 Ezra. When examined as a theological treatise, 4 Ezra appears to be inconsistent in its views; and when seen as a theological debate between Ezra and the angel, it becomes a question of contention as to where to locate the author’s voice, in Ezra or in Uriel.

#### *1.4.4 The Literary-Psychological Approach*

The literary-psychological approach offers an alternative perspective which seeks to address the inadequacies of the theological approach, particularly the latter’s weakness

<sup>102</sup> Nir, *The Destruction of Jerusalem and the Idea of Redemption in the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch*, EJL 20 (Atlanta: SBL, 2003).

<sup>103</sup> E.g. Beate Ego, “Review of Rivka Nir,” ZAW 116 (2004): 116; Frederick James Murphy, “Review of Rivka Nir,” CBQ 66 (2004): 326–7; Liv Ingeborg Lied, “Review of Rivka Nir,” JSS 20 (2005): 403–5; Gary A. Anderson, “Review of Rivka Nir,” JR 85 (2005): 155–7; Matthias Henze, “Review of Rivka Nir,” JSP 15 (2006): 145–8.

<sup>104</sup> Henze, “Torah and Eschatology in the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch,” in *The Significance of Sinai: Traditions about Divine Revelation in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. George J. Brooke, Hindy Najman and Loren T. Stuckenbruck, TBN 12 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 201–15.

in not reading 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch as coherent wholes. It was Hermann Gunkel<sup>105</sup> who, speaking against the source critical approach, first proposed that 4 Ezra should be read as a reflection of the author's own psychological state, even though he may have used different traditions. As a reaction against the theological approach that treated 4 Ezra as a theological debate, Earl Breech<sup>106</sup> called for attention to the narrative structure of the book, which represents "Ezra's movement from distress to consolation, from distress occasioned by the destruction of Jerusalem, to consolation by the Most High himself who reveals to the prophet, in dream vision, his end-time plans."<sup>107</sup> The book, therefore, was literarily constructed in the traditional form of consolation in order to "dispel the community's religious confusion."<sup>108</sup>

Inspired by Earl Breech's work on 4 Ezra, Gwendolyn B. Saylor offers a literary analysis to demonstrate how the overall narrative structure of 2 Baruch presents a story in which Baruch and his community "move from grief to consolation."<sup>109</sup> In her view the structure reveals two primary issues: "the vindication of God as just and powerful in the wake of the destruction," and "the survival of the Jewish community in the aftermath of the destruction." She correctly points out that what was at stake was "the continued efficacy of the covenant which God made with His people through Abraham and Moses."<sup>110</sup>

It is Michael Stone, in my opinion, who has perhaps offered the most important insight in how to understand ancient apocalyptic works. Stone has written on multiple occasions on 4 Ezra, but the principles apply to 2 Baruch as well. In one of his papers<sup>111</sup> Stone emphasizes that they "must be regarded as religious literature, not just as a compendium of theological concepts or midrashic traditions," and therefore, the controlling category to guide us in understanding these books must be their internal coherency, not "strict logical consistency." In other words, "the religious experience

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<sup>105</sup> Gunkel, "Das vierte Buch Esra," in *Die Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen des alten Testaments*, vol. 2, ed. E. Kautzsch (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1900), 331–402.

<sup>106</sup> Breech, "These Fragments I Have Shored against My Ruins: The Form and Function of 4 Ezra," *JBL* 92 (1973): 267–74.

<sup>107</sup> Breech, "These Fragments," 269.

<sup>108</sup> 274.

<sup>109</sup> Saylor, *Have the Promises Failed? A Literary Analysis of 2 Baruch*, SBLDS 72 (Chico: Scholars, 1984), 9.

<sup>110</sup> Saylor, *Have the Promises Failed?*, 38, 41, and 86.

<sup>111</sup> Stone, "On Reading an Apocalypse," in *Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies since the Uppsala Colloquium*, ed. John J. Collins and James H. Charlesworth (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991), 65–78. Repr. in Stone, *Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha and Armenian Studies: Collected Papers* (2 vols.), vol.1 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 339–52.

and social functioning of the pseudepigraphic hero should be taken rather seriously at the social and psychological as well as at the literary levels.”<sup>112</sup> In another paper, he specifies again that what made the book of 4 Ezra coherent and provided its central message was the “complex religious experience which the book presented by the agency of the pseudepigraphic author.”<sup>113</sup> Again, he claims in his commentary on 4 Ezra that “the thread that holds the book together is the Odyssey of Ezra’s soul.”<sup>114</sup>

The literary approach is also utilized in a number of studies that focus on certain themes or motifs in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch. Among these are: the woman as a metaphor for city,<sup>115</sup> the spatial concept of land as a broad redemptive category,<sup>116</sup> the theme of mourning explained by Freudian and psychoanalytic theory,<sup>117</sup> and the theme of creation, nature and hope.<sup>118</sup> These studies, however, are perhaps less directly related to Jewish response to the catastrophe of 70 CE.

Finally, Hindy Najman’s recent contribution to 4 Ezra scholarship, *Losing the Temple and Recovering the Future*, must be mentioned.<sup>119</sup> Najman’s analysis may be said to belong to the literary-psychological approach, as it examines the process of overcoming trauma in order to make the future possible. In a unique way and building on her past work on how to understand ancient books of pseudonymous authorship,<sup>120</sup> Najman focuses on the way 4 Ezra recast textual traditions as a “radical reboot” of the past, in order to “unfreeze the present and recover the future.” She offers a most insightful way of looking into how elements from pre-destruction traditions were used

<sup>112</sup> Stone, “On Reading an Apocalypse,” 66.

<sup>113</sup> Stone, “A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions,” *HTR* 96 (2003): 167–80. Repr. in Stone, *Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha and Armenian Studies* vol.1, 353–66.

<sup>114</sup> Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 32.

<sup>115</sup> Edith McEwan Humphrey, *The Ladies and the Cities: Transformation and Apocalyptic Identity in Joseph and Aseneth, 4 Ezra, the Apocalypse and the Shepherd of Hermas*, *JSPSup* 17 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995).

<sup>116</sup> Liv Ingeborg Lied, *The Other Lands of Israel: Imagination of the Land in 2 Baruch*, *JSJSup* 129 (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

<sup>117</sup> Dereck Daschke, *City of Ruins: Mourning the Destruction of Jerusalem through Jewish Apocalypse*, *BIS* 99 (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

<sup>118</sup> Jonathan A. Moo, *Creation, Nature and Hope in 4 Ezra*, *FRLANT* 237 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011).

<sup>119</sup> Najman, *Losing the Temple and Recovering the Future: An Analysis of 4 Ezra* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>120</sup> E.g. her “How Should We Contextualize Pseudepigrapha? Imitation and Emulation in 4 Ezra,” in *Flores Florentino: Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Early Jewish Studies in Honour of Florentino García Martínez*, ed. Anthony Hilhorst, Émile Puech, and Eibert Tigchelaar, *JSJSup* 122 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 529–36; Najman with Itamar Manoff and Eva Mroczek, “How to Make Sense of Pseudonymous Attribution: The Case of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch,” in *A Companion to Biblical Interpretation in Early Judaism*, ed. Matthias Henze (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 308–36; as well as her “Traditionary Processes and Textual Unity in 4 Ezra,” in Henze and Boccaccini, *Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch*, 99–117.

by 4 Ezra to create its own “precursors”—in this case how the exilic past was reimagined and made part of later traditions in order to renew a life whose significance was based on Israel’s covenantal relationship with God. Through the example of 4 Ezra Najman also demonstrates the concept of “revelation inflected by destruction”; in other words, how revelation persisted in post-Temple Judaism, despite the destruction, in transformed ways such as reading and rewriting scriptures.

### *1.5 Summary, Methodology and Plan of the Present Study*

With the historical and social contexts of the two ancient texts in mind, this study is concerned with the religious response their respective authors made to the devastating event of 70 CE. Recognised as compositions of individual authors, each work will be treated as a literary whole, to be studied both individually and in conversation with each other. The thesis can be summed up by two key points.

Firstly, the true nature of the crisis caused by the destruction, I maintain, is the perceived loss of the covenantal relationship between God and Israel, and the Jewish identity that is under threat. This is a point that has been widely recognized in previous studies, but its implications in understanding the messages of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch are very often overlooked. The Judeo-centric Deuteronomic understanding of the covenant is the source of all the “theological” discussions in the two texts. It was because Israel seemed to have failed to keep its part of the covenant that the nature of Adam’s sin and the human ability to keep the Law was brought into discussion. It was because God seemed to have broken his covenantal promise that Israel’s suffering and God’s righteousness in allowing it were questioned. The fate of the righteous and the fate of Israel under the Gentiles also became burning issues for the authors of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch because fulfillment of the covenant seemed to have failed. In other words, Israel’s relationship with God rests at the core of the two works and defines the authors’ thoughts, and therefore should be the basis of any correct understanding of their messages.

Secondly, my analysis concurs with previous studies in identifying the two-pillar solution of Torah and eschatology at the centre of the authors’ programmes to restore that covenant relationship. Torah and eschatology, however, are not at conflict with each other; and it will be demonstrated in the following chapters that they are about the same promise. In 4 Ezra, eschatology is implanted into the Sinai tradition and becomes

part of Mosaic Torah, whereas in 2 Baruch, the scope of the Deuteronomic promise is stretched beyond the limits of human history and is made comprehensible only through the eschatological lens.

This study will adopt a historical-literary approach to suit its purpose of interpreting Jewish response to the event of 70 CE. Thus I will often appeal to the notion of “authorial intention” in the following chapters. I am aware that, with the popularity of New Criticism, the historical-critical method has been challenged for its so-called “intentional fallacy.”<sup>121</sup> Regarding authorial intention in particular, it has been argued that an author’s purpose is both impossible and unimportant to gauge.

I do not deny that a literary work is larger than its author’s intention, thanks to the rich symbolic potentials of language through human experience; thus the pluralism of meaning is both a reality and a desirable enrichment of the meaning of a literary work. However, the diversity of meaning is not unlimited; it is bound by the preliminaries of how the author has encoded his message. An interpretation of a literary text which violates the limits set by its author can hardly be considered a valid interpretation.<sup>122</sup> I also admit the important role the reader brings into the construction of meaning of a literary text; part of the enrichment of textual interpretation is its reception history through studies of reader responses across both synchronic and diachronic sections. It is important, for instance, to acknowledge that both 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch were preserved and transmitted in Christian circles in the centuries following their composition. In this process they were read and interpreted not as Jewish texts in response to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, but out of Christian interests in Messianic and eschatological expectations, as well as the descriptions of

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<sup>121</sup> The term was first used by W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. and M. C. Beardsley in their “The Intentional Fallacy,” *Sewanee Review*, 54 (1946): 468–88, by which they argue that “the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art” (468). Their influential idea has not gone without criticism. For example, in “‘The Intentional Fallacy’ Reconsidered,” *Canadian Social Science* 8 (2012): 34–39, Lindong Zhang indicates how Wimsatt and Beardsley’s intention to encourage the study of a work of art or a literary work in its independent public existence has been even further misinterpreted and carried to extremes, to give rise to assertions such as that an author’s intention cannot be spoken of even in terms of the internal evidence of his/her work, or that the authority of a literary work derives not from the author, nor the work itself, but the reader (35).

<sup>122</sup> I am not at all convinced by Derrida’s proposal (in many of his influential works) that there is infinite free-play of significance in a text. A written text is not merely “noir sur blanc,” but an act of communication bound by socio-linguistic conventions shared by a speech community. In other words, there are norms to be followed both for the author to mean and for the reader to interpret. For an excellent critique on the pitfalls of deconstructionism, see M. H. Abrams, “The Deconstructive Angel,” in *Critical Inquiry*, 3 (1977): 425–38.

postmortem experiences of the souls that are contained in the texts.<sup>123</sup> Reader response, however, is not an appropriate methodology in my investigation of Jewish reaction to the disaster of 70 CE; to answer the questions set out in this study, it is inevitable that one must study the historical and religious contexts which gave rise to these works, as well as decode the messages of the authors which were encoded, for example, in the literary structural design, the characterization of their respective pseudonymous mouthpiece, and the patterned use of symbolism and biblical allusions of the texts. In other words, the focus of my interpretation of the works is squarely upon the authors' intentions in writing them. Authorial intention is not always without obscurity, particularly if an author intended not to clearly reveal his/her intention, or when the author and the reader are separated by the vast distances of their respective social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. However, those gaps are not entirely impossible to bridge. After all, human language is functional and pragmatic. Language use, both in spoken and written modes, represents various speech acts with the aim of accomplishing human purposes. If one can often comprehend the intentions of other human beings in oral communication, there is no reason why one should not also be able to comprehend written communication. Or using another analogy of Dale C. Allison's:

If the archaeologist can, when the data are sufficient, confidently discern purpose in an ancient, voiceless artifact ("This was an axe, made to chop wood"), how much more can readers discern purpose in verbal communications from the past, even the distant past. The dead tell tales.<sup>124</sup>

The following chapters are arranged into three parts. The three chapters in Part I will focus on three major issues concerning 4 Ezra. Through an analysis of its content and structure, Chapter Two argues that the concern of 4 Ezra centres not around the theme of theodicy, but the covenantal crisis brought about by the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. Chapter Three studies the meaning and function of eschatology and Torah in 4 Ezra as a response to the crisis, as well as how the two factors are integrated in the author's proposed solution. Chapter Four argues for the

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<sup>123</sup> Christian interests in the texts are demonstrated by the expansion and appropriation of the Ezra tradition in a range of Christian texts in late antiquity, such as the Greek *Apocalypse of Ezra*, the Greek *Apocalypse of Sedrach*, the Latin *Revelation of the Blessed Ezra*, and the Armenian *Questions of Ezra*, etc. See Stone and Henze, *4 Ezra and 2 Baruch*, 7; Michael Stone, "The Metamorphosis of Ezra: Jewish Apocalypse and Medieval Vision," in *JTS* 33 (1982): 1–18.

<sup>124</sup> Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 2. Allison dedicates the first chapter of his book to the defence of the historical-critical method, which he considers is under the attack of the "structuralists" and the "deconstructionists" (1).



unity and coherence of the apocalyptic work through a study of authorial intention in the choice and portrayal of Ezra as the pseudonymous mouthpiece. Part II, which focuses on 2 Baruch, consists of four chapters (5–8), following a similar pattern of content and structure: crisis, solution and authorial intention in the choice and characterization of the pseudonymous hero. Finally, Part III—the conclusion (Chapter Nine), will evaluate the most salient features of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch as responses to a religious crisis, in particular the interconnections of tradition, authority, pseudonymity and exegetical identity in ancient Judaism which are reflected in the two apocalypses.



# **PART I**

## **4 EZRA**



## CHAPTER TWO

### COVENANT IN CRISIS IN 4 EZRA

#### 2.1 *A Book about Theodicy?*

Between the two sister texts, 4 Ezra has so far received much more attention in scholarship than 2 Baruch.<sup>1</sup> One reason among others is that 4 Ezra is seen as a book about theodicy, like Job in the Hebrew Bible, thus arousing much interest in its theology.<sup>2</sup> In a text fictitiously set in Babylon in the exilic period, Ezra is troubled by the desolations of Zion and the wealth of Babylon, and therefore begins to speak to the Most High, questioning divine justice in the destruction of the Temple. The angel Uriel is sent to converse with Ezra, to answer his questions and to enlighten him about the reason for the current sufferings, signs of the end-time, and what becomes of the righteous and the wicked after death. Ezra, however, remains unsatisfied with the answer; the initial question about divine justice leads to further questions that reveal a tension between Israel's suffering and her election, between the divine purpose of creation and the few that are saved, and between God's mercy and his judgment.<sup>3</sup> Much scholarly attention is drawn by the vigour of these dialogues, and Ezra and Uriel are seen as engaged in a theological debate on a series of issues, generally categorized as "anthropology," "epistemology" and "soteriology,"<sup>4</sup> that derive from the central theme of theodicy.

But what complicates interpretations is the second half of the book. After three dialogues, Ezra remains in a field as the angel commands, where he sees a woman mourning her deceased son. While consoling her, Ezra witnesses the transfiguration of the woman into the heavenly Jerusalem. This experience serves as the turning point in Ezra's own transformation: his questioning ceases and his attitude converges onto that of Uriel. Ezra is then granted two more apocalyptic visions with the help of Uriel as interpreter. In one vision, he sees a lion rebuke and destroy an eagle with many wings

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<sup>1</sup> Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 6–8.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the opening line of Hogan's *Theologies in Conflict*: "Fourth Ezra, a Jewish apocalypse written around 100 C.E., stands out within the apocalyptic literature for the daring way in which it addresses questions of theodicy (1)." "Theodicy" is also the focus of a number of other book-length studies, including Thompson, *Responsibility for Evil in the Theodicy of IV Ezra*, and Tom W. Willett, *Eschatology in the Theodicies of 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> This "central message" of 4 Ezra is succinctly summarized by Stone in his commentary, *Fourth Ezra*, 35–6.

<sup>4</sup> i.e. the nature and effect of the "evil heart," the human ability to understand cosmic designs, and the objects and means of salvation.

## CHAPTER TWO

and heads. It symbolizes the destruction of the Roman Empire by the Messiah of the Most High, and the deliverance of the remnant of God's people. In the other vision, Ezra sees a man from the sea flying with the clouds of heaven and slaying a multitude of enemies with the fire and hot coal from his mouth. The man then calls to himself a multitude of peaceable people. Uriel explains that the vision represents the Messiah of the Most High defeating the ungodly nations by the Law and gathering in the lost nine and a half tribes. After these revelations Ezra is told by God that he is to depart from this world. At his own request, Ezra receives divine inspiration and, with the help of five scribes, restores the Law which was previously burned in the fire. The Law, however, includes not only the twenty-four books to be made public but also seventy sealed books only for the wise. When his task is completed, Ezra is taken up to heaven. What poses problems for interpretation is that the visions of the second half of the book move away not only from the dialogue form, but also the thematic content of the first half of the book; this disparity is also coupled with Ezra's radical change of demeanour and outlook.

The perceived problem in the book's consistency and coherence will be discussed in a following chapter.<sup>5</sup> In this chapter, I will call into question the common view that 4 Ezra is a book about theodicy. This is not to deny that 4 Ezra is concerned with, among many other questions, the question why God permits evil; however, questions about theodicy are far from being central to the author's intent—only to the modern, theologically minded reader do they become exclusive fascinations. It can be said upfront that the purpose of the book is not to contemplate philosophical ideas about theodicy or to debate fine theological categories, but above all to deal with a crisis in the understanding of Israel's covenant with her God after Jerusalem was destroyed by Rome. Does the catastrophe upon Zion mean that Israel has ceased to be God's chosen people? If Israel was God's covenant people, why, then, did God allow her bitter enemy to trample her under foot? The questions of evil and of God's allowing it only come into the equation because they matter to the "how" and the "when" of covenant recovery. It is the author's conviction that Israel's covenant with God hinges upon her faithfulness to the Torah. 4 Ezra acknowledges *a priori* that calamity happened due to Israel's transgression against the Law. If there is any complaint against the divine, then it is not that evil fell upon Israel while she was

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<sup>5</sup> See Chapter Four.

innocent, but rather, “are the deeds of Babylon better than those of Zion?” (3:31); in other words, the concern is about the validity of Israel’s chosenness in the light of her fate in contrast with other nations. The solution to the crisis is naturally a return to the Torah. A restoration of the covenant depends on Israel’s perfection in Torah obedience; yet the goal seems unattainable to the author due to the problem of Adam’s sin, hence the attention to the “evil heart.” The central problem of 4 Ezra, therefore, is quintessentially a grave concern over Israel’s covenantal relationship with God and a search for a remedy to recover that broken relationship. I argue that an Israel-centric outlook is at the heart of all the issues with which 4 Ezra is engaged, and that the various questions very often labeled as theodicy, anthropology, and soteriology, to name a few, must be considered subordinate to the central problem of covenant reestablishment in the absence of the Temple.

To facilitate discussion, an outline of the compositional structure of 4 Ezra is given below. The book is conventionally divided into seven self-contained episodes.<sup>6</sup> They are:

Episode 1 Ezra’s first dialogue with the angel Uriel (3:1–5:20a)

Introduction to the first episode (3:1–3)

Ezra’s lament (3:4–36)

Uriel’s response and dialogue with Ezra (4:1–5:13)

Conclusion to the first episode (5:14–20a)

Episode 2 Ezra’s second dialogue with Uriel (5:20b–6:34)

Introduction to the second episode (5:20b–22)

Ezra’s lament (5:23–30)

Uriel’s response and dialogue with Ezra (5:31–6:29)

Conclusion to the second episode (6:30–34)

Episode 3 Ezra’s third dialogue with Uriel (6:35–9:25)

Introduction to the third episode (6:35–37)

Ezra’s lament (6:38–59)

Uriel’s response and dialogue with Ezra (7:1 – 61)

Another lament of Ezra and Uriel’s response (7:62–115)

Another lament of Ezra and Uriel’s response (7:116–9:22)

Conclusion to the third episode (9:23–25)

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<sup>6</sup> On the seven-vision structure and literary units, see Brandenburger, *Verborgtheit*, 141–4, and Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 50–1.

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### Episode 4 Vision of the transformed Jerusalem (9:26–10:60)

- Introduction to the fourth episode (9:26–28)
- Ezra's prayer (9:29–37)
- Ezra's dialogue with the mourning woman (9:38–10:24)
- The vision of the transformation and Uriel's interpretation (10:25–57)
- Conclusion to the fourth episode (10:58–60)

### Episode 5 Vision of the Eagle and the Lion (11:1–12:51)

- Ezra's vision of the Eagle and the Lion (11:1–12:3a)
- Uriel's interpretation (12:3b–39)
- Ezra's address to the people (12:40–50)
- Conclusion to the fifth episode (12:51)

### Episode 6 Vision of the Man from the Sea (13:1–58)

- Ezra's vision of the Man from the Sea (13:1–13a)
- Ezra's prayer and Uriel's interpretation (13:13b–56)
- Conclusion to the sixth episode (13:57–58)

### Episode 7 (or Epilogue) Ezra's restoration of the Torah (14:1–50)

- The calling of Ezra and the instruction to write the Torah (14:1–26)
- Ezra's farewell speech to the people (14:27–36)
- The restoration of the Torah (14:37–48)
- Conclusion: the Assumption of Ezra (14:49–50)

The divisions of the episodes are universally agreed upon, as they are clearly demarcated as seven distinct visits by the angel or the Most High. The first three are dialogues, sharing a similar general pattern of “introduction–Ezra's prayer or lamentation–the Angel's dialogue with Ezra–conclusion”. The third dialogue is longer and more complex than the first two, but follows the overall pattern nonetheless. Episode 4, marking the transition from the first half to the second half of the book, contains both a dialogue and a vision with the angel's interpretation. Episodes 5 and 6 share a similar structure of “vision–interpretation–conclusion”. The last episode differs in structure from the previous episodes and stands alone as the Epilogue.

The seven episodes provide an ideal structure for thematic analysis, which is carried out in the next section. What the analysis shows is that Israel-centredness underlies the discussions of the dialogues and the depictions of the visions in every



episode. The significance of the Epilogue, on the other hand, is discussed in another chapter.<sup>7</sup>

## 2.2 *Israel's Covenantal Status as the Central Theme of 4 Ezra*

### 2.2.1 *Episode 1: The Desolations of Zion and the Wealth of Babylon*

The central theme of Israel's covenantal crisis is made clear in the opening verse of the book. Ezra, as an exile in Babylon, is deeply troubled, "because I saw the desolations of Zion and the wealth of those who lived in Babylon" (3:2). His following lament is in the form of a *Heilsgeschichte* from Adam to the destruction of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar (3:4–27). Adam was created and was given the Garden of Eden, but he transgressed God's commandment, for which death was appointed for him and his descendants. Nations sprang up after Adam, but again they scorned God, and the flood came upon them, except Noah and his household. Humans after Noah became more ungodly, but Abraham was chosen and received divine revelation. Isaac begot Jacob and Esau, but Esau was rejected whereas Jacob was made into a nation and led out of Egypt. God gave the Torah to the descendants of Jacob, but did not take away the "evil heart." He raised up David, and Jerusalem and the Temple were built, until the city was delivered into the hands of Babylon.

Two interwoven threads run through Ezra's account of the salvation history of Israel: the theme of elimination and election, and the theme of human sin, or the "*cor malignum*" (3:20), which the rabbis termed "הרע יצר",<sup>8</sup> the evil inclination. From Adam's descendants, only Noah was reserved; out of all the nations, only Abraham with his son Isaac was chosen. Jacob was set apart from Esau, and Israel was given the Torah to mark her out as God's people. Yet at each stage of the process, election was accompanied by human transgressions against God due to the evil heart. Michael Stone<sup>9</sup> comments that the author of 4 Ezra skilfully turns a *Heilsgeschichte*<sup>10</sup> of praise

<sup>7</sup> See Chapter Four.

<sup>8</sup> On the technical term "evil heart" and "evil inclination," see Stone's commentary, *Fourth Ezra*, 63, n 18, and "Excursus on Adam's Sin," 63–67. See also Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict*, 112–20.

<sup>9</sup> *Fourth Ezra* 61.

<sup>10</sup> On Biblical accounts of summaries of Israel's sacred history, see G. von Rad, "Heilsgeschichte" in his *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (NY: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 1–78. Jon D. Levenson (*Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* [NY: Harper Collins, 1985], 40, n 26) comments that, although he does not endorse von Rad's belief that these *Heilsgeschichte* narratives grew out of credos, they do evoke an affirmation of covenant. It is not surprising, then, that 4 Ezra also uses a *Heilsgeschichte* recital to express the covenant theme, albeit in an unconventional way.

## CHAPTER TWO

and thanksgiving into one of accusation for God's failure to remove the human tendency to sin.<sup>11</sup> The problem of evil is indeed a focus of Ezra's lament:

Yet thou didst not take away from them their evil heart, so that thy Torah might bring forth fruit in them. For the first Adam, burdened with an evil heart, transgressed and was overcome, as were also all who were descended from him. Thus the disease became permanent; the Torah was in the people's heart along with the evil root, but what was good departed, and the evil remained. (3:20–22)

Here the author uses the metaphor of planting: the Torah was planted to "bring forth fruit," but the plant was burdened by the "evil root" of Adam's sin, and what is evil overcame what is good. The author's consideration of the evil heart, therefore, is his concern over Israel's ability to keep the Torah, the marker of Israel's status as the chosen people; for it is because "the inhabitants of the city transgressed, in everything doing as Adam and all his descendants had done" (3:25–26) that Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed. Ezra's complaint is not about Israel's punishment, but rather that he does not understand why the lawless enemy is seemingly elevated above Israel:

Are the deeds of Babylon better than those of Zion? Or has another nation known thee besides Israel? Or what tribe has so believed thy covenant as Jacob? (3:31–2)

Even when the angel Uriel points out to him the limits of human intellect to understand the divine mind, Ezra insists on asking:

Why Israel has been given over to the Gentiles as a reproach; why the people whom you loved has been given over to godless tribes, and the Torah of our fathers has been made of no effect and the written covenants no longer exist; ... what will he do for his name, by which we are called? (4:23–5)

The efficacy of the covenant and the identity of Israel as God's people are brought to the fore. In other words, Ezra questions God about the unfulfilled promise that his chosen people would be exalted above other nations.

Uriel answers that the promises to the righteous cannot be fulfilled because "this world is full of sadness and infirmities" (4:27). The problem of "this world" naturally leads to the discussion about the coming of the *eschaton*, part of 4 Ezra's two-pronged solution to the crisis, which will be the topic of the following chapter.<sup>12</sup> But here Uriel implicitly agrees with Ezra and cites the human evil heart as the reason for the necessity of the long wait:

For the evil about which you ask me has been sown, but the harvest of it has not yet come. ... For a grain of evil seed was sown in Adam's heart from the beginning, and

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<sup>11</sup> *Heilsgeschichte* accounts in the HB conventionally serve the purposes of praise and thanksgiving (e.g. Pss 105:6–45; 77:16–21; 106: 6–46; 1 Chron 16:15–22), admonition to Israel (e.g. Joshua 24:2–14; 1 Sam 12:6–9; Mic 6:3–5), or plea for God's help (e.g. Neh 9:6–31; Isa 63:7–14).

<sup>12</sup> See Chapter Three.

how much fruit of ungodliness it has produced until now, and will produce until the time of threshing comes! Consider now for yourself how much fruit of ungodliness a grain of evil seed has produced. When heads of good grain without number are sown, how great a threshing floor they will fill! (4:28–32)

Not only does he confirm Ezra's observation about the existence of evil, he uses the same metaphor of planting and harvesting. What Ezra notices is how the evil root prevents the plant to produce good fruit (3:20–22); but Uriel expands on the other aspect of the same process, i.e. the sheer quantity of the multiplied ungodly fruits and the prolonged time it takes for the harvest of the good fruits to come.<sup>13</sup> In this sense, Uriel's position does not stand opposed to that of Ezra. His answer reassures Ezra that the promise is not withdrawn, but only put on prolonged wait, as a result of the production from the seed of evil.

### 2.2.2 Episode 2: *Israel and the Nations: The One and the Many*

The theme of election again opens the second dialogue, which follows the same pattern of the previous encounter between Ezra and Uriel. In grief Ezra utters a lament featuring a series of biblical symbols representing the election of Israel (5:23–27). Like the one vine from all the trees of all the forests, one lily from all the flowers, one dove from all the birds, one sheep from all the flocks, one river from all the depths of the sea, one region from all the lands, and Zion among all cities, Israel is the one people from all the multitude of peoples that God has loved, which he has given the Torah as a sign. Michael Stone interprets the river (5:25) as the Jordan, and the region (5:24) as the Land of Israel. He further indicates that the dove (5:26) and the lily (5:24) are two metaphors used on "the beloved" in the Song of Songs (2:2; 2:14; and 5:2): scripture that was allegorically interpreted at the time of Rabbi Aqiba, a contemporary of 4 Ezra, to represent the love of God, the bridegroom, for his bride, Israel.<sup>14</sup> People, land and city become parallel terms in this lament. The symbols of love are juxtaposed with impassioned questioning:

Oh Lord, why hast thou given over the one to the many, and dishonoured the one root beyond the others, and scattered thine only one among the many? And those who opposed thy Torah have trodden down those who believed in thy covenant (5:28–9).

Again, Uriel is sent to converse with Ezra. Although he speaks to Ezra almost in a blaming tone, he does not negate Ezra's words, but rather confirms God's love for

<sup>13</sup> The metaphor of harvesting is also used in Rev 14:14–20 for the coming of the *eschaton*.

<sup>14</sup> *Fourth Ezra*, 130; also Michael Stone, "The Interpretation of Song of Songs in 4 Ezra," *JSJ* 38 (2007): 226–33.

Israel: “Are you greatly disturbed over Israel? Or do you love him more than his Maker does?” (5:33). If he does mean any blame, then it is rather for Ezra’s ignorance about God’s judgment, “or the goal of the love that I have promised my people” (5:40). The subsequent revelations about the imminent nature of the *eschaton* and the signs accompanying it aim to reassure Ezra about the certainty of God’s love and promise.

There is no specific discussion on the “evil heart” in this episode. However, when being asked about the end of this world/age, the angel declares on behalf of the Most High that “the beginning is through man and the end is through myself” (6:1).<sup>15</sup> In other words, through Adam’s fall human history of sin and transgressions began, but God himself, foreseeing all and in control of all, will bring human history to an end. Continuing with the planting and harvesting metaphor, the angel paints an optimistic picture of the end of this world/age:

For evil shall be blotted out, and deceit shall be quenched; faithfulness shall flourish, and corruption shall be overcome, and the truth shall be revealed which has been so long without fruit. (6:27–28)

That is to say, the *eschaton* will provide the solution to Ezra’s problem with evil. God will eventually take away the “evil heart”—in the World/Age to Come.

In sum, the opening episodes present a clear scenario where Israel’s covenant identity — which is marked by the Torah — is under threat. The author finds the human “evil heart” to be the root cause for Israel’s inability to keep the Law, and hints at the eschatological solution which he will reveal, as the angel Uriel does to Ezra, in the next dialogue.

### 2.2.3 Episode 3: *The Righteous and the Wicked: The Few and the Many*

Episode 3 is longer and more complex in structure than the previous two dialogues. It is in this episode that the mystery of the coming end-time is revealed in detail to Ezra. This esoteric knowledge is the answer to Ezra’s question. Israel is still at the centre of discussion; however, a change of perspective occurs, from an external one placing Israel vis-à-vis the nations to an internal one juxtaposing the righteous with the lawless within Israel. Ezra realises that, from the time of the destruction of the Temple to the

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<sup>15</sup> This line is omitted in the Lat. Mss, but kept in Syr., Eth., Georg., Ar<sup>1</sup>, Ar<sup>2</sup> and Arm. As Stone points out, “there is no reason to consider it secondary” (*Fourth Ezra*, 141) since in 6:6 the same idea is recapped, “... I planned these things, and they were made through me and not through another.” Lat. 6.6 even adds “just as the end shall come through me and not through another.”

coming of the end, the process of elimination and election continues, and that many that belong to Israel will not inherit the promise. This realisation causes grave concern and sorrow for Ezra, and underscores how crucial it is for Israel to keep the Law. Thus Ezra's intercession for his people and the importance of Torah obedience are two threads interwoven with the theme of eschatological revelation.

Israel's election again occupies Ezra's mind as he begins with a narrative of the six-day creation (6:38–54).<sup>16</sup> what is conventionally a literary construct for praise in the Hebrew Bible is turned into a device for protest in 4 Ezra. The Judeo-centric view is unmistakable:

Thou hast said that it was for us that thou didst create this world. But as for the other nations which have descended from Adam, thou hast said that they are nothing, and that they are like spittle, and thou hast compared their abundance to a drop from a bucket. ... but we thy people, whom thou hast called thy firstborn, only-begotten, kin, and dear one have been given into their hands. If the world has indeed been created for us, why do we not possess our world as an inheritance? How long will this be so? (6:55–9)

A sharp contrast is drawn between the nations, described as “nothing,” “spittle,” and “a drop from a bucket” (Isa 40:15, 17),<sup>17</sup> and Israel, called God's “firstborn,” “only-begotten,” “kin,” and “dear one.”<sup>18</sup> But the one that should possess the world<sup>19</sup> is allowed to be trampled down by what are “reputed as nothing” (4 Ezra 6:57), and Ezra wants to know when Israel will inherit the world as God promised in the scriptures.

Uriel confirms that this world indeed was made for Israel's sake (7:11), but he throws the problem back to human sin: because of Adam's transgressions this world has become unviable, “sorrowful” and “toilsome,” “full of dangers and involved in great hardship” (7:12). The world that Israel is to inherit is not this one, but the “coming world,” “broad and safe and yield the fruit of immortality” (7:13). Inherit the world Israel will, but it is the World to Come, and it is necessary to pass through the

<sup>16</sup> This is based on Gen 1:1–2:4a, but the author clearly knew extrabiblical traditions about the creation of the two living creatures, Behemoth and Leviathan, on the fifth day (6:49–52). 2 Baruch seems to know similar traditions about them as well, stating that the two creatures were created on the fifth day, and they will be revealed at the *eschaton*, and will be food for survivors (2 Bar 29:4); also cf. 1 En 60:24.

<sup>17</sup> The Masoretic version of Isa 40:15 and 17 read, “Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; behold, he takes up the islands as fine dust. ... All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.” The LXX version reads, “The nations are as a drop in a bucket and are counted as the balance of a scale; and they are counted as spittle. ... All nations are as nothing and are counted as nothing.”

<sup>18</sup> Exact quotations from the HB are uncertain; however, Israel is called God's son in Hos 11:1; firstborn son in Exod 4:22; and “dear son” and “darling child” in Jer 31:19; and God's “own treasure among all peoples” in Exod 19:5.

<sup>19</sup> That the world was made for Israel's sake is found in Test. Mos 1:12, “He created the world on behalf of his people.” See J. Priest, “Testament of Moses,” in Charlesworth, *OTP* I: 919–34.

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difficult narrow entrance to enter it. The problem of the “evil heart” again appears in relevance to the covenant crisis, and is used to explain the cause of the troubles of this world.

It is at this point that focus changes in Episode 3 from a perspective of “Israel versus the nations,” i.e. “the one and the many,” to “the righteous versus the ungodly,” or “the few and the many.” Ezra expresses a concern for “those who have done wickedly” (7:18) that they may not endure and see the inheritance. Uriel replies in no uncertain terms that the wicked who “scorned his law and denied his covenant” have been “unfaithful to his statutes and have not performed his works” (7:24), and therefore have only empty things to inherit (7:25). He follows these words with a detailed revelation on future events leading to the day of the Last Judgment (7:26–44). But the angel’s words do not convince Ezra to be happy, because “the world to come will bring delight to few, but torments to many” (7:47). He again cites the “evil heart” as a reason for lament:

For an evil heart has grown up in us, which has alienated us from this, and has brought us into corruption and the ways of death, and has shown us the paths of perdition and removed us far from life—and that not just a few of us but almost all who have been created! (7:48)

He cannot rejoice knowing that almost all have sinned and, therefore, many will not have life. But Uriel replies that, like gold and silver are rare but lead and clay are plentiful, it is not the number but the true value of the souls that the Most High finds precious and desirable:

... I will not grieve over the multitude of those who perish; for it is they who are now like a mist, and are similar to a flame and smoke—they are set on fire and burn hotly and are extinguished. (7:61)

The multitude here are likened to “a mist,” comparable to the earlier reference to the nations as “a spittle.”

The obstinate Ezra laments a second time for the “human race,” “for all who have been born are involved in iniquities, and are full of sins and burdened with transgressions” (7:62–69). But Uriel argues that those who received commandments but knowingly broke them have known the judgment waiting for them all along (7:70–74). He continues to reveal to Ezra what happens to the souls after death; whereas the souls of those who scorned the Law will grieve, those who kept the Law will greatly rejoice (7:76–101). The day of judgment is described in perfectly positive terms:

... the day of judgment will be the end of this world [or age] and the beginning of the immortal world [or age] to come, in which corruption has passed away, sinful

indulgence has come to an end, unbelief has been cut off, and righteousness has increased and truth has appeared. (7:113–114)

Again this means the World/Age to Come will provide the solution to Ezra's problem of the evil heart.

The unyielding Ezra laments a third time:

O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the misfortune was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants. (7:118)

The positive prospects described by Uriel about the World to Come only sharpen Ezra's sorrow for those who will never be able to attain it (7:120–6). He pleads for God's mercy by evoking the list of divine attributes of compassion (7:132–39),<sup>20</sup> but this cannot change God's judgment: "the Most High made this world for the sake of the many, but the world to come for the sake of few" (8:1).

It must be acknowledged that the pessimism conveyed in the dialogue is overwhelming, and this pessimism originates directly from 4 Ezra's view of the human inability to resist sin. Its sentiment of despair leads E. P. Sanders to conclude that "it is this pessimistic view of the human plight which distinguishes the author from the rest of Judaism."<sup>21</sup> While I think Sanders has overstated the case by concluding that, for 4 Ezra, "all that is left is legalistic perfectionism,"<sup>22</sup> he has correctly captured the unique pessimistic character of the text and its extremely negative assessment of the nature of human sin. As we shall see in a following chapter, the author of 2 Baruch seems in particular to take issue with 4 Ezra on this point and paints a different picture of the human condition. By contrasting Adam, who transgressed God's commandment, with Moses, who obeys the Torah and teaches it to Israel, 2 Baruch emphasizes human free will and the ability to choose right over wrong.<sup>23</sup>

As Episode 3 continues, a formal prayer of Ezra is introduced by a third person narrator.<sup>24</sup> The prayer follows the traditional pattern, beginning with a doxology,

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Exod 34:6–7; Pss 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Neh 9:17 and Joel 2:13.

<sup>21</sup> *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 418.

<sup>22</sup> *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 409. Sanders thinks that 4 Ezra is an exception in the entire early Judaism in its denial of divine mercy and its strict legalistic understanding of righteousness. However, he only uses the dialogues as basis for his argument. The text must be read as a whole, in which revelation to Ezra gradually deepens, and divine mercy is eventually revealed to Ezra in the visions. Also Torah obedience in 4 Ezra is not to be equated with "legalistic perfectionism"; a careful examination of the concept of Torah in 4 Ezra is needed – see the following chapter.

<sup>23</sup> See more in Chapter Seven.

<sup>24</sup> The only other third person narration occurs at the end of the book (14:49–50) stating the assumption of Ezra. Knibb believes that the beginning of the prayer (8:19b) is a title, which indicates the liturgical use of the prayer. The inserted title of prayer and the ending of the book do not occur in the Latin

praising God as the ruler of all his creation; then it follows with admittance of sins, and a fervent petition for divine mercy punctuates its closure (8:19b–36).<sup>25</sup> Ezra’s supplication seems to be partially granted, for Uriel concedes that “some things you have spoken rightly, and it will come to pass according to your words” (8:37); however, the emphasis of his reply is on the Most High’s rejoicing over the few righteous. Uriel again uses the planting metaphor to indicate the inevitable loss of many:

For just as the farmer sows many seeds and plants a multitude of seedlings, and yet not all that have been sown will live in due season, and not all the plants will take root; so also those who have been sown in the world will not all live. (8:41)

Ezra’s reply is also in the metaphor of planting:

For if the farmer’s seed does not come up, because it has not received thy rain in due season, or it has been ruined by too much rain, it perishes. But man, who has been formed by thy hands and resembles thy own image, and for whose sake thou hast formed all things – hast thou also made him like the farmer’s seed? (8:43–44)

In other words, it is not always the seeds’ own fault if they fail to grow;<sup>26</sup> moreover, man is much more than seed and deserves to be saved.

Ezra’s plea cannot change the divine scheme: “things that are present are for those who live now, and things that are future are for those who will live hereafter” (8:46). However, Ezra does win himself praises from the Most High and is found to be among the righteous for being humble in his intercessions for others (8:46–50). At Ezra’s asking, Uriel further reveals to him the measure of the signs showing the beginning of the *eschaton* (8:63–9:13). Ezra is told to focus on the World/Age to Come, to which the righteous like himself belong. But the number of the righteous survivors is destined to be small. In the first dialogue Ezra uses a recital of the *Heilsgeschichte* that shows a process of elimination and selection in human history to question God about letting his chosen people diminish (3:4–27); but the same process of elimination and selection is continuing into the future, even for God’s chosen people of Israel:

...I considered my world, and behold, it was lost, and my earth, and behold, it was in peril because of the devices of those who had come into it. And I saw and spared some with great difficulty, and saved for myself one grape out of a cluster, and one plant out

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version, but only in oriental versions of 4 Ezra, indicating a belief that Ezra, like Enoch (Gen 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kgs 2:1–12) did not die but was translated to heaven. See Michael A. Knibb, “Commentary on 2 Esdras,” in R. J. Coggins and M. A. Knibb, *The First and Second Books of Esdras* (Cambridge: CUP, 1979), 202–3.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. the prayers of the biblical Ezra in Ezra 9 and Neh 9, and the prayer of Daniel in Dan 9.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. a similar use of this metaphor in the parable of sowing in Matt 13:4–9; 18–23.



of a great forest. So let the multitude perish which has been born in vain, but let my grape and my plant be saved, because with much labour I have perfected them. (9:20–22)

Through the angel, the Most High confirms that he will save a remnant, but not all Israel will be the one grape or one plant that endures.

Who are “the few” and “the many”? The use of general terms in this episode such as “human race” and “all who have been born” (7:65) makes the identity of the subject under discussion ambiguous. For this reason much attention is given to this episode in 4 Ezra studies, and the book is often seen as reflecting a debate between “salvation by the Law” and “salvation by grace,” or between universal and Judeo-centric views of salvation.<sup>27</sup> (More on this will be discussed in the following section.) However, there is evidence within the dialogue that, by “the few” and “the many,” the author of 4 Ezra has faithful Israelites and apostates in mind. In the midst of the argument about “the few” and “the many,” both Ezra and the angel make intermittent remarks which indicate they have the nation of Israel in mind. For example, after lengthy laments and prayers for the many that will be lost, Ezra pleads, “spare thy people and have mercy on thy inheritance, for thou hast mercy on thy own creation” (8:45). “Thy people” and “thy inheritance” are exclusive terms referring to Israel according to the Hebrew Bible.<sup>28</sup> For another example, in his refusal to yield to Ezra’s plea after the description of the souls of the righteous and the wicked after death, Uriel argues that the lawless many have chosen the miserable consequence themselves, “for this is the way of which Moses, while he was alive, spoke to the people, saying, ‘choose for yourself life, that you may live!’” (7:129). This reference to Deuteronomy 30:15–20 indicates that the author had the people of Israel in mind.<sup>29</sup> Another clue that “the few” and “the many” are the faithful and the apostates of Israel is Ezra’s

<sup>27</sup> In the words of Jonathan Moo, “The prominence of questions about salvation in 4 Ezra and the surprisingly sharp ways in which they are posed have made this text a happy-hunting ground for New Testament scholars keen to find parallels (or foils) to the soteriology that they discover in the letters of the Apostle Paul.” See his “The Few Who Obtain Mercy: Soteriology in 4 Ezra,” in *This World and the World to Come: Soteriology in Early Judaism*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 98–113; here 99.

<sup>28</sup> Israel being called “my people” by God is commonplace in the Pentateuch and the Prophets. In Deut 32:8–9 it is said that “When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he set apart the sons of Adam, he set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God (4QDeut and LXX). For the Lord’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.”

<sup>29</sup> Shannon Burkes (“‘Life’ Redefined: Wisdom and Law in Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch,” *CBQ* 63 [2001]: 55–71; here 59) seems to think that 4 Ezra has changed the national scope of this Deuteronomic command to include any righteous individuals. But what 4 Ezra changes is merely when and where the promises of life to Israel will be fulfilled, i.e. from this world/age to the eschatological World/Age to Come. The Law of Moses referred to here was given exclusively to Israel so that they might have life. Moo also makes the same argument in “The Few,” 111–112.

sympathetic attitude towards even the sinners. He identifies himself with them and pleads for himself and for them (e.g. 8:17). This is in sharp contrast to his antagonistic and resentful tone whenever the Gentile nations are the subject of his speech (e.g. 4:23; 6:56). For 4 Ezra, the nations are by definition lawless and will not be part of the Age to Come. Given the principle of elimination and election, for 4 Ezra, the remnant of the righteous of Israel alone represents the “human race,” the seeds of Adam. This perspective can even be seen in Uriel’s speech. After the description of the resurrection and Last Judgment, it is expressed through Uriel:

Then the Most High will say to the nations that have been raised, ‘Look and understand whom you have denied, whom you have not served, whose commandments you have despised! ...’ (7:37)

This condemning attitude towards the Gentile nations is hardly different from Ezra’s in the earlier episodes.

Once the identities of “the few” and “the many” are cleared up, we can see that the dialogues in Episode 3 also maintain an Israel-centric focus. The author expresses a concern for the many who are not judged as righteous within the people of Israel. As the perspective changes from the confrontation between Israel and the nations to the division according to Torah obedience within the ranks of Israel, Ezra’s attitude also changes from condemnation to pleading and intercession on behalf of his compatriots.<sup>30</sup> The purpose of the author is for the book to serve as warning and exhortation among his audience against apostasy (e.g. 8:56–7), and to portray Ezra as an example of the righteous to be imitated in order to inherit life in the World/Age to Come (8:51–53).

#### *2.2.4 Episode 4: The Transfigured Jerusalem and the Transformation of Ezra*

The theme of covenantal relationship is particularly accentuated in Episode 4. This episode has been the subject of detailed study for its important role in the transition from the dialogues to the visions as well as the transformation of the character of

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<sup>30</sup> Ezra’s grave concern for the sins of his fellow Israelites and his counting himself as a sinner among them is highly comparable to the Talmudic idea of כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה (all Israel is responsible [are sureties] for each other). According to b. Šeb. 39a, “And for all transgressions of the Torah is not the whole world punished? Lo, it is written, And they shall stumble one upon another [Leviticus 26:37]: one because of the iniquity of the other; this teaches us that all Israel are sureties one for another!” (Translation from The Ancient World Online, “Online Soncino Babylonian Talmud Translation,” trans. I. Epstein, viewed on September 7, 2016, <<http://ancientworldonline.blogspot.com.au/2012/01/online-soncino-babylonian-talmud.html>>.)

Ezra.<sup>31</sup> It marks a transition and a transformation on two levels. Firstly, placed at the middle point of the book's overall structure, it has features of both dialogue and vision, and serves as the link in form and content of both halves of the book. In terms of literary design, it marks the readiness of Ezra to develop from being a seeker of God's wisdom and a righteous man concerned with the plight of his people to a seer of divine revelations (more on this below) and the second giver of the Torah. It is at this point that Ezra turns from a mourner to a comforter, and he obtains the seal of approval from the Most High, "for he has seen your righteous conduct, that you have sorrowed greatly for your people, and mourned greatly over Zion (10:38)." On the other hand, since what completes Ezra's transformation is the vision of Zion in eternity, it clearly demonstrates that the fate of Zion is the author's ultimate concern.

Despite the previous instructions from the angel, Ezra is still not completely relieved from the anguish he feels for his people. He prays to the Most High, using the sowing metaphor again, contemplating the permanence of the Law and the perishability of the people. Like a seed, the Law is sown into people's heart. Whereas the Law, the word of God, remains in glory, those who received it but failed to keep it perish; he observes that this is quite the opposite to nature, where the seed dies but the container remains (9:29–37). The pessimistic tone of Ezra's words, however, is only superficial, if we consider the scriptural verses that his words resoundingly echo—by invoking the images of seed, sower, perishable grass and flower (9:26), and the perpetual glorious word of God—Isaiah 40:6–8, 55:10–11, and Psalm 103:15–17.<sup>32</sup> Isaiah 40, 55 and Psalm 103 are charismatic affirmations and joyful praises for God's undying love for Israel, his forgiveness of sins, and his everlasting covenant with his people. In other words, Ezra the character may be only one step away from making this realization, but the audience of the book who were steeped in the scriptures would not have failed to make the connection.

Ezra's thought is disrupted by a woman bemoaning the loss of her son. While consoling her, he asks her to think about the "troubles of Zion" and the "sorrow of Jerusalem" instead of her own son (10:19). It is at this point of the book that the author

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<sup>31</sup> For one such a detailed study in most recent time, see Loren T. Stuckenbruck, "Ezra's Vision of the Lady: The Form and Function of a Turning Point," in Henze and Boccaccini, *Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch*, 137–50.

<sup>32</sup> For the significance of eating flowers in the light of the intertextuality of these verses, see Chapter Four.

expresses, through the character Ezra, the deep trauma the Jewish nation must have felt in the loss of their mother city:

For you see that our sanctuary has been laid waste, our altar thrown down, our temple destroyed; our harp has been laid low, our song has been silenced, and our rejoicing has been ended; the light of our lampstand has been put out, the ark of our covenant has been plundered, our holy things have been polluted, and the name by which we are called has been profaned; our free men have suffered abuse, our priests have been burned to death, our Levites have gone into captivity; our virgins have been defiled, and our wives have been ravished; our righteous men have been carried off, our little ones have been cast out, our young men have been enslaved, and our strong men made powerless. ... (10:21–22)<sup>33</sup>

The loss of the Temple, the termination of temple worship, and the suffering of the people have reached a catastrophic level, but

what is more than all, the seal of Zion—for she has now lost the seal of her glory, and has been given over into the hands of those that hate us. (10:23)

Here is the crux of the matter: the loss of the seal of Zion. What can the “seal of her glory” be, except divine favour, the election of Israel, the guaranty of her relationship with God? I find this impassioned statement placed at the middle point of the book a powerful articulation of its *raison d’être*.

It is at this point the woman transfigures into a splendid city, which, the angel Uriel explains, is the heavenly Zion, where “no work of man’s building could endure” (10:54). Ezra is told to “go in and see the splendour and vastness of the building, as far as it is possible for your eyes to see it” and “hear as much as your ears can hear” (10:55–6).<sup>34</sup> We are not told what Ezra will see and hear; but it is certain that the sights and sounds answer his questions and dissipate his doubts. It is rather ambiguous whether the heavenly structure here is the city or the Temple building; but perhaps this ambiguity is also meaningful: it demonstrates the oneness of the land, the city and the Temple, all merged into the symbol of Zion. What eventually persuades Ezra and

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Josephus’s description of the atrocity in his *Jewish War* 6:271: “While the temple blazed, the victors plundered everything that fell in their way and slaughtered wholesale all who were caught. No pity was shown for age, no reverence for rank; children and greybeards, laity and priests, alike were massacred; every class was pursued and encompassed in the grasp of war, whether suppliants for mercy or offering resistance” (Loeb 3:455).

Compared with Ezra’s words revealing a trauma still fresh and raw, Baruch’s lamentation in 2 Baruch (10:8–19) is less concerned with what Israel directly suffered, but a dirge calling all creation, nature and humankind, to mourn over Zion. The pain in 2 Bar is also palpable, but its impact is carefully cushioned by the description of Jerusalem and the Temple being destroyed at the hands of the angels of the Most High instead of the Babylonians (6:1–8:5).

<sup>34</sup> Michael Stone (“The City in 4 Ezra,” *JBL* 126 [2007]: 402–7) interprets this as a metaphor for the environs of God, i.e. Ezra had an experience in divine presence as a new level of revelation. This experience corresponds to what the angel said to Ezra in 4:21 that “those who dwell upon the earth can understand only what is on the earth” (406).

changes his entire outlook is the knowledge—and seeing with his own eyes—that Zion, “the mother of us all” (10:7),<sup>35</sup> the sign of God’s covenant with Israel, lives in eternity. The heavenly Jerusalem with the radiant, vast Temple he sees serves as a decisive motivation for this radical change, for it provides Ezra with the single factor of confidence in God’s mercy for Israel.<sup>36</sup>

#### 2.2.5 Episode 5: *The Eagle and the Lion*

An unmistakable Israel focus is sustained throughout the following two apocalyptic visions. In Episode 5 Ezra sees an eagle with twelve wings and three heads come up from the sea (11:1),<sup>37</sup> which is identified as the last of the four beasts spoken of by Daniel, but whose interpretation was not disclosed to Daniel but is now said to be revealed to Ezra instead (11:39; 12:11–2). The eagle represents Rome, as the *aquila* was a prominent symbol used as the standard of Roman legions.<sup>38</sup> In the vision, a lion from the forest, symbolizing the Messiah of the Most High from the posterity of David (12:32),<sup>39</sup> denounces the evil doings of the eagle and destroys it with his words. Israel’s fate in this world is reversed in the vision: its arch enemy defeated, and the remnant of God’s people delivered and made joyful until the Last Judgment (12:33–4).

The question that troubled Ezra in the previous dialogues, i.e. the attainment of divine mercy, is explicitly answered affirmatively in this episode. Through the leonine figure it is announced that the whole earth (or *terra*, the Land) will be freed from the violence of the eagle, thus “refreshed and relieved,” it may “hope for the judgment and mercy of him who made it” (11:46). Uriel also tells Ezra that the Messiah will reprove and destroy Israel’s enemy, but save God’s people throughout his borders (of the Holy Land?), and “deliver in mercy the remnant” of the people (12:34). This provides the

<sup>35</sup> It has been argued that the mother metaphor referring to Zion in 10:7 is extended in 10:9 to refer to the earth, thus the mother of all humankind (Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 321; Knibb, “Commentary,” 227; Hogan *Theologies in Conflict*, 164). However, the term, *terra*, translated as “earth,” can also refer to “the land” (Stuckenbruck, “Ezra’s Vision of the Lady,” 145, n 14). The concepts of Jerusalem, the Holy Land and the people of Israel collapse and merge in the all-encompassing term “Zion.”

<sup>36</sup> The Temple as a sign of Israel’s covenantal relationship with God and Ezra’s attitude to the Temple are presented in a more straightforward way in 4 Ezra than in 2 Baruch. See Chapter Six.

<sup>37</sup> The number of the wings and heads as well as the description of the manners they disappear help establish the identities of the Roman rulers they refer to. The three heads, e.g. are interpreted to represent the Flavian emperors, Vespasian, Titus and Domitian. Therefore, the composition of 4 Ezra may be dated to the latter part of Domitian’s reign (81–96 CE), i.e. likely to be in the early part of the 90s. For details see Knibb, “Commentary,” 236, 243–4; Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 363–5; and Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict*, 182–85.

<sup>38</sup> The eagle is also a symbol for Rome in Rev 13:1.

<sup>39</sup> See Gen 49:9 and Rev 5:5, where the Lion is a symbol of Judah.

answer to both the collective and the individual dimensions of salvation raised in the earlier dialogues: the vindication of Israel and the deliverance of the people.

Ezra takes on a complete change of outlook. When he was consoling the woman in the previous episode his words were still suffused with sorrow and bitterness, but now he is able to comfort the people with confidence and optimism:

Take courage, O Israel; and do not be sorrowful, O house of Jacob; for the Most High has you in remembrance, and the Mighty One has not forgotten you forever. (12:47)

### 2.2.6 Episode 6: *The Man from the Sea*

The Israel-centric focus is even stronger in the vision of the Man from the Sea in Episode 6. If the Messiah in the leonine figure in the previous vision shows his earthly connection—from the prosperity of David (12:32) and representing “the remnant of Jacob ... like a lion among the beasts of the forest” (Mic 5:8), the Messiah in this episode is presented as a mystic figure of heavenly origins. Ezra sees

a great wind arose from the sea so that it stirred up all its waves. ... this wind made something like the figure of a man come up out of the heart of the sea. ... that man flew with the clouds of heavens; and wherever he turned his face to look, everything under his gaze trembled, and wherever the voice of his mouth issued forth, all who heard his voice melted as wax melts when it feels the fire. (13:2–4)

Upon a great mountain he carves out, the Man from the Sea is engaged in war with a hostile multitude of people that gather against him, but his weapon is “a stream of fire” sent from his mouth, “a flaming breath” from his lips and “a storm of fiery coals” shot from his fiery tongue (13:10). With these he reproaches and destroys his enemies. Afterwards, the man calls another peaceable crowd to himself. According to Uriel, the Man from the Sea is the servant of the Most High,<sup>40</sup> the Messiah (13:32). The mountain represents Zion (13:35), and the fire symbolizes the Law (13:38). The Messiah will also gather the nine and a half tribes in dispersion,<sup>41</sup> who have lived in isolation from other nations and kept the statutes, “which they had not kept in their own land” (13:42).

Like Ezra’s prayers in the previous episodes, which are dense with scriptural allusions, the symbols in Ezra’s apocalyptic visions also have strong biblical basis.

<sup>40</sup> The Man from the Sea is designated as the “servant” of the Most High in Stone’s reconstruction and translation. However, the Latin and Syriac versions use “my son.” Stone argues that confusion was caused in the process of translating the Greek word *παῖς*, which can mean both servant (or slave) or son (or child, both male or female). For Stone’s argument for “servant,” עֶבֶד, to be the original reading, see *Fourth Ezra*, 207–8; see Hogan’s counter argument, on the other hand, in *Theologies in Conflict*, 195–9.

<sup>41</sup> The belief in the returning of the lost tribes of Israel to Zion is also reflected in Isa 27:13; Matt 24:31 and 2 Macc 2:18.

Similar to the eagle from the sea in the previous vision (11:1), the great wind stirring from the sea that reveals the “figure of a man” in this episode is also making an explicit link to Daniel 7:2. “The clouds of heaven” connects the figure with the “son of man” in Daniel 7:13 that comes “with the clouds of heaven” to the presence of the Ancient of Days. Clouds are often a symbol of divine status (e.g. Isa 19:1 and Rev 1:7), thus indicating the mystic nature of the Man figure. Similarly, “everything under his gaze trembled” recalls the theophany of the majesty of the God of Israel in, for example, Psalm 104:32 and 97:4; “all who heard his voices melted as wax melts” brings to mind Psalm 97:5, 68:2 and Micah 1:3–4. The fire is a commonplace symbol of God himself or the word of God. The fire from the mouth of God is also an image from Isaiah 11:4 and Psalm 18:8, representing the role of the Law of God in divine judgment.

That the Messianic figure comes out of the sea has been found deeply puzzling, since in Daniel 7 it is the grotesque beasts representing evil forces that stir up from the sea.<sup>42</sup> The sea in Daniel 7 is widely accepted to be a symbol of chaos originated from Ugaritic myths of Yamm—the Sea, and Baal. Thus in Daniel it expresses the malevolent and sinister nature of Gentile dominion, represented by the four terrible beasts.<sup>43</sup> If 4 Ezra’s Man from the Sea intends to allude to the Messianic figure in Daniel, how should one reconcile the negative symbolic value of the sea? One possible solution is to read the Messiah as an unsatisfactory figure implied and intended by the author of 4 Ezra.<sup>44</sup> Another solution is to see the Messiah’s rising from the sea as a symbol of his victory over chaos—borrowing from the motif of Baal’s defeat of Yamm in the same Canaanite myth.<sup>45</sup> However, both the negative and positive solutions are based on the assumption that the author of 4 Ezra indeed had Canaanite mythology in mind. Yet it is apparently not the case, as he makes Ezra ask Uriel specifically why the Messiah comes out of the sea; and the answer given is, “just as no one can explore or

<sup>42</sup> For a brief summary of earlier scholarly puzzlement over this issue, see A. Peter Hayman, “The ‘Man from the Sea’ in 4 Ezra 13,” *JJS* 49 (1998): 1–16; here 9–11.

<sup>43</sup> John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 290–1; also his *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 99–101; and his “Stirring up the Great Sea: The Religio-Historical Background of Daniel 7,” in *idem, Seers, Sybils and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism*, *JSJSup* 54 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 139–56.

<sup>44</sup> An example of this is James H. Charlesworth (“4 Ezra and 2 Baruch: Archaeology and Elusive Answers to Our Perennial Questions,” in *Interpreting 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch: International Studies*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini and Jason M. Zurawski, *LSTS* 87 [London: Bloomsbury, 2014], 155–72), who suggests that the author may have wished to warn against the dangers of Davidic proclamations and Messianic proclamations, or against the Messianic claims of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth (164). But clearly, the Man from the Sea is a positive figure in Ezra’s vision.

<sup>45</sup> Hayman, “The ‘Man from the Sea’.”

## CHAPTER TWO

know what is in the depths of the sea, so no one on earth can see my servant or those who are with him, except in the time of his day” (13:52). Hogan comments that the answer “demythologizes” the sea, just as the angel’s interpretation of the fiery breath demythologizes divine warrior attributes (13:37–8).<sup>46</sup> I would make a further claim that the choice of apocalyptic symbols of 4 Ezra was not at all based on pagan mythological ideas, but was drawn entirely out of biblical exegesis. The sea as a biblical symbol in 4 Ezra does not represent chaos, but the hiddenness of foreordained things, preexistent before human history and only revealed in the end-time. It is a recurrent and emphasized theme throughout the apocalypse. 2 Baruch also features an apocalyptic vision that begins with “a cloud ... ascending from the very great sea” (2 Bar 53:1); the cloud is filled with water and moves quickly to cover the earth (53:2). The waters from the cloud that are poured upon the earth are interpreted as the foreordained duration of this world/age (56:3). Clearly, the great sea here also represents the hidden source of primordial times before creation, likely inspired by the “waters” in Gen 1:2. This interpretation is not to deny the Ancient Near Eastern mythological background of many concepts and images in the writings of the Hebrew Bible; but it is important to clarify that the choice of apocalyptic symbols in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch was not motivated by mythological ideas as in the much earlier layers of biblical writings, but an exercise of scriptural exegesis.

Back to the vision of the Man from the Sea, it again provides the answer to the double concerns Ezra earlier had in the dialogues: the fate of Israel and the salvation of fellow Israelites. The interpretation of the vision given by Uriel presents a sharp antithesis between Israel and the nations. Although Israel is oppressed and downtrodden in this world/age, the vision foresees her vindication by God through his Messiah at the end-time. This message is thoroughly expressed in the Man from the Sea figure. Pertaining to the Son of Man in Daniel 7, it is said that

to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. (Dan 7:14)

Although these words of Daniel do not appear in 4 Ezra, they are no doubt intended by the author to be called upon in the response of his audience, as the sea and the clouds references at the beginning of the vision affirmatively connect the Man from the Sea with the Son of Man in Daniel.

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<sup>46</sup> Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict*, 194.



On the other hand, the multitude of the returned tribes shows that more than just “a few” Israelites will be saved at the end after all. Most significantly, the returnees are those who had previously transgressed against the Law in their own land and were subsequently punished by exile; but through repentance and return to the Torah, they have obtained forgiveness and new life (13:41–42). The mercy of God is at hand after all. It is this revelation that has completed Ezra’s spiritual transformation from the previous complainer and doubter; he

arose and walked in the field, giving great glory and praise to the Most High because of his wonders, which he did from time to time, and because he governs the times and whatever things come to pass, as these dreams show. (13:57–8)

The apocalyptic visions culminate the revelations received by Ezra in the earlier episodes of the book. Their focus on the triumph of Israel in God’s plan at the end of times is a clear testimony to the author’s concern for the covenant.

### *2.3 The Ethnic Boundary of Israel’s Covenant*

If 4 Ezra has maintained a strong covenant perspective throughout the text, as demonstrated above, what is its understanding of the covenant? It is here that scholarly opinions vary. While scholars have commonly recognised covenant as a “dominant theme in the Jewish religion”<sup>47</sup> and “the key to any understanding of Judaism,”<sup>48</sup> they also emphasise the variety of ways how the concept of covenant functioned in a wide range of social groups in the Second Temple period. That God has chosen Israel to be his people and has given them the Law to mark that status was general consent among all Jews, but “who are included among the saved” and “what is the meaning and function of Torah” were subject to diverse interpretations.<sup>49</sup> Where does 4 Ezra stand toward the covenant, and how does it understand the efficacy of the covenant?

It is premature to offer a detailed and nuanced answer here without having fully examined 4 Ezra’s understanding of Torah, eschatology, as well as the author’s intention behind the pseudonymous name choice, which I intend to do in the following chapters. However, in this section I will further clarify the identity of the people with whom 4 Ezra is concerned, for much of the scholarly debate about the “universalist”

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<sup>47</sup> Christopher Rowland, *Christian Origins: An Account of the Setting and Character of the Most Important Messianic Sect of Judaism* (London: SPCK, 1985), 27.

<sup>48</sup> Géza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran in Perspective*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 163.

<sup>49</sup> Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant*, 31.

versus the “particularist” covenantalism in 4 Ezra is largely determined by the interpretation of that identity.

Bruce Longenecker, for instance, recognises three fundamental characteristics of early Judaism: its covenant nature, its ethnocentric focus, and its social diversity. Against this background of Jewish covenantalism, his study of 4 Ezra (as a comparison with Romans 1–11) concludes that it falls outside a common “pattern of religion”<sup>50</sup> in that the author rejects the traditional ethnocentric covenantalism, which no longer made sense to him in the light of the destruction of Jerusalem.<sup>51</sup> While maintaining the pillar concepts of “Law” and “Israel”, the author “redefines them in a way which gives them radicalized import.”<sup>52</sup> For Longenecker, therefore, 4 Ezra is a work written primarily as a “repudiation of Jewish ethnocentrism.”

The argument that 4 Ezra is a rejection of “Jewish ethnocentrism” seems flawed to me for two reasons.<sup>53</sup> Firstly, such an argument is made using evidence exclusively selected from the angel Uriel’s part of the dialogue in the third episode, while the Israel-centric theme in the visions of Ezra only receives unsatisfactory treatment. Longenecker, for example, admits the strong nationalistic flavour of the visions, yet attempts to explain them away by narrowly focusing on the “remnant” motif in the visions, which he sees as introduced by the author to emphasize the fewness in number of those saved and to argue against any national hope. He contends that the author reworked the traditional material in order to deflate any national interest contained in them.<sup>54</sup> It leaves one to wonder, if the author of 4 Ezra had to twist and turn his material to create the opposite impression, why he chose to include these Israel-centric visions in his work in the first place. Those who argue against the author’s Israel-centric concerns in 4 Ezra have to either disregard the visions which make up at least half of the book or discredit the integrity of the book as a coherent whole.

Secondly, proponents of the view that 4 Ezra is a work propagating covenantal universalism base their argument on the use of general references of humanity in the dialogues, especially in Episode 3. While Ezra is concerned with the one and the

<sup>50</sup> He is using the term in E. P. Sanders’s monumental work, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*.

<sup>51</sup> Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant*, 153.

<sup>52</sup> Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant*, 153.

<sup>53</sup> My use of the term “Jewish ethnocentrism” implies no negative connotation of “racism”. After all, 4 Ezra was written at a time of national crisis, and it was the Jewish nation that had been the defeated, the oppressed and the down trodden in a long process. Nevertheless, “Israel centredness” would better convey the meaning.

<sup>54</sup> Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant*, 113–32.

many, i.e. Israel against the nations (5:28), Uriel on the other hand talks about the many and the few, i.e. the wicked and the righteous (8:1). Even Ezra himself seems to shift back and forth between his ethnocentric attitude (Particularism) and his concern for all humankind (Universalism).<sup>55</sup> These general terms used by both Ezra and Uriel such as “the many,” “the few,” “the wicked,” and “the righteous” tend to blur the distinction between Israel and the nations. The discussion of creation and Adam’s sin also inevitably adds a universal colouring to the dialogues. However, given the strong tendency of seeing human history as a process of elimination and selection in 4 Ezra, biblical figures such as Adam and Noah are seen not only as ancestors of humankind, but those of the Jews in particular. An analogy can be found in pseudepigraphic works attributed to Enoch. The antediluvian patriarch was made the mouthpiece not in order to represent humans universally, but rather the Jews particularly. Despite the universal language in 4 Ezra, the election of Israel and its fate are still at the centre of concern in the dialogue discussions, albeit implicitly. Any other theological themes with universal concerns are peripheral and accidental. Interpretation of such discussions should take into account their context, namely that they occur as part of Ezra’s lament over Zion, and that the issue of Israel’s election is always the starting and end points of Ezra’s discourses. A good example can be seen in Ezra’s plea in the third dialogue; on the surface he seems to be praying for all humankind (8:1), but the focus of his prayer is strongly brought back to Israel,

About all mankind thou knowest best; but [I will speak] about thy people, for whom I am grieved, and about thy inheritance, for whom I lament, and about Israel, for whom I am sad, and about the seed of Jacob, for whom I am troubled. Therefore I will pray before thee for myself and for them, for I see the failings of us who dwell on the earth, and I have heard of the judgment that is to come (8:15–8).

It is at this point that it becomes clear that “the failings of us who dwell on the earth” (8:17) and the judgment Uriel has been talking about are really concerns for Ezra’s own people though expressed in universalistic language. The so-called universal sweep should also be cautioned against in Uriel’s discourse regarding the fate of the souls of the righteous and wicked. On the surface, it seems that Uriel intentionally replaces the ethnic distinction in Ezra’s inquiries with a universal, ethical distinction;<sup>56</sup> however, the constant reference to the Law as the sole criterion of judgment (7:17, 24–5, 37, 45,

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, the framing of the issue in Hogan’s *Theologies in Conflict*, 126–34.

<sup>56</sup> In Hogan’s terms; *Theologies in Conflict*, 133.

72, 81, 88–9, 94, 129; 8:56; 9:9–12) suggests that it is only the nation that received the Law that is implicated in the judgment.

Therefore, the argument that 4 Ezra represents a breakaway from Israel's covenant thought cannot be maintained. As Richard Bauckham sums up:

To suppose that for 4 Ezra God gives the righteous eschatological salvation not because they are members of his elect people but because, regardless of their corporate affiliation, they have individually merited salvation, is to pose a false alternative. God gives salvation to those members of his elect people who have kept the terms of the covenant and so merit the salvation promised in the covenant. ... What God does not do, according to 4 Ezra, is exercise mercy to Israelite sinners by withholding judgment from them.<sup>57</sup>

Salvation in 4 Ezra is not intended to break the ethnic-religious boundary of God's chosen people.

It is naturally essential to also determine 4 Ezra's attitude towards the concept of Torah. Upholding the Mosaic Torah, as I shall argue below, is part of the author's message to his compatriots at the time of national crisis. To borrow Sandmel's characterization of the relationship of Israel and the Law, "Israel and the Torah constituted a blended entity; without Israel the Torah had no significance, and without the Torah Israel had no uniqueness."<sup>58</sup> It is only natural, then, that the author of 4 Ezra instinctively upholds the Torah—albeit in a supplemented form—as the key to national survival and revival at a time of destruction and threat.

## 2.4 Summary

In this chapter I have endeavoured to show that 4 Ezra is ultimately not a book about theodicy, but has Israel's covenant and election at its heart. This is the central theme that runs through both the dialogues and the apocalyptic visions in Episodes 1 to 6.<sup>59</sup> To save Israel's covenant naturally means not only for Israel to prevail over foreign powers, but also a concern for the fate of individual members of the people; hence both the collective and the individual dimensions of the same issue of salvation. The problem of the "evil heart" becomes important only because it is the cause of this

<sup>57</sup> Bauckham, "Apocalypses," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism. Volume I. The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. D. A. Carson, P. T. O'Brien and M. A. Seifried, WUNT 2.140 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 135–87; here 173.

<sup>58</sup> Samuel Sandmel, *Judaism and Christian Beginnings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 182.

<sup>59</sup> Interestingly, it is precisely the concern for Israel's covenant in 4 Ezra that was detected and elaborated in 5 Ezra, which is chapters 1–2 attached to 4 Ezra in the Latin version of 2 Esdras. In this text showing a Christian response to the issue of Israel's election, God's favour was transferred to a new nation as a result of Israel's sin.

corruptible world, and only by overcoming the “evil heart” can Israel remain Torah obedient and maintain its covenant with God. The dilemma can only be resolved through God’s mercy by bringing on the World/Age to Come.

Thus the author’s solution to the national crisis is the adoption and promotion of the eschatological worldview, instead of the traditional Deuteronomic worldview.<sup>60</sup> A sharp contrast is drawn between this world or age and the World or Age to Come. The traditional Deuteronomic worldview is obviously inadequate to deal with a crisis on such a scale, and a new worldview is needed. But the author does not abandon the old; even in the new scheme of eschatological judgment the Deuteronomic notion of Torah obedience plays a decisive role in a soul’s after life. The importance of the Torah is well illustrated in the apocalyptic vision of the Man from the Sea (Episode 6). The lost tribes were saved and brought to the Messiah precisely because they had kept the statutes even in exile (13:42)—a point that would not have been lost on the audience. For the author, faithfulness to the Mosaic Torah is key for salvation. As can be seen more clearly in the following chapters, not only did he not abandon the Mosaic tradition, but he also endeavoured to incorporate his new worldview into the old.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> DiTommaso, “Who is the ‘I’ of 4 Ezra?”; particularly 130. Also Michael E. Stone, “Reactions to Destructions.”

<sup>61</sup> Here I depart from DiTommaso (“Who is the ‘I’ of 4 Ezra?”), who implies in his argument that by conversion to the new worldview Ezra discontinued with the old. DiTommaso’s essay does not discuss the significance of Episode 7, which shows the author’s attempt to adopt and adapt rather than abandon.



## CHAPTER THREE

### ESCHATOLOGY AND TORAH IN 4 EZRA

#### 3.1 *The Eschatological Scheme*

There is a discernible pattern in the dialogues of the first three episodes. Again and again Ezra demands to know why Israel was allowed to be down trodden, and what would become of God's covenantal promise; yet repeatedly Uriel talks, instead, about "the end." Thus, for example, after Ezra's initial complaint in the first dialogue, Uriel, instead of answering his questions, tells him that his understanding "is quite confounded regarding *this* world" (4:2). When Ezra seeks to know

why Israel has been given over to the Gentiles as a reproach; why the people whom you loved has been given over to godless tribes, and the Torah of our fathers has been made of no effect and the written covenants no longer exist; and why we pass from the world like locusts, and our life is like a mist, and we are not worthy to obtain mercy. But what will he do for his name, by which we are called? (4:23–25)

Uriel's answer is (surprisingly): "... because the world (*saeculum*) is hastening swiftly to its end" (4:26). The second episode similarly begins with Ezra questioning divine justice in allowing the oppression of Israel under the Gentiles, yet with the angel's response it unfolds into a dialogue about the imminent end (5:41–6:29). In the third dialogue, while Ezra is determined to know

If the world (*saeculum*) has indeed been created for us, why do we not possess our world (*saeculo*) as an inheritance? How long will this be so? (6:59)

his interlocutor, after telling him a parable (7:1–13), throws the question back at him: "why have you not considered in your mind what is to come, rather than what is now present?" (7:16).

This pattern should neither be criticized for being incoherent in the author's thought, nor interpreted as a quarrel between conflicting theological concerns.<sup>1</sup> Rather, here the author intended to present a response to the urgent questions that had arisen from the catastrophic crisis of 70 CE. To those pondering over the fate of Israel suffered at the hand of her enemies, he pointed to "the end," when the imbalance of justice was to be redressed; and to those wondering about Israel's destiny as the inheritor of the world, he answered that the world Israel was to inherit was not this

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<sup>1</sup> The notion that the dialogues in 4 Ezra reflect external debates among various Jewish thoughts has been touched upon in the previous chapters, and will be discussed in greater detail in the following one.

world but “the World to Come”. Or as Harnisch puts it, “the polemically conceived two-aeons doctrine aims in particular to answer the problem of the absence of the promise.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, the response of 4 Ezra to the covenantal crisis created by the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple was unswervingly eschatological. Its eschatology is not presented in a systematic way as in a theological treatise, but different aspects of his idea are evidenced in every episode, sometimes confirming, and other times complementing each other. His eschatology may be described in terms of three important features: 1) it juxtaposes this present world/age of corruption with “the World/Age to Come,” a transcendent reality to be revealed at divinely ordained times; 2) it conceives the impending end as a duration that consists of several stages marked by certain decisive events; and 3) it contains two dimensions: both national redemption through a Messianic figure and individual salvation through obedience to the Law. These three aspects will guide the discussion on 4 Ezra’s eschatological response as follows.

### 3.1.1 *The Nature of the World/Age<sup>3</sup> to Come*

The author’s proposed solution to the dilemma expressed through Ezra can be summed up by the words of Uriel that “the Most High has made not one world (*saeculum*) but two” (7:50). Through the words of the angel, the World/Age to Come is described as one in which

corruption has passed away, sinful indulgence has come to an end, unbelief has been cut off, and righteousness has increased and truth has appeared. (7:113–4)

... paradise is opened, the tree of life is planted, the world to come (*futurum tempus*) is prepared, delight is provided, a city is built, rest is appointed, goodness is established and wisdom perfected beforehand. The root [of evil] is sealed up from you, illness is banished from you, and death is hidden; hell has fled, and corruption has been forgotten; sorrows have passed away, and in the end the treasure of immortality is made manifest. (8:52–4)

<sup>2</sup> “Wir haben nachzuweisen versucht, dass die ... polemisch konzipierte Zwei-Äonen-Lehre insonderheit darauf abseilt, das Problem des Ausbleibens der Verheißung zu lösen ...” See Harnisch, *Verhängnis*, 324. It is my view, however, that any “polemical” tone in the presentation of the two-aeons doctrine by the angel should be read as a literary construct. Ezra the character is portrayed as receiving instruction by divine revelation, rather than being engaged in a debate reflecting an external theological dispute contemporary to the author.

<sup>3</sup> The Latin word, *saeculum*, or Syriac, ‘*lm*’ ܠܡ, Greek αἰών, is equivalent to the Hebrew עולם. A study of constructions involving this word in 4 Ezra shows that its meaning shifts between “time,” “age,” “world-age,” and “world,” very often with no clear indication of which meaning is most appropriate in a given context, e.g. 4:2; 6:20; 6:25; 7:47; 7:50; 7:137; 8:1; 8:2; 9:13 (2x); 10:45; 14:20. For a detailed look into this term, see the “Excursus on the Term ‘Age’” in Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 218–9. My choice of English words between “world” and “age” depends on Stone’s translation in Stone and Henze, *4 Ezra and 2 Baruch*.



It is often said that 4 Ezra presents a dualistic worldview,<sup>4</sup> precisely because of the sharp contrast of the future world of transcendence and immortality juxtaposed with the present world of sorrow and corruption.<sup>5</sup>

This world of immortality, moreover, can only be entered through the endurance of trials in this world. In a parable told by Uriel, the World to Come is likened to a broad and vast sea, but to get there one must pass through a narrow gulf; the World to Come is also represented as a city full of good things, but to receive it as an inheritance one must pass through the narrow entrance set on a precipice (7:2–11). While the coming world is “broad and safe and yield[s] the fruit of immortality” (7:13), to enter it one must pass through this world, “narrow,” “sorrowful,” “toilsome,” “full of dangers” and “great hardships” (7:12). Because of the severity of the trials, “the Most High made this world for the sake of many, but the world to come for the sake of few” (8:1).<sup>6</sup>

In addition, this World to Come, along with everything related to it, is foreordained by the Most High before the creation of the cosmos:

For before the circle of the earth existed, and before the exits of the world (*saeculi*) were in place, and before the assembled winds blew, and before the rumblings of thunder sounded, and before the flashes of lightning shone, and before the foundations of the garden was laid, and before the beautiful flowers were seen, and before the powers of movement were established, and before the innumerable hosts of angels were gathered together, and before the heights of the air were lifted up, and before the measures of the firmaments were named, and before the footstool of Zion was established, and before the present years were reckoned; and before the imaginations of those who now sin were estranged, and before those who stored up treasures of faith were sealed—then I planned these things, and they were made through me and not through another. (6:1–6).

This strong assertion of predetermination is further confirmed by the words of Uriel in other places. In one case, it is said that the Most High first prepared the judgment and things pertaining to it when he made the world and Adam with his posterity (7:70); in another case, it is claimed that the times of this world before the judgment have been foreordained by the Most High (7:74).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 93. Also in the words of Arthur J. Ferch (“The Two Aeons and the Messiah in Pseudo-Philo, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch,” *AUSS* 15 [1977]: 135–51; here 135): “... the essential feature of apocalyptic lies in its dualism – especially ... in the doctrine of the two aeons which dominates its thought-world.”

<sup>5</sup> It is important, however, not to make any absolute claim on the perceived “dualism.” More will be said on this below.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. also the contrast of “narrow” and “wide/broad” as well as “many” and “few” in Matt 7:13–14.

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At first glance, the strong theme of determinism seems to contradict another assertion of 4 Ezra: that the mortality of this world and the subsequent judgment are the consequences of Adam's sin.<sup>7</sup> When Ezra asks Uriel why Israel does not possess the world for inheritance, since it was created for their sake, Uriel explains with the parable of the sea and the city (7:2–10), and concludes,

So also is Israel's portion. For I made the world (*saeculum*) for their sake, and when Adam transgressed my statutes, what had been made was judged. (7:11)

Scholarly consensus on the interpretation of this verse is that this world was originally good when it was created for Israel, but was condemned to become corrupt and difficult as a consequence of Adam's sin.<sup>8</sup> But how can it be, it has been asked, if the present mortal world is fated to be replaced by an immortal one even before creation? There are, therefore, differing readings of verse 7:11, taking issue with the fact that the author makes a strong claim on God's foreordained planning and making of the *eschaton* and the World to Come before Adam's sin. Myers, for example, agrees that this world was created for Israel, but suggests that "what was judged" is not the entire order of God but only "what was made by virtue of the order of things growing out of Adam's *malum*."<sup>9</sup> Zurawski goes even further to say that this world was "fraught with danger from the start" because it "was originally made difficult and hard to traverse." Adam was simply the first to succumb to the temptation of the evil heart; thus he himself and his actions alone were condemned, not the rest of the world.<sup>10</sup> This is certainly a possible reading of this stand-alone verse; however, elsewhere in 4 Ezra, it is indicated otherwise through the words of the Most High, that this world was originally good but is now lost and in peril because of human sin:

For there was a time in this age (*saeculi*) when I was preparing for those who now exist, before they came into being the world (*saeculum*) was made for them to dwell in, ... but now those who have been created in this world (*mundo*) ... have become corrupt in their ways. So I considered my world (*saeculum*), and behold, it was lost, and my earth, and behold, it was in peril because of the devices of those who had come into it. (9:18–20)

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, "4 Ezra has already been noted to hold firmly to the view of individual free will. This clearly stands in tension with the deterministic ideas he propounds elsewhere. Such conflicts or tensions are not surprising in authors like those of the apocalypses" (39). Also see Jason M. Zurawski ("The Two Worlds and Adam's Sin: The Problem of 4 Ezra 7:10–14" in Boccaccini and Zurawski, *Interpreting 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch*, 97–115), who indeed thinks that the two ideas are contradictory to each other (97–101), which requires a solution.

<sup>8</sup> Box, *The Ezra-Apocalypse*, 98 & 101–2; William O. E. Oesterley, *II Esdras (The Ezra Apocalypse)* (London: Methuen, 1933), 64–5; Knibb, "Commentary on 2 Esdras," 161; Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant*, 78. For more examples, see Zurawski, "The Two Worlds," 100, n 6.

<sup>9</sup> Jacob M. Myers, *I and II Esdras*, AB 42 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1982).

<sup>10</sup> Zurawski, "The Two Worlds," 105.

This supports verse 7:11 and confirms the author's belief that the mortality of this world and eschatological judgment are direct consequences of human sin. It seems that Zurawski's reading is an attempt to reconcile the apparent contradiction between the belief in a foreordained divine scheme on the one hand and the idea that hardships and sufferings of this world and future judgment originated from human action.<sup>11</sup> But they do not have to be seen as incompatible: belief in an omniscient God can accommodate a simultaneous belief in real consequences of the human will. 4 Ezra clearly professes both. This position is shared (though with fine differences) by 2 Baruch, which also firmly claims that Adam's transgression led to the mortality of this world (2 Bar 23:4), and which at the same time presents unequivocally the idea of a foreknown human history of sin, consummation and judgment in Baruch's vision of the bright and dark waters (chapters 53–74).<sup>12</sup>

A further feature of the World to Come in 4 Ezra is its hiddenness. It is always in existence, but it belongs to a different realm. Its reality is simply veiled from human senses and knowledge and can only be understood by divine revelation. The author applies the language of hiddenness in his description of both the inauguration of the Messianic era and the scene of the Last Judgment:

...the city which now is *not seen* shall *appear*, and the land which now is *hidden* shall be *disclosed*. ...my Messiah shall be *revealed* with those who are with him ... (7:26–8)

And the Most High shall be *revealed* upon the seat of judgment, ... recompense shall follow, and the reward shall be *manifested*; righteous deeds shall *awake*, and unrighteous deeds shall not *sleep*. Then the pit of torment shall *appear*, and opposite it shall be the place of rest; and the furnace of Gehenna shall be *disclosed*, and opposite it the paradise of delight. (7:33–6)

The “last things” in the World to Come are already a reality; their future happenings are not coming into being *per se*, but rather are being “disclosed,” “manifested,” and “revealed.” In other words, a true reality now hidden to people of this present world will be unveiled; the unseen will be made seen, and the unknown, known.

A further important aspect of the onset of the World to Come is its imminence. The angel's first direct answer to Ezra's questioning is the announcement that “the

<sup>11</sup> Zurawski, “The Two Worlds,” 97–101.

<sup>12</sup> Zurawski thinks that 4 Ezra and 2 Bar present contrasting views on this matter: while in 4 Ezra “the original dichotomy between the two worlds was established from the start for some particular, necessary purpose,” in 2 Bar the problems of this world were the result of Adam's sin (“The Two Worlds,” 97–8). However, 2 Bar also believes in divine foreordination; Zurawski does not take Baruch's vision of the bright and dark waters into account. The eschatology of 2 Bar will be examined in Chapter Seven.

world (*saeculum*) is hastening swiftly to its end” (4:26). He further uses the parable of a flaming furnace and a cloud full of water to illustrate that the remaining time is like the smoke that remains after a flame and the drops after a rainstorm (4:44–50). But the imminence of the coming of “the end” is also tempered with the desideratum for all that is foreordained to come to full term. It is necessary to wait. 4 Ezra uses a piece of tradition that relates the impatience of the souls of the righteous dead, eager to go out for their reward while remaining in their treasuries.<sup>13</sup> Instead, the souls were told by the angel guarding them that it was only to happen

When the number of those like yourselves is completed; for he has weighed the age (*saeculum*) in the balance, and measured the times by measure, and numbered the times by number; and he will not move or arouse until that measure is fulfilled. (4:36–7)

Time here is talked about not as an abstract concept, but like a concrete substance that has weight and size, which can be weighed, measured and dispensed in portions like supplied goods.<sup>14</sup> In fact, 4 Ezra believes that one can know the end of time for certain precisely because time is limited and can be counted, since it is foreordained by God, allocated, numbered in order, and dealt out in parts. Uriel reveals to Ezra that “the age (*saeculum*) has lost its youth, and the times (*tempora*) begin to grow old” (14:10). Time is divided into twelve parts; nine and half parts have passed, and only two and half remain (14:11–2).<sup>15</sup>

Interestingly, both the urgency of the coming of the end and the necessity of waiting are conveyed by the metaphor of birth. On the one hand, Ezra is asked to consider if a woman in her ninth month with child can keep it within her any longer. Just like the woman, who in travail “makes haste to escape the pangs of birth,” “the underworld and the treasuries of the souls” also cannot hold back but hasten to render

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<sup>13</sup> This sentiment of impatient eagerness for the coming of the “last things” is comparable to that of another 1<sup>st</sup>-century Jewish writer who held an eschatological worldview, Paul of Tarsus, when he wrote that “the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed” and that “the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time” (Rom 18:19, 22).

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion on 4 Ezra’s conception of time, see Matthias Henze, “Dimensions of Time in Jewish Apocalyptic Thought: The Case of 4 Ezra,” in *The Figure of Ezra*, ed. Tobias Nicklas and Veronika Hirschberger (Leuven: Peeters, forthcoming).

<sup>15</sup> This calculation of time calls to mind the enigmatic Danielic expression, “time, two times and half a time” (Dan 7:25; 12:7); it is perhaps another piece of evidence showing 4 Ezra’s exegesis of scriptural texts. Pseudo-Philo also seems to base its calculation of remaining time on the Danielic scheme; however, instead of twelve parts as in 4 Ezra, it divides time into seven parts, “four and a half have passed, and two and a half remain” (LAB 19:15). Rev presents its reckoning of the remaining time as “forty-two months” (11:2; 13:5) and “one thousand two hundred and sixty days” (11:3; 12:6), i.e. three and half years, thus offering another interpretation of Daniel’s “time, two times and half a time,” in its own eschatological scheme.

the souls “committed to them from the beginning” (4:41–2).<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, Ezra is made to answer if a woman’s womb can be requested to produce ten children at one time rather than one child after another. Likewise, God has “made the earth a womb for those who from time to time come forth on it,” until, like a woman in her old age, it does not bring forth lives any longer (5:46–9). Although both metaphors liken the earth to a woman in labour, the function of the earth in the first metaphor is that of the storage of departed souls and their “births” mark the end of this world/age, whereas in the second metaphor the earth’s function is to dispatch living souls into this world/age until the end. Therefore, by switching the roles of the earth in the metaphoric usage of birth, the author expresses both the imminence of the end and the need to wait in the interim. In both cases, the metaphor emphasizes God’s absolute sovereign control of time.

The imminence of the *eschaton* is also described in the symbolic birth of Jacob and Esau. When Ezra inquires about the timing of the end of this age and of the beginning of the one to follow, Uriel replies:

“From Abraham to Abraham,<sup>17</sup> because from him were born Jacob and Esau, for Jacob’s hand held Esau’s heel from the beginning. For Esau is the end of this age (*saeculi*), and Jacob is the beginning of the age that follows. For the end of a man is his heel, and the beginning of a man is his hand; between the heel and the hand seek for nothing else, Ezra!” (6:8–10)

This parable appears to be an eschatological exegesis of Gen 25:26. Based on rabbinic usage of Esau as a code name for Rome, Stone infers the parable to mean that the “Kingdom of Rome” will be the last age, to be replaced by the new age, the “Kingdom of Israel,” represented by Jacob.<sup>18</sup> Regarding this interpretation Neusner points out that Esau as a symbol for Rome was absent from rabbinic sources in the Tannaitic period, and appeared rather late in Amoraic texts (e.g. Gen. Rab. or Lev. Rab.).<sup>19</sup> However,

<sup>16</sup> See also 7:32. The same idea that the “treasuries of souls” in which the souls of the dead are deposited and which are to be emptied at the end of this world/age is also found in 1 En 51:1; 2 Bar 21:23; 30:2; LAB 3:10; 33:3, as well as Talmudic sources such as Avodah Zarah 5a; Yevamot 62a, 63b; Niddah 13b (Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel: From Its Beginning to the Completion of the Mishnah*, trans. W. F. Stinespring [New York: Macmillan, 1955], 333, n. 5 & 431). Similarly, the language of Christ being the “firstborn from the dead” (Rev 1:5; Col 1:18) or “first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor 15:20) should also be understood in this context.

<sup>17</sup> Latin Mss ψ, Eth., Ar<sup>2</sup> Ms B read, “From Abraham to Isaac”; Georg. Reads “From Adam to Abraham”, whereas Syr. reads like the majority of Latin Mss, but adds “Isaac was born of Abraham and from Abraham and from Isaac were ....” The textual variations demonstrate ancient attempts to make sense of this difficult text. See Stone’s commentary, *Fourth Ezra*, 143.

<sup>18</sup> Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 159–61.

<sup>19</sup> Jacob Neusner, *Transformations in Ancient Judaism: Textual Evidence for Creative Responses to Crisis* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004), 103–6; cited in Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict*, 153.

Cohen confirms that the identification of Rome with Esau or Edom can be traced to a Messianic interpretation of Balaam's oracle by Rabbi Akiba, a contemporary of 4 Ezra, in which Edom is used as the code name for Israel's enemy.<sup>20</sup> Earlier source critics such as Kabisch and Box, on the other hand, identify Esau and Jacob as representations of the present corruptible age and the future age of immortality, respectively.<sup>21</sup> Regardless of the different interpretations, the parable clearly expresses a sense of immediacy in the onset of the World/Age to Come, in which Israel plays the role of victor. This is the meaning of "between the heel and the hand seek for nothing else." The imminence of the future world, however, is not the only possible meaning of this multivalent symbol. As Esau and Jacob were twins conceived simultaneously in the beginning, both the present world/age and the World/Age to Come exist from creation, although the manifestation of the latter must be awaited after the former, like the appearance of Jacob after that of Esau. In addition, the parable echoes the birth metaphors used in 4:41–2 and 5:46–9, which signify both the sense of anticipation and the necessity of patient endurance for the unfolding of the *eschaton*.

To recapitulate the nature of the proposed World/Age to Come in 4 Ezra, it is transcendent and immortal, presented in stark contrast with the present world/age. It (along with everything associated with it) is both foreordained by God before the creation and made a necessity because of the consequences of Adam's sin; thus it serves as a divine initiative and remedy for a condemned world that is transient and corrupt. It preexists in a reality that is veiled from human knowledge, waiting to be revealed at the *eschaton*, which is imminent.

### 3.1.2 The Stages of the End

Although it is *communis opinio* that 4 Ezra propounds a "two aeons" worldview, many critics of the apocalypse find the author's use of the word "end" and related terms<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Gerson Cohen, "Esau as Symbol in Early Medieval Thought," in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. A. Altman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 21–24; cited in Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict*, 153. While Hogan concedes that it is not impossible that 4 Ezra presents the earliest example of the identification of Esau with Rome, she is reluctant to accept Stone's reading. Her concern is that it would introduce a strong nationalistic dimension into the eschatology presented by Uriel. But as I have argued in the previous chapter and will again in the following, the triumph of Israel as a nation and the salvation of individual Israelite souls are two connected aspects in the eschatology of 4 Ezra, and should not be seen as divergent thoughts in conflict.

<sup>21</sup> Richard Kabisch, *Das vierte Buch Esra auf seine Quellen Untersucht* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1889), 50–1; G. H. Box, *The Ezra-Apocalypse* (London: Pitman, 1912), 67–8.

<sup>22</sup> The concept of the "end" is usually indicated by Latin *finis* (Syriac parallel *šwlm* 'ܫܠܡܐ), or *novissimus* (Syriac 'hry' ܚܪܝܐ, 'hryt' ܚܪܝܬܐ), "last," or "last times." The Hebrew equivalents are

inconsistent. The author predicts a number of events that will happen at the end, but does the end refer to the coming of the Messiah, or the day of judgment?<sup>23</sup> Does the present age end with the fall of Rome as in the Eagle Vision (12:31–4) or at the Last Judgment referred to in the third dialogue (7:26–44)?<sup>24</sup> In Stone's words, "there is some uncertainty about exactly which point on the eschatological timetable is called 'the end.'"<sup>25</sup> Questions have even been raised as to whether 4 Ezra can be considered a work of coherent thought.<sup>26</sup>

Two points should be kept in mind when judging the coherence of 4 Ezra's eschatological thought. Firstly, the book was not written to be a theological treatise, but a religious work in the genre of apocalyptic narrative. If the author described what he believed would happen at end-times, his aim was not to present a tightly argued essay, but to remind his audience that, despite the current malaise, better times were ahead and the final word was with God. As he underscored different aspects of his message in different episodes, he chose to highlight some but not all details of his eschatological idea. There certainly appear to be lacunae when every part of his eschatology is placed under scrutiny by a modern scholar, but the onus of getting a sense of coherence is not on the ancient author but on modern readers, as they are the ones that need to make up for the vast distance between themselves and the cultural context and religious milieu that were shared by the author and his intended audience, steeped in notions and concepts about end-times.<sup>27</sup>

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likely to be קץ or אחרון/אחרית. See Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 104–5. He points out that, although קץ almost never occurs in Mishnaic Hebrew, it does occur in Qumranite documents, e.g. 1QS 4:16–7 and 1QpHab 7:7, 12, in the expression קץ אחרון, "end of the last times."

<sup>23</sup> For examples of perceived ambiguity, see Jonathan Moo, "The Few Who Obtain Mercy," 106–108. He explains this fuzziness and fluidity as the author's deliberate act in order to serve his purposes.

<sup>24</sup> Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict*, 152.

<sup>25</sup> Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 93.

<sup>26</sup> The coherence of 4 Ezra on the point of its use of the "end" is defended by Stone in his "Coherence and Inconsistency in the Apocalypses: The Case of the 'The End' in 4 Ezra," *JBL* 102 (1983): 229–43, repr. in Stone, *Selected Studies*, 333–47, in which he points out the different decisive points "the end" is used to designate.

<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Stone expounds, "The preliminary hypothesis must always be that the author's thought was coherent. (This is the more so in as meticulously crafted a work as 4 Ezra.) If so, then when analysis of a term uncovers *prima facie* contradictions or inconsistency, it is possible that the meaning assigned to it is not exact. Alternatively, there may be an unstated premise, view, or feature lying outside the text that actually provides the author's thinking with coherence. For, unless the author was weak of mind, or the book a jumble of miscellaneous literary remains, it made sense to the author; and the task of the modern analyst is to attempt, by a combination of careful historical, philological study and empathetic exegesis, to discover how that was so. This must be done while bearing in mind that the documents of apocalyptic literature are religious compositions of a non-Aristotelian type, and consequently the application of a criterion of rigid logical consistency within them is not appropriate." See "The Case of the 'The End,'" 242 (346 in *Selected Studies*).

Secondly, “the end,” or better still, “the last times” (אחרון), should be understood not as a point in time, but a duration of time consisting of stages. “The end”, therefore, is used metonymically, where the final event or result is selected to stand for the whole process, due to its salience. The structure of 4 Ezra’s eschatological scheme is mainly presented in 7:26–44, with other details added in other episodes. The stages associated with the end can be summarized as such:<sup>28</sup> 1) signs of the end; 2) Messianic warfare; 3) Messianic era;<sup>29</sup> 4) reversal to primeval silence; and 5) Last Judgment and World/Age to Come.<sup>30</sup> The victory of the Messiah and the Last Judgment are the two most decisive events in 4 Ezra’s end-time scheme.

At the first stage, “the end” is marked by signs and sorrows conventionally known as the “Messianic woes.” These signs, told at three different places (5:1–12; 6:18–25; 9:3), are described as bizarre astronomical occurrences, abnormal phenomena in the natural world, moral and spiritual depravity in human behavior, and spread of violence.<sup>31</sup> The Messianic warfare then ensues, with the revelation of the Messiah, the City and the Land (7:26–8; 13:35–6). Rome and other hostile Gentile nations will be defeated (12:32; 13:25–34, 37–8), and the exiled tribes will return to the land of Israel (13:39–47). If the eagle vision is indeed symbolic of the defeat of the Roman empire by the Messiah, the author, writing decades after 70 CE, clearly believed in an imminent end. The victory will usher in the era of Messianic rule for 400 years.<sup>32</sup> According to Ferch, the figure 400 is based on the total number of years of the historical Davidic dynasty in Jerusalem.<sup>33</sup> The Messianic era was not treated by the author with the same emphasis and elaboration he placed on the Messianic warfare. Instead, the messiah’s role is simply stated as to “make people who remain rejoice for 400 years” (7:28; cf. 12:34; 13:50), before all living things including the Messiah himself die, and the world returns to primeval silence for seven days (7:30). At the final stage, the world reawakens to general resurrection when the treasures give back

<sup>28</sup> These events are summarized in a similar way by Moo, “The Few Who Obtain Mercy,” 105.

<sup>29</sup> Or ימי המשיח, “days of the Messiah,” using the rabbinic term.

<sup>30</sup> העולם הבא in rabbinic terminology.

<sup>31</sup> The existence of such a period of trial and tribulation before the advent of the messiah is found common in other apocalyptic works such as 2 Baruch (25:2–4; 48:31–9; 70:1–10).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. the unspecified length of Messianic rule in 2 Bar and a thousand years in Rev 20:4.

<sup>33</sup> Ferch, “Two Aeons,” 143, n 37. Sanh 99a records a debate of rabbis speculating on the length of the Days of the Messiah. Among the different sayings, R. Dosa said, “Four hundred years; for it is written in one place (Gen 15:13), ‘and they shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years’; and in another place it is written (Ps 90:15), ‘make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us.’” See also Klausner, *Messianic Idea*, 421. R. Dosa apparently agreed with 4 Ezra!



the sleeping souls (7:32), the Most High is revealed together with Gehenna and Paradise (7:24–36) and the Last Judgment takes place to last “a week of years” with eternal torment assigned to the wicked and everlasting delight for the righteous (7:37–43). The day of judgment is described in substantial details:

The day of judgment will be thus: it has no sun or moon or stars, or cloud or lightning or thunder, or wind or water or air, or darkness or evening or morning, or summer or spring or harvest, or heat or frost or cold, or hail or rain or dew, or noon or night, or dawn, or shining or brightness or light, but only the splendour of the glory of the Most High, by which all shall see what has been determined for them. (7:39–42)

Which stage, then, marks the beginning of the World/Age to Come? Clearly it is the final stage 5), which is preceded by a Messianic era. According to Uriel’s statement, “the day of judgment will be the end of this world [or age] and the beginning of the immortal world [or age] to come” (7:113). The Messianic era inaugurated by the victory of Israel’s Messiah over the enemies serves as the interim, transitional stage between the two worlds/ages. It serves as a correction of the wrongs and compensation for the woes of this ephemeral world/age, before it gives way to the World/Age to Come.

If the Last Judgment marks the beginning of the World/Age to Come, and if it comes after a period of Messianic rule, does the eschatological timetable contradict the parable of Esau and Jacob (6:7–10), which seems to imply that the age to come will begin immediately after the present age without an interim Messianic era?<sup>34</sup> If this is indeed incompatible with the eschatological timetable offered in 7:26–44 as well as the visions about the Messiah in episodes five and six, does it mean that the author simply incorporated different traditions without editorial discretion?<sup>35</sup> Jewish apocalyptic works produced during the Second Temple Period indeed demonstrate diversity in eschatological ideas.<sup>36</sup> Some downplay the Messianic figure, and others confer upon him an augmented role. In the Animal Apocalypse (1 En 83–90) written during the rise of the Hasmoneans, for example, the days of the Messiah follow after the Last Judgment. It is God, the Lord of the sheep, who judges the wild beasts and birds of prey, the corrupt shepherds, the blind sheep and the fallen stars (90:20–7); the

<sup>34</sup> This is the view of earlier source critics, Kabisch (*Das vierte Buch Esra*, 50–1) and Box (“IV Ezra,” *APOT* 2:575; also *Ezra Apocalypse*, 67–8). The seeming incompatibility is explained by the author’s indiscriminate use of different external sources.

<sup>35</sup> This is again the point against which Stone (“Coherence and Inconsistency”) argues.

<sup>36</sup> This diversity is demonstrated in a survey of the Messianic figure in four Jewish works between the 1st cent. BCE and 1st cent. CE by Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “Messianic Ideas in the Apocalyptic and Related Literature of Early Judaism,” in *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 90–113.

Messiah, represented by a white bull, simply appears after the coming of the heavenly Jerusalem and the ingathering of all the sheep (90:28–36) without a special role to play.<sup>37</sup> In contrast, in the much later Book of Parables (1 En 37–71), the Messianic figure is much developed and stands out strongly in the eschatological scheme.<sup>38</sup> Besides the diminished role of the Messiah, the Messianic era can also be all together absent in the eschatology of some writings. Pseudo-Philo, for instance, though conceding to the idea of a future Davidic king in the age to come (LAB 62:9), presents its two aeons without a Messianic age separating the two.<sup>39</sup> Given the diverse traditions about the end-time, it is quite conceivable that the author of 4 Ezra utilized different traditions to highlight different aspects of that end-time, the parable of Esau and Jacob being a case in point. But a metaphor as a figure of speech is always selective and is never meant to be comprehensive in all aspects of its representation. The parable of Esau and Jacob was not adopted to explain the stages of the end; it purported to illustrate that, although unknown to many, the Age to Come was preexistent like the present age, and its revelation was imminent. On the other hand, the birth metaphor in the parable echoes the common theme of Messianic woes; the hand of Jacob seizing the heel of Esau presents an image of Messianic struggle.<sup>40</sup> It is by no means incompatible with the eschatological stages and the Messianic visions presented elsewhere in the book.

<sup>37</sup> The interpretation of the white bull as the Messiah is not accepted by all scholars. Daniel C. Olson, for instance, argues against the identification of the white bull as the Davidic Messiah, or the Second Adam, or the Danielic Son of Man. Instead, he identifies it as a symbol of “the true Jacob, the patriarch of the ‘true Israel’”. See his *A New Reading of the Animal Apocalypse of 1 Enoch: “All Nations Shall be Blessed”, with a New Translation and Commentary*, SVTP 24 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 26–55.

<sup>38</sup> Klausner (*Messianic Ideas*) places this development in the historical context of the Hellenistic and Roman periods. He argues that the augmented personality and role of the Messiah arose as a need of the Jewish nation at times of national crisis. “In the time of the victorious Hasmonians, before the struggle of the Pharisees against Alexander Jannaeus, the nation did not need the Messiah so much. Therefore, the compass of his deeds had not yet been extended, and such numerous legends had still not been woven around him. The situation changed in the times immediately preceding Pompey’s conquest, as appears in the later parts of the Book of Enoch, in the Book of Parables (288–9).” The accentuated Messianic figure in the visions of 4 Ezra, produced in the national catastrophic loss of the Temple, confirms Klausner’s argument.

<sup>39</sup> As demonstrated by this passage: “But when the years of the world shall be fulfilled, then shall the light cease and the darkness vanish; and I will quicken the dead and raise up from the earth them that sleep; and Sheol shall pay its debt and Abaddon give back that which was committed unto it, that I may render unto everyone man according to his works and according to the fruit of their imaginations, until I judge between the soul and the flesh. And the world shall rest, and death shall be quenched, and Sheol shall shut its mouth. And the earth shall not be without birth, neither barren for them that dwell therein; and none shall be polluted that hath been justified in Me. And there shall be another earth and another heaven, even an everlasting habitation (LAB 3:10).”

<sup>40</sup> Cf. the saying in Matt 11:12, “From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force,” spoken by Jesus on the struggle of the onset of the Kingdom of Heaven, inaugurated by the forerunner of the Messiah, John the Baptist, a figure of Elijah.

The full view of 4 Ezra's eschatology in stages also forces us to put the dualistic stamp so often placed upon the author's thought-world into perspective. The author certainly presents the two aeons in sharp contrast to each other; however, besides this linear, dualistic view, he also offers another perspective which sees the entire cosmic history in a circular manner, as he predicts the seven-day reverse of creation at the end of the Messianic era when the world returns to primeval silence,<sup>41</sup> and the "end" becomes the "beginning." Dualism, albeit a valid observation, is only a partial view, as the two worlds in juxtaposition are only part of the holistic cosmic scheme. The enigmatic expression "from Abraham to Abraham" (if this is indeed the original reading)<sup>42</sup> in the parable of Esau and Jacob (6:8–10) perhaps also reflects a circular perspective on the change of worlds.

### *3.1.3 The Individual and the National Dimensions of Redemption*

It has been noticed in many 4 Ezra studies that the eschatology of Uriel's dialogues lacks the theme of national restoration which dominates the visions in later episodes. Admittedly, nationalistic symbols are not completely absent; for example, there is the mention of the revelation of the Heavenly Jerusalem, the Messiah and the joyful Messianic era (7:26–8). Overall, however, the dialogues are predominantly concerned with the salvation of the righteous and the condemnation of the wicked.

Such a case is often made through a comparison of the three portrayals of the Messianic figure (7:28; Eagle Vision; Man Vision). Although in all three places where the Messiah is mentioned he is described as preexistent,<sup>43</sup> the Messiah figure in the dialogue is assigned no role in the events ushering in the Messianic era, but is only said to make the remnant joyful.<sup>44</sup> The description of him is so meager that it gives little hint of the glorious, triumphant figure who in the visions takes up Israel's cause and restores the nation. In the Eagle Vision, by contrast, the Messiah, in the image of the Lion of Judah, destroys the archenemy of Israel with his words. As Stone comments, his activities are described in judicial terms: indictment, pronouncement of

<sup>41</sup> Cf. also 2 Bar 3:7, where Baruch asks the Most High when the latter announces the destruction of Zion, "Shall the world return to its [original] nature, the age revert to primordial silence?"

<sup>42</sup> See n 17 above.

<sup>43</sup> In 7:28 he is said to be "revealed with those who are with him"; in the Eagle Vision he is "the Messiah whom the Most High has kept until the end of days" (12:32); and in the Man Vision he is the one "whom the Most High has been keeping for many ages" (13:26).

<sup>44</sup> Stone, "The Question of the Messiah in 4 Ezra," in his *Selected Studies*, 317–32 (here 318); repr. from *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era*, ed. Jacob Neusner, William Scott Green and Ernest S. Frerichs (New York: CUP, 1987), 209–24 (210).

judgment and execution.<sup>45</sup> This judicial role is not to be confused with God's Last Judgment of all the living and the dead, which is cosmic in nature.<sup>46</sup> The judgment carried out by the Messiah is against Israel's last enemy, Rome; by its destruction is the Messianic era ushered in, until the end of this world/age (12:34). In the Man from the Sea vision, on the other hand, the Messiah is described as a warrior, yet the author emphasizes that he holds not "a spear or weapon of war" (13:27) but depends on the Law of God, symbolized by the streaming fire from his mouth, the flaming breath and the storm of fiery coals from his tongue (13:10, 37–8). His role is also described in judicial terms, albeit to a lesser degree than in the Eagle vision. He rebukes, sentences, and destroys the hostile nations by righteous pronouncement.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, he gathers in the returned exiles and defends the remnant and "will show them very many wonders" (13:50), which is likely an equivalent expression of making them joyful (7:28) in the ensuing Messianic era.

In short, the Messiah in the two visions is granted much more personality and function than the one in the dialogue. His role in the visions is the vindication of Israel against her oppressive enemies. They directly respond to Ezra's anguished questions in the dialogues, "are the deeds of Babylon better than Zion" (3:31), and "why hast thou given over the one to the many" (5:28).<sup>48</sup> The nationalistic colouring of the Messianic role is made more discernible by its lack of universal or cosmic scope,<sup>49</sup> particularly when compared with the Messianic figures in other apocalyptic writings such as the Animal Apocalypse (1 En 83–90), the Book of Parables (1 En 37–71) and Revelation.

Do the different portrayals of the Messiah across the episodes in 4 Ezra again represent conflicted ideas in the author's thought?<sup>50</sup> In Hogan's analysis, the perceived disparities are not contradictions but "a matter of different emphases."<sup>51</sup> The dialogue clearly places more stress on the anticipated end of this world and the Last Judgment (7:29–44) and only cursory attention on the appearance of the city, the coming of the Messiah and the rewards of the survivors (7:26–8). The three visions that follow, on

<sup>45</sup> Stone, "The Question," 318–9 [210–1].

<sup>46</sup> As Hogan (*Theologies in Conflict*, 204) notices, the Messianic judgment serves a different purpose from the Last Judgment and is not to be confused with the latter. It is a "vindication of Israel's belief in their covenant with God."

<sup>47</sup> Stone, "The Question," 322 [214].

<sup>48</sup> Hogan also makes a similar point in *Theologies in Conflict*, 199.

<sup>49</sup> See also Stone, "The Question," 319 [211].

<sup>50</sup> See Kabisch, *Das vierte Buch Esra*, 94–9; Box, "IV Ezra," 2:550.

<sup>51</sup> Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict*, 201.

the other hand, may be seen as elaborations of the three aspects mentioned in 7:26–8, i.e. the appearance of the Heavenly Jerusalem in the vision of the woman, the defeat of Rome by the Messiah in the Lion and Eagle vision, and the joyful ingathering of the remnant in the Man from the Sea vision. In other words, eschatological ideas in the dialogues and the visions “complement or supplement,”<sup>52</sup> rather than contradict each other.

However, Hogan does consider that the ideas in the dialogues and the visions represent not one, but two different eschatologies. She terms the former individual-salvation eschatology, and the latter, national-restoration eschatology, in line with her interpretation of the text as a theological debate.<sup>53</sup> Whereas the national-restoration eschatology espoused in the visions expresses an Israel-centred, nationalistic worldview, the individual salvation eschatology represented by Uriel in the dialogues embraces a universal view of redemption that erases any ethnic difference between Israel and the Gentiles.<sup>54</sup> However, the universalistic reading of the eschatology in the dialogues is founded upon the assumption that “the many” about whom Ezra is concerned and for whom he pleads before God refer to humanity as a whole. This is an assumption that can no longer be sustained if we consider Ezra’s sorrowful lament over the fate of “the many” in stark contrast to his antagonism towards the Gentiles (e.g. 4:23; 6:56), his self-identification with the sinners (e.g. 7:126; 8:17), and his remembering them in the presence of God as “your inheritance” (8:45), as I have argued in the previous chapter.<sup>55</sup> If we uphold the Israelite identity of “the few” and “the many,” the author’s belief in the Last Judgment and the World to Come described in the dialogues are no longer a competing eschatology incongruent with the ethnocentric flavour of the eschatology in the visions; instead, it is merely one component within that eschatology with a focus on the fate of individual Israelites.

If any conflict can be detected at all in the author’s eschatology, it is the internal struggle on the question of Israel’s redemption now beset with uncertainty, under the impact of the catastrophe. He is torn between two equally strong beliefs, that all of

<sup>52</sup> Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict*, 203.

<sup>53</sup> Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict*. Hogan sees 4 Ezra as a reflection of a three-way wisdom debate; while the dialogue presents two theological schools of thought in conflict, the visions offer a third as a solution. For more comment on this see the next chapter.

<sup>54</sup> This is also the view of many analysts of 4 Ezra adopting the external-debate approach, e.g. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant*, and Choi, “Intra-Jewish Dialogue,” to name a few.

<sup>55</sup> See Chapter 2.2.3.

Israel shall be redeemed, and that Torah, the word of God, cannot possibly be flouted without consequence. If the law, on which the covenant is based, has the potency to save Israel, it must also have lethal potential for those who disregard it. It is not a dilemma for 4 Ezra alone, but a predicament for Judaism as a whole. Another Jewish thinker of the first century, Paul of Tarsus, also struggled with the same issue as demonstrated by his letter to the Romans. On the one hand, Paul laments over his kinsmen who will not inherit the Abrahamic promise because they have rejected the gospel (Rom 9–10); on the other hand, he declares that “by no means” has God rejected his people (11:1) and that “all Israel will be saved” (11:25).<sup>56</sup> Like Ezra, Paul has by no means resolved this tension in his writing to the satisfaction of the modern reader, but it does not prevent him from praising “the wisdom and knowledge of God” and his “unsearchable” judgment and “inscrutable” ways (Rom 11:33). Similarly, Ezra can also give “great glory and praise to the Most High because of his wonders” (13:57), despite his unanswered questions. The difference between them lies at the core of their respective belief. For Paul, the saving power of faith in Christ must not be compromised even if it means many of his brethren will be in peril; and for 4 Ezra, it is the integrity of the Torah that must not be lessened.

In sum, 4 Ezra provides a distinct eschatological response in its search for answers in the national crisis. It presents a belief in the imminent advent of a new world/age that is transcendent, immortal and eternal, in stark contrast to the transient and sorrowful world/age of the present time. It proposes an eschatological scheme composed with stages. What is most significant is not only the augmented role of the Messiah as the avenger of Israel, but also the amplified stage of Messianic struggles against the Gentiles. The author dedicated one episode on the revelation of the heavenly Jerusalem (Episode 4), and two visions to describe the triumphant Messiah (Episodes 5 & 6). The emphases given to these components of his eschatological scheme particularly stand out when compared with eschatological descriptions in other apocalyptic works. This was most likely due to the covenantal crisis the author sought to address.

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<sup>56</sup> The difference is, however, that Paul considers the salvation of the Gentiles an essential process in bringing all Israel to salvation, whereas for 4 Ezra the Gentiles do not play a part in the equation. Thus, I disagree with Sanders (*Paul and Palestinian Judaism*) and Longenecker (*Eschatology and the Covenant*). More on this point in the next chapter. This different attitude is logically due—at least partially—to the different circumstances of their respective authors: 4 Ezra was written after the destruction of the Temple by Gentile powers, while Romans was written when the Temple was still standing.

4 Ezra's eschatology is a salvation scheme that consists of both an individual dimension and a national dimension; what joins the two dimensions together is the Torah.<sup>57</sup> Obedience to the Torah is the necessary condition for the preservation of individual Israelites at end-times; and it is by the Torah of the Most High that the Messiah destroys the enemies and brings in the joy of the Messianic era. Torah obedience is the sole justification at the Last Judgment and passport to the World/Age to Come. But what is the meaning and function of Torah in 4 Ezra? This is the topic to which we now turn.

### 3.2 *The Meaning and Function of Torah in 4 Ezra*

#### 3.2.1 *The Religious and Intellectual Background of 4 Ezra's Ideas about Torah*

The discussion of Torah in 4 Ezra takes place against the wider issue of the relationship between Wisdom and Law in ancient Judaism in all its complexities.<sup>58</sup> The Hebrew word תורה, simultaneously translated as "instruction" or "teaching" (e.g. Prov 28:4, 9) and "law" (e.g. Neh 8:1, 2; 1 Chron 22:12; 2 Chron 22:12, and νόμος in the LXX) with many nuances in between, naturally lends to much mutual influence between the sapiential and the legal streams of ancient Judaism. It is reasonable to trace the beginning of a shift of meaning of Torah from "teaching" to "law" to Deuteronomy, and subsequently to the Pentateuch attributed to Moses.<sup>59</sup> This transformation was closely related to the process of scripturalization and of older traditions now written down increasingly gaining authoritative status.<sup>60</sup> However, this perceived shift of meaning from "teaching" to "law" can hardly be regarded as a unidirectional development. By the Hellenistic period, the Mosaic Torah, while retaining its reference to the Pentateuch, had been further identified with heavenly Wisdom, as testified by Sirach 24 and 1 Baruch 3:9–4:4. On the one hand, this has been interpreted as "a transition from a non-Mosaic sapiential paradigm" to a new one

<sup>57</sup> Or in Klausner's terms, "political-national salvation" and "religio-spiritual redemption" are two conceptions inseparably woven together, two elements that walked arm in arm. He finds the "idea of the twofold nature of the Messiah" even before the destruction of the Second Temple. See his *Messianic Idea*, 392.

<sup>58</sup> A recent collection of papers exploring the relationship between "wisdom" and "Torah" in the post-exilic period is *Wisdom and Torah: The Reception of 'Torah' in the Wisdom Literature of the Second Temple Period*, ed. Bernd U. Schipper and D. Andrew Teeter, JSJSup 163 (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

<sup>59</sup> Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 244–319.

<sup>60</sup> Anne Fitzpatrick-McKinley, *The Transformation of Torah from Scribal Advice to Law*, JSOTSup 287 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 146–77.

that was based on the Mosaic Torah, which had gained dominance.<sup>61</sup> An observable feature of this transition is that, although the Mosaic Torah was elevated to a new height, obedience to the covenant and to the Law was not expressed in halakhic terms, but “in ways that allow the integrity of the sapiential approach to life to continue.”<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, the Hasmonean period witnessed an upsurge in literature that betrayed an increased interest in halakhic issues. The sectarian writings of Qumran testify the prominence of exegetical activities of prescriptive law as well as divisions between Jewish factions over halakhic interpretations.<sup>63</sup> The intellectual landscape of Second Temple Judaism was further enriched (and complicated) by the emergence of apocalyptic literature. The question of whether it should be traced to prophetic or sapiential roots is still under debate;<sup>64</sup> nevertheless, it demonstrates much semantic affinity with wisdom literature, and in the case of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, also with the Mosaic tradition.

It is not my purpose here to examine the development of Torah, Wisdom and apocalyptic literature in the Second Temple period, but only to indicate the context within which 4 Ezra’s use of the term Torah took place.<sup>65</sup> If, according to Joseph Blenkinsopp, “in its earliest stages, Israelite law can be seen as a specialization of clan

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<sup>61</sup> George E. Nickelsburg, “Torah and the Deuteronomic Scheme in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha: Variation on a Theme and Some Noteworthy Examples of Its Absence,” in *Das Gesetz im frühen Judentum und im Neuen Testament: Festschrift für Christoph Burchard zum 75 Geburtstag*, ed. D. Sänger and M. Konradt (Göttingen: V&R, 2006): 222–35; here 232–3. Nickelsburg bases his statement upon the idea of Jack T. Sanders, “When Sacred Canopies Collide,” *JSJ* 32 (2001): 121–36. Applying the sociological theory of Berger and Luckmann to explain the phenomenon of the coexistence of competing religious paradigms, Sanders reaches the conclusion that the wisdom school absorbed the Mosaic Torah in such a way that it maintained the essential elements of the sapiential tradition. For Berger and Luckmann’s works, see *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1978); and *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967).

<sup>62</sup> J. T. Sanders, “Sacred Canopies,” 131.

<sup>63</sup> John J. Collins, “The Transformation of the Torah in Second Temple Judaism,” *JSJ* 43 (2012): 455–74.

<sup>64</sup> The most representative proponent of the view seeing apocalyptic literature as a child of postexilic prophecy is Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975). See also John J. Collins, “From Prophecy to Apocalypticism: The Expectation of the End,” in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, ed. Collins, B. McGinn & S. Stein, 3 vol. (New York: Continuum, 1998), vol. 1. On the other side of the debate is Gerhard von Rad (*Theologie des Alten Testaments*, 2 vols. 4th ed. [Munich: Kaiser, 1965], 2:315–30), who proposes a wisdom source for apocalypticism. For a summary of different views on the origins of apocalyptic literature and its relationship with prophetic and sapiential traditions, see Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 19–37.

<sup>65</sup> A very useful book that provides a comprehensive overview of this background is Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom from Ben Sira to Paul: A Tradition Historical Enquiry into the Relation of Law, Wisdom and Ethics*, WUNT 2.16 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985). Another is John J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997).



wisdom,<sup>66</sup> the practice seemed to have evolved and showed a much more expansive scope in the Second Temple period. The Mosaic tradition gained a prominent stature, and was even made to lend its name and authority to traditions outside the Pentateuch. Nevertheless, Torah, in both its narrow and broad sense, had always been securely placed under the canopy of divine Wisdom. Here “wisdom” refers not to the wisdom literary genre, but rather to a mode of perception; or in Sheppard’s term, a “hermeneutical construct”, the lens through which all strands of thoughts are interpreted and expressed.<sup>67</sup> The idea of Torah in 4 Ezra is a reflection of this intellectual milieu of Second Temple Judaism. It is reasonable to assume that the Hebrew Torah (הַתּוֹרָה) is the original word behind the Latin *lex* or Syriac *namûsā* ܢܡܘܨܐ, which were translations of the Greek *νόμος*.<sup>68</sup> By using the term Torah, the author expresses a wide range of meanings, from the Law of Moses to Scripture generally, even to revelations written and unwritten beyond Scripture, as well as to divine wisdom and judgment.<sup>69</sup> His concept of the Torah encompasses all aspects of Wisdom, now subordinated under the name of Moses. What our apocalyptic author is concerned with, however, is Torah piety in sapiential style, not juridical or cultic matters. His eschatological scheme hinges upon his understanding of the salvific force of the Torah.

### 3.2.2 The Meaning of Torah in 4 Ezra

In many places, Torah in 4 Ezra refers to the Law of Moses; in such a case it is always associated with Israel’s Sinaitic traditions. Here, the giving of the Torah is described as being accompanied by cosmic phenomena:

Thou didst bend down the heavens and shake the earth, and move the world, and make the depths to tremble, and trouble the universe. And thy glory passed through the four gates of fire and earthquake and wind and ice, to give the Torah to the descendants of Jacob, and thy commandment to the posterity of Israel. (3:18–9)

<sup>66</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Wisdom and Law in the Old Testament: The Ordering of Life in Israel and Early Judaism*, Oxford Bible Series, rev. ed. (Oxford: OUP, 1995), 151.

<sup>67</sup> Gerald T. Sheppard, *Wisdom as a Hermeneutical Construct: A Study in the Sapientializing of the Old Testament* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980). It can be said that the “sapientializing” process continued throughout the Second Temple period.

<sup>68</sup> See also Karina Martin Hogan, “The Meanings of *tôrâ* in 4 Ezra,” *JSJ* 38 (2007): 530–52.

<sup>69</sup> In her article, “Meaning of *tôrâ*,” 534, Hogan examines “Torah” in 4 Ezra as a more general and much wider concept. I do not necessarily agree with her on the point that Ezra and Uriel represent two different understandings of *tôrâ*, as I do not see 4 Ezra as a text aimed at presenting a theological debate; however, her analysis of the broad range of meanings of this term in 4 Ezra is illuminating.

The giving of the Mosaic Torah marked the election of Israel.<sup>70</sup> Thus the Torah is the core of Israel's being. It is by the sign of the Torah that the world is divided into two: "the one," i.e. Israel to whom God has given the Torah (5:27), and "the many," i.e. those who opposed the Torah (5:29). In this sense, the Torah is equated with the covenant (5:29). The author also claims through Ezra that the Torah "is approved by all" (5:27). This idea echoes Deuteronomy 4:6, in which Moses admonishes Israel to observe the statutes and ordinances diligently, in order to show "wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!'" There appears to be a contradiction between Gentile approval of and their opposition to the Law. Hogan argues that this indicates Ezra's belief that the nations know the Law, even though they did not receive it, and are therefore bound by it.<sup>71</sup> This is a reasonable proposition; however, the purpose of the statement of "approved by all" is to accentuate the assuredness of Israel's status as the chosen people, thus bringing into focus the absurdity of "the one" being trodden down by "the many."

The Mosaic Torah also takes the sense of the "law of life" in Ezra's farewell speech to the people:

Hear these words, O Israel. At first, our fathers dwelt as aliens in Egypt, and they were delivered from there, and received the law of life, which they did not keep, which you also have transgressed after them. Then land was given to you for a possession in the land of Zion; but you and your fathers committed iniquity and did not keep the ways which the Most High commanded you. And because he is a righteous judge, he took from you what he had given in due time. (14:28–32)

Several contact points in this speech link the Torah with the Mosaic Law. The opening of the exhortation, "Hear these words, O Israel," evokes the *shema* in Deuteronomy 6:4 as the words of Moses. Ezra then situates the giving of the Law in the out-of-Egypt experience. The reference of "the law of life" recalls the exhortation, "Choose life for yourself, so that you may live!" (Deut 30:19). Ezra's words, therefore, present a summary of the exhortation on the principle of reward and punishment in the farewell

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<sup>70</sup> For a survey in Second Temple literature on the idea of Israel's election, see Matthias Henze, "The Chosenness of Israel in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha," in *The Call of Abraham: Essays on the Election of Israel in Honor of Jon D. Levenson*, ed. Gary A. Anderson & Joel S. Kaminsky (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 170–98.

<sup>71</sup> Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict*, 537–8.

speech of Moses in Deuteronomy 30:15–20.<sup>72</sup> In other words, the Torah which Israel has transgressed – therefore suffering the consequence – is the Law of Moses.

There are also times when the author uses Torah to refer to the entire Scriptures, particularly in its written form as books. In one of Ezra's laments, he asks "why the Torah of our fathers has been made of no effect and the written covenants no longer exist" (4:23). Here, Torah appears in parallelism with "the written covenants." That they "no longer exist" must be understood both symbolically and literally, for later in the epilogue Ezra states that the "law has been burned" (14:21), and asks the Most High to send the holy spirit so that he may "write everything that has happened in the world from the beginning, the things which were written in thy law" (14:22). The scope of the Torah in these references goes beyond the Pentateuch, and Torah is emphatically understood in its written form instead of oral "instructions."

The entire known Scriptures, however, are not the limit of what 4 Ezra understands as Torah. It turns out that Ezra is given revelation about not only things contained in the twenty-four books in the Tanakh known to the public, but also seventy others that are exclusively for the eyes of the wise (14:44–6). They are dictated by Ezra to his scribal assistants when his heart becomes filled with understanding, wisdom and memory after drinking a divine cup offered to him (14:39–41). The author makes the Most High declare that in these books "are the springs of understanding, the fountains of wisdom, and the river of knowledge" (14:47). Most significantly, this concept of Torah as esoteric wisdom is apparently not in conflict with the idea of Torah being the Mosaic Pentateuch. As a matter of fact, the content of the esoteric revelation written down in the seventy books is attributed to Moses and turned into part of the Sinaitic experience together with the Pentateuch. In the words of the Most High:

"I revealed myself in a bush and spoke to Moses, when my people were in bondage in Egypt; and I sent him and led my people out of Egypt; and I led him up to Mount Sinai. And I kept him with me many days; and I told him many wondrous things, and showed him the secrets of the times and declared to him the end of the times. 'These words you shall publish openly, and these you shall keep secret.' ..." (14:3–6)

It is the same "wondrous things" revealed first to Moses that are now revealed again to Ezra. The ascription of esoteric revelations to Moses is not the creation of the author of 4 Ezra, but a reflection of the expanded Mosaic tradition during the Second Temple

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<sup>72</sup> For more on the portrayal of Ezra as a second Moses, see Chapter Four.

period, of which the book of Jubilees is a case in point.<sup>73</sup> The author's originality lies in his identifying Ezra as following in the footsteps of Moses and as the recipient of the same revelations both contained in the Tanakh and beyond.

What gives 4 Ezra its rich sapiential flavour that prompts von Rad to trace apocalyptic literature to wisdom circles<sup>74</sup> is the author's ultimate identification of Torah with Wisdom and its associated concepts. Torah is frequently referred to as "the way(s) of the Most High," equated both explicitly and implicitly with his law.<sup>75</sup> Other terms paralleled to Torah and Wisdom are "commandment(s)" (3:19, 36; 7:37, 45, 72), "judgment" (5:34, 40, 42; 7:44), "righteousness" (8:12), "covenant(s)" (4:23; 5:29; 7:24), "statutes" (7:11, 24; 9:23; 13:42), "works" (7:24), "decree" (10:16), "words" (14:6), "path" (14:22) and "knowledge" (14:47). The Torah is likened both to a seed sown into people's heart for them to bear fruit (9:31) and food and drink in the form of understanding and wisdom (8:4–6); these two related metaphors equate the Torah with understanding and wisdom. That Torah is the wisdom of God is stated most clearly when Ezra is praised for having searched out "my law", devoted his life to "wisdom" and called "understanding" his mother (13:54–5). In the epilogue, which is the climax of the apocalypse, Torah ultimately emerges as one entity encompassing understanding, wisdom, spoken prophetic words, as well as written books, when Ezra is given the holy spirit in the form of a fiery drink to dictate inspired words to the scribes to write as books (14:39–47).

The multiple concepts associated with Torah and the identification of Wisdom with Law make 4 Ezra comparable to wisdom psalms, and Ps 119 in particular. Psalm 119 is dated to the Second Temple period because of its anthological style (*anthologische Stilgattung*),<sup>76</sup> i.e. "creating Scripture through the creative use of Scripture" "by alluding to, borrowing from, rephrasing and reinterpreting segments" of other authoritative texts.<sup>77</sup> The many striking similarities between 4 Ezra and Psalm 119 indicate that the former most likely depended on the latter for inspiration. 4 Ezra is

<sup>73</sup> This point will be revisited in the analysis of 2 Bar in Chapter Eight.

<sup>74</sup> von Rad, *Theologie*, 2:315–30.

<sup>75</sup> E.g. 4:2, 11; 5:24; 7:79, 88–9, 129; 8:56; 9:9; 12:4; 13:54; 14:31.

<sup>76</sup> Alfons Deissler's term. See his *Psalm 119 (118) und seine Theologie*, Münchner Theologische Studien 1/11 (Munich: Karl Zink, 1955), 268, 277. Also see Jon D. Levenson, "The Sources of Torah: Psalm 119 and the Modes of Revelation in Second Temple Judaism," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Patrick D. Miller, Jr., Paul D. Hanson and S. Dean McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 559–574 (here 566).

<sup>77</sup> Philippus J. Botha, "Interpreting 'Torah' in Psalm 1 in the Light of Psalm 119," *HTS Theological Studies* 68 (2012), art. #1274, 7 pages (here 1), <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v68i1.1274>.

comparable to Psalm 119 in at least two aspects. Firstly, both identify Wisdom with the Torah and use strikingly similar terms to express what they think Torah means. Eight such terms are found in Psalm 119 that are closely associated with wisdom in the book of Proverbs: “statute” (חֻק), “precept” (פְּקוּדָה),<sup>78</sup> “commandment” (מִצְוָה), “testimony” (עֵדוּת), “instruction” or “law” (תּוֹרָה), “word”, (דְּבַר), “utterance” (אִמְרָה) and “judgment” (מִשְׁפָּט). Botha puts the first five in the domain of “instruction,” aspects of the Torah that are to be observed and meditated upon, whereas the last three belong to the domain of “word,” aspects of the Torah to serve as promises and hope for redemption.<sup>79</sup> To these eight Deissler adds two more: “way” (דֶּרֶךְ) and “path” (אֶרֶץ).<sup>80</sup> Strict one-to-one comparison of these concepts with those cited in 4 Ezra is not possible, as the available versions of the apocalypse were twice translated from its original language; but the high degree of correspondence is hard to miss. Both regard Torah as a “comprehensive arch-lexeme”<sup>81</sup> which includes regulatory aspects that must be observed and used as a guide in life, but which reaches beyond to encompass God’s will and his past and future dealings with Israel.<sup>82</sup> 4 Ezra also makes explicit claims that the Law reveals knowledge about the things which have been done and will be done by God (14:21). Torah as God’s will also includes what we would call the natural law. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss the possible influence of Hellenistic philosophy on Second Temple Jewish thoughts in this respect;<sup>83</sup> suffice to say that both authors regard nature and creation as manifestation of the divine will and evidence that God is present and in control. Thus the psalmist declares that “forever your word (דְּבַר) is fixed in heaven” and “according to your judgments/ordinances (לְמִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ)” the earth stands firm (Ps 119:89–90). Likewise, the natural world in 4 Ezra

<sup>78</sup> Or פְּקוּדִים; both are reconstructed forms, as the word appears in the HB only in its plural construct form, פְּקוּדֵי.

<sup>79</sup> Botha, “Interpreting,” 7; also his “The Measurement of Meaning: An Exercise in Field Semantics,” *Journal for Semitics* 1 (1989): 3–22.

<sup>80</sup> Deissler, *Psalm 119*, 75–86.

<sup>81</sup> Botha, “Interpreting,” 7.

<sup>82</sup> Botha, “Interpreting,” 7.

<sup>83</sup> For a summary of discussion and further bibliography, see Hogan, “Meanings of *tôrâ*,” 542–3, n 41. On the other hand, see the most insightful analysis of Hindy Najman on Philo’s interpretation of the Mosaic Torah in the Hellenistic philosophical framework of natural law, in “Chapter Three: Copying Nature, Copying Moses,” of her *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism*, JSJSup 77 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 70–107.

is drawn on to demonstrate the fixed order of creation and God's unfailing control of the *eschaton*,<sup>84</sup> thus the natural world is worthy of awe and admiration (6:38–54).<sup>85</sup>

The second parallel that can be drawn between 4 Ezra and Psalm 119 is the portrayal of their respective protagonist. The speaker of Psalm 119 takes “delight” (חפץ or שעשע)<sup>86</sup> in the Torah and have “love” (אהב)<sup>87</sup> for wisdom. He seeks (דרש) understanding,<sup>88</sup> longs for (יאב)<sup>89</sup> and cries out<sup>90</sup> for revelation, pleading with God to “teach me your statutes.”<sup>91</sup> Levenson wonderfully summarises Psalm 119 as “a prayer for illumination and revelation”, in which the psalmist's constant exclamations are heard:

“Teach me!” “Reveal to me!” “Make me understand!” “Grace me with your Torah!”  
“Give me wisdom!”<sup>92</sup>

The same portrayal matches Ezra's characterization. He is depicted as one who is determined to comprehend (3:31), strives to understand (4:12; 5:34; 8:4) and searches out the way of the Most High (12:4). He beseeches (4:22; 5:56; 12:6; 13:13), inquires (4:23), prays while fasting and mourning<sup>93</sup> in order to know God's will.<sup>94</sup> Both the psalmist and Ezra are grieved by the transgressors of the Torah, for in their minds the wicked who do not seek God's statutes will not have salvation.<sup>95</sup> These distinctive parallels are indicators of the psalm's likely influence on 4 Ezra.

Not only do these parallels help illumine the meaning of Torah in 4 Ezra, the differences also bring further clarification. Psalm 119, like 4 Ezra, shares a strong concern for commandments with Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic History. Compare, for example, the paraenetic texts of Deuteronomy 4:1–6 on the importance of keeping and doing the commandments with Psalm 119's frequent use of לשמר, “to

<sup>84</sup> Nature is used as a didactic device by Uriel to teach Ezra God's wisdom; e.g. the forest and the sea (4:13–8), the furnace and the clouds (4:48–9), the sea and the city (7:3–9), base matter and precious metal and stones (7:52–6; 8:2). Michael Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 102. See the next note.

<sup>85</sup> See Michael Stone's commentary, *Fourth Ezra*, 102, for his discussion on the parabolic and hortatory use of the natural order in 4 Ezra. Also *idem*, “The Parabolic Use of the Natural Order in Judaism of the Second Temple Age,” in *Selected Studies*, 457–67; particularly 463–6 on 4 Ezra.

<sup>86</sup> vv 16, 24, 35, 47, 70, 77, 92, 143, 174.

<sup>87</sup> vv 47, 48, 97, 113, 127, 132, 140, 163, 165, 167.

<sup>88</sup> vv 27, 45, 73, 94, 99, 100, 124, 125, 130, 144, 169.

<sup>89</sup> vv 131, 174.

<sup>90</sup> vv 145, 146, 147, 169.

<sup>91</sup> vv 12, 26, 33, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 133.

<sup>92</sup> Levenson, “Sources of Torah,” 564.

<sup>93</sup> E.g. 4:51; 5:20; 6:35; 8:9; 9:27; 12:7–9.

<sup>94</sup> More detailed discussion on Ezra's characterization is in Chapter Four.

<sup>95</sup> See Ps 119:155, 158; cf. 4 Ezra Episode 3.

keep,” and לעשות, “to do”;<sup>96</sup> or the teaching in Deuteronomy 6:4–9 on the importance of remembering the commandments with Psalm 119’s repeated use of שִׁיחַ, “meditate,” and לא שכח, “not forget.”<sup>97</sup> The psalm’s lexical borrowings from Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic Jeremiah have been convincingly demonstrated.<sup>98</sup> Despite this affinity to Deuteronomy, Psalm 119 conspicuously lacks any mention of three important Deuteronomic elements: the covenant, Moses as the mediator of revelation, and Torah as books.<sup>99</sup> The absence of these elements has led Levenson to conclude that Psalm 119 is closer to Proverbs in its understanding of wisdom and Torah than to Deuteronomy.<sup>100</sup> By its similarity to Psalm 119, 4 Ezra’s understanding of Torah also demonstrates a strong sapiential inclination, reflected foremost in its lack of concrete and specific discussion of the commandments, i.e. halakhic rules. However, as is shown above, 4 Ezra makes explicit connections between Torah and Israel’s covenantal relationship with God.<sup>101</sup> Although Torah is polysemic and the Pentateuch is only one of many meanings, it upholds the priority of Sinai by presenting Ezra’s reception of the Torah as an encore of the revelations received by Moses, both the common and the secret. Perhaps this can also be understood as the author’s strategy to get around the established tradition of the finality of Mosaic revelation.<sup>102</sup> He was clearly conscious about maintaining the primacy of Sinai, even though he made Ezra receive the Torah directly from the Most High. Finally, as also shown above, Torah in 4 Ezra is deliberately represented as books; its recipient indeed sees apocalyptic

<sup>96</sup> vv. 4, 5, 9, 57, 60, 106 for “keeping” and 112, 121, 126 for “doing.”

<sup>97</sup> vv. 15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 97, 99, 148 for “meditate” and 16, 61, 83, 93, 109, 141, 153, 176 for “not forget.”

<sup>98</sup> Deissler, *Psalm 119*, 270–71; Botha, “Interpreting,” 5; Levenson, “Sources of Torah,” 563–4. Other biblical texts that influenced Ps 119 are thought to be Isaiah 64, Ezekiel, Proverbs 1–9, Job, Lamentations and Pss 19, 25, 33, 37, 67, 134, 139, 147.

<sup>99</sup> As Levenson (“Sources of Torah,” 564–6) convincingly argues, the absence of these elements could not have been accidental, given the acrostic style of the psalm, in which each of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet is given one stanza of eight bicola for a total of 176 verses; the psalmist could have easily included “covenant” ברית under the letter *bêt*, “written” כתוב under *kaf*, or “book” ספר or “Sinai” סיני under *samekh*.

<sup>100</sup> Levenson, “Sources of Torah,” 567.

<sup>101</sup> The lack of covenant theology and salvation history in the concept of Torah in Ps 119 is also noted by Hogan (“Meanings of *tôrâ*,” 544–5) as an analogy to Uriel’s understanding of the term in the dialogues (6:35–9:25). Her purpose is to demonstrate how Ezra and Uriel represent two different schools of sapiential thoughts that part ways on the point of Israel’s covenant traditions. However, there does not appear to be a clear-cut line separating Uriel’s use of the term Torah from Ezra’s even within the dialogues. To ascertain the author’s understanding of Torah, the book must be considered as a whole. Clearly for the author, that Torah is both universal wisdom and Israel’s covenant is not an oxymoron.

<sup>102</sup> Deut 4:2; 13:1; 34:10. See Levenson, “Sources of Torah,” 560.

visions and speaks prophetic words,<sup>103</sup> but the title attributed to him is “the Scribe of the knowledge of the Most High” (14:50). 4 Ezra’s understanding of Torah as both Wisdom and Scripture testifies to the growing influence of a book religion in the Second Temple period.

### *3.2.3 The Function of Torah in 4 Ezra*

What, then, is the function of Torah in the eschatological scheme of 4 Ezra? In a nutshell, Torah obedience is a matter of life and death; only through faith in God’s Torah will Israel have life, both as a nation and for individual souls, in the World/Age to Come.

The efficacy of Wisdom/Torah expressed as life-giving is found in both the sapiential strand and the Mosaic strand of biblical traditions. In the Wisdom tradition, life implies long lifespan, possession of the land, worldly prosperity, offspring and respected memory for individuals.<sup>104</sup> In the Mosaic tradition, the same promise of prosperity in the land is given to Israel as a collective identity.<sup>105</sup> The different emphases on the individual and the community in these two strands are well noted and contrasted;<sup>106</sup> however, one should avoid polarizing the two emphases, as individual Israelite identity and community identity cannot always be clearly demarcated. In the legal text of Leviticus 18:5, for example, the commandments are given to Israel as a nation through Moses, yet the promised reward for keeping them is addressed to the individual, that “if a man does, he shall live in them.”<sup>107</sup> The different stresses can even be attributed to the different illocutionary intentions between the proverbial wisdom genre and the testament genre: one as didactic discourse between a wise man and his son, and the other as Moses’s valedictory address to Israel as a whole. Nevertheless, the identification of Law with Wisdom in 4 Ezra combines the two dimensions of its eschatological scheme—the individual and collective—into one unity. The emphasis on the future age of immortality in the author’s eschatology also

<sup>103</sup> The Torah is dictated by Ezra as words through divine inspiration symbolized by the cup (14:39–41). Ezra is also called the last of all the prophets (12:42).

<sup>104</sup> E.g. Prov 3:2, 16, 18, 22; 4:4, 10, 13, 22; 6:23; 7:1; 8:35–36; 9:7, 11, 23; 10:11, 17, 27; 11:30; 13:12, 14, 22; 14:27; 15:4, 24; 16:22; 17:6; 19:16; 20:7; 22:4; Ps 37:9, 11, 22, 34; Ps 91:16; Ps 112:2–3; Ps 128:2–6 etc.

<sup>105</sup> E.g. Lev 26:3–4; Deut 30:15–20, 32:46–7; Josh 1:1–7.

<sup>106</sup> See, e.g. Shannon Burkes, “‘Life’ Redefined,” 55–6.

<sup>107</sup> יַעֲשֶׂה אֶתֶּם הָאָדָם וְהִי



means that his concept of “life” is modified from that of the biblical traditions before him.

For 4 Ezra, the purpose of the Law is precisely the same as stated in the scriptures, that a man/men may live (8:6; 14:22; cf. Lev 18:5), and that the righteous shall inherit the promises and the ungodly will perish (7:17, 45, 72; 8:56). However, “life” in 4 Ezra is no longer defined as earthly blessings; covenantal promise in 4 Ezra is stripped of its hope for longevity, settlement in the land, abundant offspring and material success. As the author’s eschatological response has made not the present world but the World/Age to Come Israel’s inheritance, “life” is correspondingly orientated towards the future rather than the present age.<sup>108</sup> According to the eschatological timetable, Torah observance determines first the postmortem welfare of the soul at the interim stage while waiting for the Last Judgment. The righteous souls will be gathered into their treasuries and guarded by angels in profound peace and joy, whereas the ungodly souls suffer shame and torment (7:78–101; 9:9–12). Subsequently, “life” undergoes a transfiguration in the World/Age to Come after the Last Judgement. While the law-abiding souls will shine more than the stars, implying their angelic status, those who committed iniquity will suffer eternal destruction (7:125–7).

Admittedly, incorruptible life as the reward for Torah obedience in 4 Ezra appears to be on an individual basis, but it is not separated from the Torah’s covenantal background. While explaining the ways of the righteous and wicked souls after death, Uriel quotes the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 30:15–20, “Choose for yourself, that you may live”, calling to mind Israel’s covenant based on the Torah (4 Ezra 7:129). It has been noted that here the author of 4 Ezra has deliberately replaced the Deuteronomic concept of “life” as national survival with that of “personal immortality,” i.e. individual over corporate conceptualization.<sup>109</sup> This judgement, however, must be balanced with the fact that the same Deuteronomic reference to life is also made in a community context, when Ezra admonishes the people to keep “the law of life” (14:28–32):

If you ... will rule over your minds and discipline your hearts, you shall be kept alive, and after death you shall obtain mercy. (14:34)

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<sup>108</sup> The same point is made by Burkes, “‘Life’ Redefined,” and Michel Dejadins, “Law in 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra,” *SR* 14 (1985): 25–37.

<sup>109</sup> Burkes, “‘Life’ Redefined,” 58–60; Hogan, “Meanings of *tôrâ*,” 540.

The redefined “life” with an emphasis on mercy after death (instead of the Deuteronomic promise of inheriting the land) is offered to both individuals and the community as a whole.

In addition, the national dimension of the salvific role of the Law is mainly played out in the Messianic era as part of the eschatological scheme. In both of Ezra’s apocalyptic visions, what the Messiah uses to destroy Israel’s enemies is not any weapon, but “words” in the symbolic sense.<sup>110</sup> In the vision of the Man from the Sea, it is explicitly stated that the Messiah will destroy the ungodly nations “without effort by the law” symbolized by the fire from his mouth (13:38). The Law in this case preserves the lives of the righteous even in this present world through the deliverance of the remnant of God’s people in the holy land by the Messiah (12:34; 13:12, 48). The rather detailed mention of the returned nine and a half tribes is especially poignant; though they were exiled to a faraway land, through keeping the statutes of the Most High their lives are preserved, and they are brought back to enjoy the blessings of the Messianic age (13:40–7).

### *3.3 Summary*

4 Ezra presents an eschatological solution to Israel’s covenantal crisis. The answer to a world in peril and catastrophic national defeat is the hope for a new world/age that overcomes all the frailties of the present one and ends its sorrow and afflictions. This new reality is the world that Israel is destined to inherit. Eschatological faith is not enough though, due to the presence of the evil heart. Torah obedience, therefore, is proposed as the solution to overcome that, and to be the key to the salvation of Israel, both as a collective entity in the eschatological struggles and for individuals to have life after the Last Judgment. The Torah connects the two dimensions of the eschatology together in that individuals must keep the commandments given by Moses and must keep faith in the revelations about the World to Come, whereas Israel as a nation depends on the power of Torah as God’s Wisdom, i.e. his will, design and judgment, to overcome her enemies. The book’s eschatological scheme including its different dimensions as well as the crucial role Torah plays in the scheme also means that it is necessary for the author to have a broad range of meanings for the term

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<sup>110</sup> Cf. the image of the sword from the mouth of the Messiah that destroys the enemy in Rev 1:16; 2:16; 19:15; 19:21; and the metaphor that “the word of God is ... sharper than any two-edged sword” in Heb 4:12.

Torah: the Pentateuch, Scripture generally, divine revelations written and unwritten outside Scripture, and ultimately, the Wisdom of God. This much wider interpretation of Torah in 4 Ezra is rather different from the understanding of Torah in 2 Baruch, where it is defined more narrowly as the Mosaic Torah, and where the theme of Torah as life and light is also systematically elaborated, following more closely the Deuteronomic tradition.<sup>111</sup> What is absent in 4 Ezra's discussion of Torah is prescriptive rulings. As a response to the catastrophic destruction of the Temple, 4 Ezra offered a hope—the World/Age to Come as Israel's inheritance, and a warning—the importance of Torah obedience to inherit it. Torah obedience, however, seems to be understood more in terms of Torah piety in the tradition of wisdom, rather than pragmatic agenda and concrete and specific rules.

We have also seen that, while examining the themes and contents of the book, the question about its consistency and coherence constantly arises. The next chapter offers a perspective on the unity of 4 Ezra through a consideration of authorial intention, as it is revealed in the last episode of the apocalypse.

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<sup>111</sup> See Chapter Seven.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE UNITY AND COHERENCE OF 4 EZRA AND ITS AUTHORIAL INTENTION<sup>1</sup>

#### *4.1 The Perceived Problem of “Disunity” or “Inconsistency” and the Inadequacy of Previous Solutions*

The differences in scholarly interpretations of the message and intention of 4 Ezra largely derive from the difficulty to reconcile the apparent “disunity” in content and outlook that is posed between the dialogues and the visions.<sup>2</sup> An “inconsistency” is also perceived in the personality of Ezra. While in the first three episodes he appears to be filled with despair and skepticism, in the second part of the book he is much more optimistic and cooperative; yet nowhere in the dialogues does there seem to be a satisfactory solution to his dilemma. Another recurring question of debate is where to locate the voice of the author; is it to be placed in Ezra the pseudonymous hero or in the angel Uriel? Finally, what is the purpose and function of Episode 7, the Epilogue?

One earlier approach to reconcile the problem of disunity was the source critical solution represented by Kabisch<sup>3</sup> and Box.<sup>4</sup> Source criticism explains the disparity as the result of putting together by a final redactor of various sources of very different outlooks, namely the Salatiel Apocalypse, and Ezra Apocalypse, the Eagle Vision and the Son of Man Vision. This explanation has been abandoned, as it does not help us understand the overall meaning of the book. It also ignores the careful structure of the book that betrays evidence for a skillful author writing with a clear purpose in mind.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter makes up a major part of my paper, “The Unity and Coherence of 4 Ezra: Crisis, Response, and Authorial Intention,” *JSJ* 47 (2016): 212–35.

<sup>2</sup> For a good overview of the issues concerned in 4 Ezra studies see Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 11–36; Longenecker, *2 Esdras* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 20–32; and Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict*, 1–40.

<sup>3</sup> Kabisch, *Das vierte Buch Esra*.

<sup>4</sup> Box, *The Ezra-Apocalypse*.

<sup>5</sup> This, of course, is not to deny that the author used various traditions available to him, both written and oral. See Matthias Henze, “4 Ezra and 2 Baruch: Literary Composition and Oral Performance.” The intention of Henze’s article is to offer an alternative explanation for the parallels between 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch without resorting to the presumption of textual dependence between the two in either direction. Rejecting the “source-critical and single-author/redactor model” (183), he sees the texts as the productions of a dynamic process of diverse literary activities involving both written and oral modes of composition that were closely interrelated. The common elements of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch come from an early stage when both were under construction, in a common, “larger, intellectual environment” (185). While I think Henze raises an important point on the complex process of textuality and orality involved in the evolvment of the materials found in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch before the production of the works, the view that a single author is behind the final production of 4 Ezra should not be easily rejected, particularly given the accepted view that the final production of the work occurred between 70 and 100

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The structure of the seven episodes, for example, is not drawn arbitrarily, but rather seems to be clearly designed by the author with a scheme of patterns, each episode signposted with a certain number of days of fasting or a special diet, or a change of Ezra's location and bodily position.<sup>6</sup>

A very influential approach, first advocated by Brandenburger<sup>7</sup> and Harnisch<sup>8</sup>, sees the conflicting ideas, particularly the argument between Ezra and the angel Uriel, as depicting a contemporary debate which existed externally in Jewish circles. Uriel represents the true voice of the author, according to this perspective, repudiating the heretical or mistaken views represented by Ezra. The dialogues are thus read as a polemic over theological issues. This approach is attractive in that it captures the argumentative spirit and theological ideas of the dialogues; but it seems to intensify, rather than resolve, the issue of disunity, raising other interpretational difficulties. As Hayman<sup>9</sup> points out, Ezra's arguments can in no way be described as heretical in contemporary Jewish thoughts, and Ezra's position is not refuted by Uriel. Most importantly, it does not mesh well with the choice of Ezra both as a righteous hero, who represents his community in his quest for wisdom, and as an authoritative figure and restorer of the Law. The approach also tends to be selective in its reading, mining the dialogues exclusively for specific theological themes that are often inspired by theological issues of New Testament scholarship, at the expense of interpreting the author's overarching intention. As a result, the significance and the function of both the apocalyptic visions and the Epilogue are very often overlooked or inadequately explained.

An example of the shortcoming of this approach can be seen in Choi's examination of the theological thrust of 4 Ezra as an intra-Jewish dialogue and in his conclusion that the author's most striking contribution to Judaism is that "he persuaded the Jewish thinkers to abandon the traditional covenantal paradigms of universalism and particularism." Thus the authorial voice lies with Uriel alone.<sup>10</sup> Yet the chapters after 9:25 are left unexamined; no attempt is made to see whether the conclusion

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CE, as an almost immediate response to the disaster of the destruction of the Temple. The work is best to be seen as the product of a skillful author who appropriated both written and oral traditions of his time - the "larger, intellectual environment," to write a coherent text to serve a purpose.

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed analysis see Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 28–30.

<sup>7</sup> Brandenburger, *Die Verborgenheit Gottes im Weltgeschehen* (1981). His earlier work, *Adam und Christus* (1962) influenced Harnisch.

<sup>8</sup> Harnisch, *Verhängnis und Verheißung*.

<sup>9</sup> A. P. Hayman, "The Problem of Pseudonymity in the Ezra Apocalypse," *JSJ* 6 (1975): 47–56.

<sup>10</sup> P. Richard Choi, "The Intra-Jewish Dialogue in 4 Ezra 3:1–9:25," 253.

reached is backed up by the apocalyptic visions that make up half of the book. No consideration is given to the choice of Ezra as a pseudonym and the purpose of the Epilogue. In other words, the theological inquiry is made without firstly looking into the important question of the form and function of the work as a whole.

Karina Martin Hogan's *Theologies in Conflict in 4 Ezra*, however, attempts to remedy the flaws of the external-debate approach by extending the debate to cover the apocalyptic visions. Hogan interprets the dialogues between Ezra and Uriel as an external debate between the conflicting theologies of covenantal wisdom on the one hand and eschatological wisdom on the other. As both are found insufficient to solve the problem, the author of 4 Ezra introduces a third theology, represented by the apocalyptic visions, as the solution. Hogan's interpretation raises interesting questions on the interplay between the Law, wisdom and apocalypticism. It also highlights the important point that the roles and perspectives of author and characters should not be confused. However, calling the visions a third theology different from the position of Uriel in the dialogues is less than convincing. It poses a difficulty as to why divine revelation through Uriel in the dialogues would be considered inadequate by the author. The message in the visions seems to be the same message, albeit presented in a different form, to complement Uriel's position in earlier dialogues. Clearly, the author intends to see the visions as an extension of Uriel's words in the dialogues, for Uriel functions as the sole interpreter of the visions.<sup>11</sup>

As an alternative way to explain the major shift between the two halves of the book, the psychological approach first suggested by Gunkel sees the conflict as a reflection of the internal struggle of Ezra and his split personality.<sup>12</sup> It is also emphasised by Michael Stone that 4 Ezra is not a theological treatise, and as such its consistency should not be judged according to the theological propositions contained in it.<sup>13</sup> The key to coherence, according to Stone, lies in the author's religious experience through the character Ezra. Ezra and Uriel represent the two aspects of the author's own internal debate, while episode four reflects a religious transformation,

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<sup>11</sup> For a detailed critique of Hogan's argument, see Lorenzo DiTommaso, "Who is the 'I' of 4 Ezra?" in Henze and Boccaccini, *Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch*, 119–33. DiTommaso raises questions about Hogan's choice of categories in differentiating the three theologies she identifies as covenantal wisdom, eschatological wisdom and apocalypticism, categories such as the antithesis of national eschatology vs. personal eschatology, apocalyptic determinism vs. free will, and apocalyptic irrationality vs. wisdom rationality.

<sup>12</sup> Gunkel, "Das vierte Buch Esra."

<sup>13</sup> "On Reading an Apocalypse," 66, 72.

which is essential to explain the inconclusiveness of the dialogues, and serves as a literary transition between the two major parts.<sup>14</sup> The psychological approach is helpful in explaining the change in Ezra's outlook and resolving the tension between the visions with the dialogues, but it tends to blur the important distinction between author and character. The author's intention certainly goes beyond merely describing his anguish, pain and religious experience; besides, the significance of the Epilogue is not satisfactorily explained. It is probably not surprising, therefore, that Gunkel regards the seventh episode merely as an aesthetically pleasing ending of no particular significance,<sup>15</sup> whereas Stone sees its usefulness mainly in terms of the book's social function.<sup>16</sup>

On the question of the authorial voice, on the other hand, Hindy Najman<sup>17</sup> differs from both the theological-debate approach and the psychological approach. She argues that the author's pseudepigraphic strategy is precisely that of deliberate self-effacement; therefore, the authorial voice is found neither with Uriel the angel (external-debate model), nor with Ezra (Stone), nor with both (Gunkel).<sup>18</sup> She seems to imply that the authorial voice is external to and above his literary work. Najman also puts an emphasis on the transformative functions of the dialogues and visions as the key to textual unity, or in her own words, "the point is to form a subject capable of receiving the renewed Torah."<sup>19</sup> While I am in total agreement with this emphasis, I also feel there is a need to demonstrate how this transformation of character is achieved, particularly in the dialogues.

It is important to point out that both the internal-conflict and external-debate models have contributed much to our understanding of 4 Ezra. Yet I believe the author of 4 Ezra is not merely depicting a heated theological debate or presenting his musings on fine philosophical points such as the nature of human sin, the meaning of suffering or the universal vs. Judeo-centric nature of soteriology (*pace* the external-debate approach); and his purpose is certainly not limited to providing comfort to either himself or his readers through undergoing a "conversion" such as that of Ezra (*pace* the psychological approach). The author of 4 Ezra has a specific crisis to deal with,

<sup>14</sup> "On Reading an Apocalypse," 73–75. This experience is described by Stone as "the Odyssey of Ezra's soul" (*Fourth Ezra*, 32).

<sup>15</sup> "Das vierte Buch Esra," 348. See also Earl Breech, "These Fragments," 274.

<sup>16</sup> "On Reading an Apocalypse," 75–77.

<sup>17</sup> *Losing the Temple*

<sup>18</sup> *Losing the Temple*, 66 and 75.

<sup>19</sup> *Losing the Temple*, 75.



namely the covenant between Israel and her God, now thrown into uncertainty due to the destruction of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. He has an apocalyptic solution too, but in no way does it mean to abandon the Deuteronomic tradition enshrined in the name of Moses, although some modification and restructuring of that tradition is needed. It is precisely for this purpose that the author chooses Ezra to be the “hero” of the book. The Epilogue, therefore, is a crucial episode binding the whole text together. This perspective, with a sharper focus on authorial intention, will help us see the work not as parts in disunity, but as a coherent whole.

#### *4.2 Authorial Intention as Revealed in the Final Episode*

If correctly understood, the Epilogue is not merely an after-thought or a random piece of Ezra tradition attached as a tail, but the climax and the fulfillment of the entire book. The understanding of authorial intention here turns on the author’s pseudepigraphic use of the name Ezra. The depiction of Ezra restoring the Law and the title given to Ezra, “the scribe of the knowledge of the Most High” (14:50), indicate that the biblical Ezra is intended by the author, despite the fact that he seems to have incorrectly placed his character in the exilic period.<sup>20</sup>

The rationale behind the choice of Ezra is no doubt his portrayal in the Bible as a Lawgiver and the second Moses. He is indeed modeled as a second Moses in the last vision. Not only does the author describe God’s calling him out of a bush, “Ezra, Ezra,” and his answering with “here I am, Lord” (14:1–2), which alludes to the way Moses was called (Exod 3:4), but the parallel is even made explicit by God himself recalling his summons of Moses in the same manner (14:3). It is generally recognized that the forty-day fast in the previous episodes and another forty-day fast in the last episode during which Ezra rewrote the Torah (14:23; 42–44) are an intentional reference to the forty-day period in which Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai (Exod 34:28).<sup>21</sup> Ezra, therefore, is depicted as the new prophet like Moses

<sup>20</sup> See Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 37–38, as he points out the title given in 4 Ezra 14:50 is an adaptation from Ezra 7:21, “the scribe of the Law of the God of Heaven” (442).

<sup>21</sup> See Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 35, 374, 431. Michael P. Knowles (“Moses, the Law and the Unity of 4 Ezra,” *NovT* 31 [1989]: 257–74; here 261–65) associates the first forty-day fast in the first six episodes with the number of days of intercession Moses made on behalf of the people after the Golden Calf episode (Deut 10:1–5; 10). By this association, Knowles establishes a stronger theme of sin, repentance, renewal and restoration, leading to the second giving of the Law. Hogan, on the other hand, points out that Ezra’s primary activity over the first forty-day fast is the reception of revelation, rather than intercession for his people. Thus it should be associated with the forty-day period during which Moses received God’s instructions on the mountain (Exod 24:18; cf. 34:28), to which the author alludes in 4 Ezra 14:4. See Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict*, 206, n 4.

who God promised in Deuteronomy 18:18, “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.” The words of God, the Torah, that were put in Ezra’s mouth are represented as “a full cup,” “full of something like water, but its colour was like fire” (14:39). Here “fire” recalls the “stream of fire” sent forth from the mouth of the Man from the Sea in the vision of the sixth episode (13:10), which is later interpreted by the angel as “the Law” used by the Messiah to destroy the ungodly nations (13:38); except that here, instead of being a destructive weapon, the Law also resembles water, nourishing and life-giving, a symbol of rebirth and regeneration.<sup>22</sup> After drinking this cup, Ezra’s heart “poured forth understanding, and wisdom increased” in his breast, and his spirit “retained its memory” (14:40). It is by divine inspiration that Ezra dictated ninety-four books to the five chosen scribes, who were also inspired, as they were writing in characters they did not know (14:42).<sup>23</sup> What is significant is that the ninety-four books from the mouth of Ezra included not only the twenty-four to be published for both “the worthy” and the “unworthy”—commonly recognized as referring to the number of books in the Hebrew Scripture<sup>24</sup>—but also seventy others<sup>25</sup> that were to be given to the wise (14:45–6). The author makes God declare that in the seventy books “are the springs of understanding, the fountains of wisdom, and the river of knowledge” (14:47). The seventy books are said to reveal to the wise the mystery of God, but to us they reveal the author’s intention.

Michael Stone observes with great insight that pseudepigraphy provides Judaism with an alternative channel to handle the confrontation of different traditions.<sup>26</sup> Traditions ascribed to figures of great antiquity, such as Enoch, contrast and compete with the legal-exegetical traditions transmitted in the name of Moses. They claim at least equal—if not higher—authority through the appeal to their greater antiquity and

<sup>22</sup> Similarly Ezekiel was given a scroll to eat before his prophesizing (Ezek 2:8–3:3). The images are different, but both represent the words of God.

<sup>23</sup> Instead of the cryptographic writing theory of Stephen Pfann (“The Use of Cryptographic and Esoteric Scripts in Second Temple Judaism and the Surrounding Cultures,” in Boccaccini and Zurawski, *Interpreting 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch*, 173–96), it is more likely that this is an allusion to the tradition that Ezra gave the Torah to Israel “in the square script and the Aramaic tongue,” cited in t. Sanh. 4:7 and b. Sanh. 21.b. See Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 411, as well as Longenecker, *2 Esdras*, 90.

<sup>24</sup> Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 441. Here the number may be identified with the twenty-two books of scriptures mentioned by Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.8. Najman also attaches a symbolic significance to the number twenty-two: it is the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet, “the minimal number of units with which every meaningful utterance may be formed” (*Losing the Temple*, 152).

<sup>25</sup> The number seventy is better interpreted as a symbol of completeness, totality and the whole. This interpretation is also proposed by Hogan (“The Meanings of *tôrâ*,” n 54, 549–50) and Najman (*Losing the Temple*, 152).

<sup>26</sup> *Fourth Ezra*, 38.

reliability, presented as traditions much older and thus more prestigious.<sup>27</sup> But 4 Ezra also stands out from other pseudepigrapha in that it asserts its authority and worth not by challenging the Mosaic tradition but by grafting itself onto that tradition, thus achieving two objectives. The source of its authority is derived from Moses, yet it greatly elevates the status of Ezra at the same time; indeed, according to the author, the Mosaic tradition was known only because of Ezra and through Ezra!

On the one hand, the author seeks to confirm and emphasize the power and efficacy of the Mosaic Torah. In the last episode, it is Ezra who pleads with God to be given the holy spirit in order to write down the Torah previously revealed to Moses which had been burned, presumably during the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (14:21).<sup>28</sup> The importance of Torah obedience is also the main thrust of Ezra's instruction to the people before he went into the last forty-day fast (14:28–35). The speech is a brief account of the salvation history from the traditional Deuteronomic perspective, presented in three stages of past, present and future. Torah obedience is placed at the core of each stage. In the past, the Law was received when the people were taken out of Egypt; it was because of transgression of the Law that the land was taken away from Israel (14:29–32). For the present, in order to be kept alive and obtain mercy after death, it is important to “rule over your minds and discipline your hearts” (14:34). For the future, each person's deeds in Torah obedience are the basis for judgment (14:35). Therefore, calling on people to remain faithful to Israel's covenant tradition is a key message of 4 Ezra, and part of the author's response to the national crisis.

On the other hand, while upholding the authority of the Mosaic tradition, its content is also significantly modified when Ezra's apocalyptic revelations are inserted into the Pentateuch tradition. Ezra only asked to write down the Torah that was lost, but the end result was a much larger corpus containing seventy books of esoteric content. Most importantly, these seventy books are said also to have been given to

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<sup>27</sup> Stone, *ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> The scriptural basis for this claim seems to be Lam 2:9: “Torah is no more” – וְיֵצֵא תוֹרָה (translated as “guidance is no more” in NRSV). Although this detail mentioning that the Law was burned can be viewed as a literary device in order to enable Ezra to rewrite the Law, it may have some historical basis. David Carr suggests that the scrolls containing preexilic literature were largely destroyed as Jerusalem fell, and the later Scripture was mainly the works of the scribes of the exile from “memorized building blocks” of the old tradition. According to Carr, it was during the exilic time when the Mosaic Torah was written down with radical reformulations. See his *Writing on the Tablets of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 167–68.

#### CHAPTER FOUR

Moses and written down, as part of the Sinai tradition.<sup>29</sup> They contain God's revelation to Moses on Mount Sinai regarding "many wondrous things," "the secrets of the times" and "the end of the times" (14:5), the same contents now revealed again to Ezra. The author emphasizes their significance again by making the Most High declare that "in them are the springs of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the river of knowledge" (14:47). Here lies the author's solution to the crisis: whereas the past is a source of moral teaching, to remain faithful to the Law is the way of life for the present, wisdom about the end times and understanding of God's plan for Israel and for the world are the key to not losing hope in the face of adversity.

The Law rewritten by Ezra has a further symbolic significance of covenant renewal; it holds the key to the central concern of 4 Ezra. The recovery of the Holy Writ is rightly treated as a focus (or one of the four elements made up of the "constellation," in her own term) in Hindy Najman's recent study of 4 Ezra.<sup>30</sup> In her treatment of the Epilogue the burning of Scripture reported by Ezra is given extra symbolic meaning. Despite the high level of textualization in the Second Temple period, Najman argues, after the destruction of the Temple the Scriptures must have seemed inaccessible since their meaningfulness was tied to the continuation of Israel's covenant with the divine, exemplified by God's presence in the Temple.<sup>31</sup> The rewriting of Torah is a symbolic act of recovering the covenant within the new eschatological framework proposed by the author, which he aims to establish as the continuation of Israel's previous traditions. This continuity with the old centres not only upon Mosaic Torah but also the choice of Ezra as the protagonist, as I will further argue below. Seen from this perspective, Episode 7 is not merely the Epilogue, but the climax of the book.

A potential question to arise at this point is this: if revelation about the end of times and God's future plan is the author's solution at the time of crisis, why, then, are the seventy books said to be kept only for the eyes of the wise (14:6, 46), and why does Ezra not mention anything about his visions in his instruction to the people

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<sup>29</sup> This is done through the parallel the author draws between Moses and Ezra. God reveals "many wondrous things," "the secrets of the times" and "the end of the times," and instructs him, "these words you shall publish openly, and these you shall keep secret" (14:14). When Ezra finishes writing the books, likewise the Most High says to him, "make public the twenty-four books that you wrote first and let the worthy and the unworthy read them; but keep the seventy that were written last, in order to give them to the wise among your people" (14:45–46).

<sup>30</sup> *Losing the Temple*.

<sup>31</sup> *Losing the Temple*, 125.

(14:28–36)? In fact, this differentiation between the wise and the lowly in 4 Ezra has often been used as a clue to locate the author’s social identity and his purpose in writing. Hogan, for example, concludes that the purpose of the book is to instruct the wise only, rather than to comfort the people.<sup>32</sup> Longenecker, on the other hand, believes that the author desires to “restrict eschatological interest to the arena of a select group,” to prevent the perpetuation of “social irresponsibility that results from fostering expectations concerning the destruction of one’s overlords.”<sup>33</sup> This is agreed by Moo, who views the purpose of keeping the books secret as not to let the unworthy or the simple-minded be led astray; since only a few would be saved, it is better for the lowly to keep the Law.<sup>34</sup>

The categorizing of the wise and the lowly indeed indicates the author’s consciousness of social difference, of his intended audience and of his self-identification with the scribal class, i.e. the wise. However, the motif of keeping secret an apocalyptic vision should not be taken literally. Given the pseudepigraphic nature of the work, one needs to keep in mind the distance between the author and his pseudonymous character. That Ezra was told to keep a secret does not necessarily mean that is what the author intended to do. It is better understood as a literary device to explain why, if the visions had been given to Moses and to Ezra, and had been penned as holy writing, they were otherwise not found in the Scriptures. This explanation may seem too simple, but to say otherwise—that the author intended to keep books on eschatological expectations, including his own, from the public, is not warranted. By the end of the first century of the common era, eschatological expectations simply were no secret, but had become a prevalent feature of Judaism; apocalyptic traditions, many in oral forms no doubt, were widely known and not merely intellectual properties of an exclusive circle. One such apocalyptic work, the Book of Daniel, was already a highly influential work with great popularity and authority, which inspired many other works in the same genre, including 4 Ezra itself.<sup>35</sup> Interestingly, in Daniel there is also the motif of keeping the visions, which

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<sup>32</sup> *Theologies in Conflict*, 227.

<sup>33</sup> “Locating 4 Ezra,” 292.

<sup>34</sup> Moo, *Creation, Nature and Hope in 4 Ezra*, 155–56.

<sup>35</sup> For example, 4 Ezra’s Eagle Vision (11:1–12:35) carries much influence from Daniel’s fourth beast; particularly in 11:39 and 12:11 the link to Daniel is specifically spelt out. Another example is 4 Ezra’s reckoning of time; nine and half parts out of twelve have already passed, i.e. two and half parts are left (14:11–2). It is modeled after Daniel’s “time, two times and half a time” (Dan 7:25; 12:7). For other examples showing the author’s consciousness of Daniel, see Michael A. Knibb, “Apocalyptic and Wisdom in 4 Ezra,” *JSJ* 13 (1982): 56–74; 66–67 and 70–71.

only the wise shall understand, sealed until the time of the end (e.g. Dan 7:28; 8:17, 19, 25–6; 12:9–10).<sup>36</sup> The example of Daniel shows that secrets and sealed things should not be taken literally, but understood as a literary device associated with pseudonymity, on the one hand, and a motif to indicate the mysterious nature of such matters which form the content of a higher form of wisdom, on the other.<sup>37</sup> It is in this light that the seventy secret books should be understood. For the author, it represents God's plan for the world and for Israel in its fullness. The author may not have expected everyone who read his book to be convinced, but he believed that it was a crucial message to be conveyed to Israel at the time of crisis; and he conveyed the message in the names of Ezra and Moses by the authority of divine revelation, so that people would be convinced.

### *4.3 The Characterization of Ezra and the Unity and Coherence of the Book*

#### *4.3.1 The Choice of Ezra as the Pseudonymous Voice*

Part of the author's response in 4 Ezra is to promulgate the Mosaic Torah as the way of salvation and the core of national identity at a time of crisis. For this purpose, Ezra the Scribe in the Bible is a perfect choice. More importantly, however, the author intended to go beyond what was the established Law of the Pentateuch to include eschatological revelations as a higher form of knowledge and wisdom. To that end, the biblical Ezra obviously falls short. As John J. Collins observes, while the biblical Ezra was "a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses" (Ezra 7:26), the Ezra in the apocalypse is a purveyor of heavenly mysteries; while the biblical Ezra identified with the Law and covenant of Moses, and affirmed the justice of God's punishments for Israel's sins (Ezra 9 and Neh

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<sup>36</sup> The secret motif commonly goes hand in hand with pseudonymity. This point is clearly drawn out by Adela Yarbro Collins in her comparison of the Book of Daniel with the Book of Revelation. Whereas in Daniel, the angel Gabriel told Daniel, "Go, Daniel, for the words are closed and sealed until the time of the end (12:9)," in Revelation, the angel instructed John, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near (22:10)." Collins explains the contrast as due to the literary fiction of pseudonymity in Daniel. The events involved were disclosed to Daniel supposedly over four hundred years earlier. The secrecy device explains why the book had been unknown until the actual time of composition. Such a problem, on the other hand, does not exist for Revelation, which is not pseudonymous, nor back dated. See "The Influence of Daniel on the New Testament" in J. J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 111.

My teacher, Dr Stephen Llewelyn, also points out that, whereas early Christians believed in active prophecies and inspired prophets in the church, such as John the Prophet, the self-named author of the Book of Revelation, prophets and prophecy had already ceased for other contemporary Jewish groups. Hence the lack of pseudonymity in Revelation, which is unique in apocalyptic literature in this period, and the lack of the secret motif (private conversation).

<sup>37</sup> The secret motif in the Gospel of Mark regarding Jesus' messiahship during his ministry and his empty tomb witnessed by the women could perhaps also be understood as such: a literary device to highlight them being divine mystery.

9), Ezra in 4 Ezra is portrayed as a man of incessant questioning and complaints. Collins is correct to indicate that, although the covenantal theology of Ezra is not rejected, a radical revision of the persona of Ezra occurs in the apocalypse.<sup>38</sup>

Was the author aware that his Ezra was quite different from Ezra the Scribe in the Bible? I think he was. That is why Ezra must first be portrayed as a seeker of wisdom before the mysteries are revealed to him, and before the task of writing the Law—which now includes the revelations—is given to him. At the very beginning of the book our pseudonymous hero is introduced as “I, Salathiel, who am also called Ezra” (3:1).<sup>39</sup> “Salathiel” (from Hebrew שאלתיאל, “I asked God”) and “Ezra” (עזרה, “support, help”) indeed represent rather appropriately the two aspects of Ezra’s role given in the book, a seeker of God’s wisdom through questioning and a succour for his people acting as the medium of divine will and wisdom.

This second role of Ezra, that is, as a source of consolation for his people, is widely recognized in many studies of 4 Ezra. This role is even identified as the primary purpose of the book, i.e. to comfort the people for the catastrophic destruction in 70 CE.<sup>40</sup> Many derive their conclusion from God’s command to Ezra in the Epilogue to “reprove your people; comfort the lowly among them and instruct those that are wise” (14:13). This in turn is interpreted in tandem with Ezra’s speech to the people (14:27–36), as an indication of his leadership role—or even a reflection of that of the author—in his community. However, as Hogan points out, Ezra’s speech hardly mentions any of his revelations, and therefore cannot be associated with the main function of the text.<sup>41</sup> The “inadequacy” of his speech is even more conspicuous when compared with the edifications given by Baruch to his community in 2 Baruch. Ezra’s role as community leader is greatly exaggerated too, as he was taken up to heaven right after he had dictated the ninety-four books of the Torah. Instead, his intended role as a comfort to his people should be understood as constituted in his act of restoring the

<sup>38</sup> John J. Collins, “Enoch and Ezra,” in Henze and Boccaccini, *Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch*, 83–97; particularly see 84 and 88–93.

<sup>39</sup> The mention of the name Salathiel here has caused much puzzling and speculation. The Salathiel that appears in the Bible is the Shealtiel, son of Jehoiachin and father of Zerubbabel, who lived in the exilic period. Explanations for the identification of Salathiel with Ezra range from the source critical perspective, which sees it as a vestige of the “Salathiel apocalypse” as a source text (Box, *The Ezra Apocalypse*), to the theory that it is an attempt to imitate Daniel 4:5, “Daniel ... he who was named Belteshazzar” (Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 55). Hogan opines that this verse is an acknowledgement for an anachronistic setting, a deliberate signal that the author was writing fiction (*Theologies in Conflict*, 220–21).

<sup>40</sup> Examples are Breech, “These Fragments;” Philip F. Esler, “The Social Function of 4 Ezra;” and Longenecker, “Locating 4 Ezra.”

<sup>41</sup> *Theologies in Conflict*, 212.

Law, both the twenty-four books of Scripture, and the divine revelations in the esoteric books, which will serve as a code to live by, a hope for the future despite the present gloom and doom, and a pillar of faith in the absence of the Temple. Interestingly, it is only after Ezra has been declared worthy by the angel (10:39; 12:36) and after he had received his vision in episode five that he was called the “only help left to his people,” “for of all the prophets you alone are left to us, like a cluster of grapes from the vintage, and like a lamp in a dark place, and like a haven for a ship saved from a storm” (12:42). It is also after he received his vision that he uttered his words of comfort, “take courage, O Israel; and do not be sorrowful, O house of Jacob” (12:46).

#### *4.3.2 The Transformation of Ezra*

I would like now to focus more on the first role in which Ezra is depicted, namely, that of the questioner of God. Ezra is chosen for this pseudepigraphic work in view of his status as the Lawgiver in line with the Mosaic tradition. However, since it is the author’s intention to modify that tradition to incorporate eschatological revelations, it becomes necessary to add a new dimension to his profile as a seeker of wisdom. The first three episodes serve the purpose of preparing Ezra for his role as a recipient of divine wisdom. It is no coincidence, then, that these three episodes show many parallels with Job in their dialogue form, the question of theodicy and words and imageries.<sup>42</sup>

In each of the three dialogues Ezra is shown to be clearly conscious about his intention to “comprehend the way of the Most High” and to “search out his judgment” (3:31; 4:12, 22; 5:34; 8:4). The first two episodes are similar in structure: both are introduced with a description of Ezra’s troubled state of mind, followed by a lament, and a question of complaint. The complaint is followed by an exchange of questions and answers between Uriel and Ezra. Uriel makes eschatological predications, and Ezra then asks more questions about the end. The third dialogue, however, is much longer and follows a slightly different pattern. In the first two dialogues Uriel repudiates Ezra’s complaint by asking him to do impossible tasks—to indicate Ezra’s lack of wisdom, thus the absurdity of his questioning divine justice, and to put him in his place, so to speak; but in the third dialogue he stops doing so and reveals more detailed information on what happens at the end and what happens to the righteous and

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<sup>42</sup> See Knibb, “Apocalyptic and Wisdom in 4 Ezra,” 65–66.



the wicked after death. There is a sense of progression, therefore, in the first three episodes.

Many identify a tension between Ezra and Uriel in that, whereas the angel tells Ezra he cannot comprehend the way of the Most High (4:9–11), Ezra refuses to give up his probing, although he admits that he is without wisdom (5:38–9). This tension is interpreted as an epistemological debate. In each dialogue, Uriel puts a list of impossible tasks to Ezra:

Go, weigh for me the weight of fire, or measure for me a measure of wind, or call back for me the day that is past (4:5).

How many dwellings are in the heart of the sea, or how many springs are at the source of the deep, or how many ways are above the firmament, or which are the exits of hell, or which are the entrances of paradise? (4:7)

Count up for me those who have not yet come, and gather for me the scattered raindrops, and make the withered flowers bloom again for me; open for me the closed treasuries, and bring forth for me the winds shut up in them, or show me the appearance of him whom you have never seen, or show me the picture of a voice.... (5:36–7)

Allusions to Job (38:16–8; 36:26–7) are well noted.<sup>43</sup> There are lists of such things in other apocalyptic literature too, with a striking similarity in content and language, which Michael Stone calls “lists of revealed things.”<sup>44</sup> A list of similar things, for example, is said to be revealed to Moses in 2 Baruch 59:5; another list is found in 1 Enoch 60:11–13, revealed to Enoch. In the external-debate approach, Uriel is seen as using a list to reinforce his position in his argument with Ezra regarding whether humans have the ability to know the divine.<sup>45</sup> What the debate approach overlooks in this case, however, is what the author intends to achieve in portraying Ezra as a persistent seeker of wisdom. The angel’s negative statement about Ezra’s ability to understand divine things should not be taken literally, just as Ezra’s own statement about himself being “without wisdom” (5:38–9). After all, the angel came, in each dialogue, precisely to reveal the mysteries of the Most High to Ezra. Whereas in 2 Baruch and 1 Enoch, the list of revealed things is used as a statement of the revelations to Moses and Enoch respectively, in 4 Ezra it is used rhetorically to indicate that Ezra is still uninitiated when it comes to divine revelation. The dialogues show his

<sup>43</sup> Knibb, “Apocalyptic and Wisdom in 4 Ezra,” 65–66; Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict*, 102.

<sup>44</sup> “Lists of Revealed things in the Apocalyptic Literature,” in Michael E. Stone, *Selected Studies in Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha with Special Reference to the Armenian Tradition*, SVTP 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 379–418.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict*, 120–26, in which she sees this tension as an illustration of the difference between the two schools of wisdom, i.e. covenantal wisdom and eschatological wisdom, “regarding the path to theological understanding” (123).

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progressive gaining of wisdom with the angel's help, leading to his readiness for the apocalyptic visions.

The progressive elevation of Ezra is also revealed in the details of the location, physical position, and food and drinks at each stage of his transformation.<sup>46</sup> At the first stage represented by the first three episodes, he is located on his bed in his own room (3:1); at the end of the third conversation with Uriel, however, he is told to go into a field of flowers (9:24). For the next stage, Ezra is located in the open field called Ardat (Episodes 4–6) in order to receive his apocalyptic visions. At the final stage, he is called by God for the revelation of the Law while he is “sitting under an oak” (14:1). Here, the oak tree symbolizes God's protection, providence and Israel's hope for renewal and restoration.<sup>47</sup>

Ezra's physical position also plays into his characterization. Episode 1 begins with a dejected Ezra lying on his bed (3:1); towards the end of the episode, however, the angel Uriel strengthens him and sets him on his feet (5:15). In the second episode, it is in the middle of the dialogue that Ezra is told to stand on his feet, which he obeys (6:13, 17). In Episode 3, it is at the beginning of the dialogue that the angel commands Ezra to rise (7:2), showing the latter's increasing strength. This growth of strength continues in the following episodes in which Ezra receives his three visions. In Episode 4 he goes into the field of Ardat, sitting among the flowers (9:26); but by the end of the vision, the angel has set him on his feet so that he may go into the transformed city to see the heavenly Jerusalem (10:30, 55). At the completion of all his visions, Ezra, no longer disheartened and downcast, arises by himself and walks in the field, “giving great glory and praise to the Most High because of his wonders” (13:57). In the Epilogue, when Ezra hears God's calling, he rises immediately to his feet (14:1–2). The change of physical position indicates the state of his spiritual maturity and readiness for the task appointed for him.

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<sup>46</sup> See also Knowles, “Moses, the Law, and the Unity of 4 Ezra,” 257. Stone, in *Fourth Ezra* (24–30), also discusses the book's sophisticated structural features which indicate a development of Ezra's character. In another article (“Seeing and Understanding in 4 Ezra,” in Ashton, *Revealed Wisdom*, 122–37), Stone draws attention to the way the author marks the different stages of Ezra's visionary progress by indicating his physical position, mental status, and particularly the new things revealed to him at each stage. Also see a survey on the significance of foodstuffs, eating and drinking in 4 Ezra by Peter-Ben Smit: “Reaching for the Tree of Life: The Role of Eating, Drinking, Fasting, and Symbolic Foodstuffs in 4 Ezra,” in *JSJ* 45 (2014): 366–87, which touches upon Ezra's diet in relation to his relationship with God.

<sup>47</sup> The same symbol is used expansively and consistently in 2 Baruch to develop a fuller understanding of the covenant. See Chapter Six.

Another detail which reveals his increasing level of wisdom is his dietary regimen. Prior to each dialogue in the first three episodes, Ezra keeps a total fast for seven days (5:13, 20; 6:31, 35). As he has gained more understanding, he is commanded to eat only the flowers in the field of Ardat for the duration of his three apocalyptic visions (9:24; 12:51).

What does eating the “flowers of the field” (*floribus campi*) symbolize? Jonathan Moo argues that it suggests Ezra is participating in the paradise to come, since it is in the same field where the heavenly Zion is revealed where Ezra is eating the flowers.<sup>48</sup> This interpretation is based on the fact that eating plants alone is the situation in the garden of Eden before Adam’s expulsion in Gen 1:29.<sup>49</sup> However, it should be asked why flowers alone are emphasized, but not plants generally as in Gen 1:29. (On the other hand, it is said that Ezra “ate of the plants of the field” in 9:26; and in 12:51 he eats both flowers and plants.) While fully accepting Moo’s interpretation,<sup>50</sup> I would also like to suggest another alternative way of understanding it, taking into consideration the close symbolic connection eating and drinking has with the acquisition of wisdom in 4 Ezra. When Ezra prays that God give his people a seed for their cultivation of understanding (8:6), he bids his own soul, “drink thy full of understanding, O my soul, and feed on wisdom, O my heart!” (*absorbe, anima mea, sensum, et bibe, cor meum, intelligentiam*) (8:4).<sup>51</sup> The expression, “flower of the field” (צִיץ הַשָּׂדֶה), does have a scriptural basis; it appears in Isaiah 40: “All flesh is grass, and all its/its loving kindness (חֶסֶד) is like the flower of the field (כְּצִיץ הַשָּׂדֶה) (40:6);” “the grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of our God endures forever (40:8).” These Isaianic verses seem to be on the mind of the author, because while staying in the field eating flowers, Ezra contemplates how those who received the Law—unlike the field that received seed—perished, but the Law, the word of God, remains forever (4 Ezra 9:32–37). The only other occurrence of “flower of the field” (צִיץ הַשָּׂדֶה) in the HB is Ps 103:15–17, “As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field ... but the loving kindness of the Lord (חֶסֶד יְהוָה) is

<sup>48</sup> *Creation, Nature and Hope in 4 Ezra*, 146–8. Also, Smit, “Reaching for the Tree of Life,” 375–6.

<sup>49</sup> Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 302–3.

<sup>50</sup> The feasibility of Moo’s interpretation is further supported by the fact that the field where Ezra eats plants only is also where the heavenly Jerusalem is to appear. Jerusalem, or the Temple Mount, on the other hand, is equated with the Paradise called the Garden of Eden in Jewish perception. Ezek 28, for example, identifies “Eden, the garden of God” (v13) with “God’s holy mountain” (v14). For more on Zion and Eden, see Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 128–135.

<sup>51</sup> Or, “Then take delight in understanding, O my soul, and drink wisdom, O my ears!” according to Stone’s translation based on the Syriac and other textual variations (*Fourth Ezra*, 262).

from everlasting to everlasting....”<sup>52</sup> Eating the flowers of the field may be interpreted as symbolic of Ezra’s acquisition of God’s loving kindness, i.e. his grace and mercy, if the flower of the field is seen as a symbol for loving kindness, חסד יהוה or חסדו, intertextually influenced by Isaiah 40:6 and Psalm 103:17. Since the intellect is completely useless in the human attempt to comprehend divine wisdom (4 Ezra 4:10–11; 5:35, 40), it is only through receiving divine mercy and grace—expressed through the eating metaphor—that Ezra is bestowed understanding of the eternal word of God and God’s plan for Israel.

This eating metaphor continues in the Epilogue, where the Most High gives Ezra a cup to drink before his restoring the Torah, “something like water, but its colour was like fire” (14:39), a symbol of divine wisdom.<sup>53</sup> The progression from total fast to flowers only and to the divine cup, therefore, corresponds to the stages of Ezra’s pursuit of God’s wisdom.

#### 4.3.3 *The Role of Uriel in the Transformation of Ezra*

The intention to prepare the character of Ezra may be further appreciated through a look into the portrayal of the angel Uriel. As an otherworldly mediator, Uriel provides two types of revelation. In Episodes 4–6 he plays the typical part of an *angelus interpres*, interpreting the symbolic dreams to the human recipient. However, in the first three episodes, his role is even more significant as the dialogue partner of Ezra, preparing him for his transformation and for the task of writing the Law. In this latter role, Uriel is introduced as the one imparting knowledge, using expressions such as “listen to me and I will instruct you” (5:32), “and will admonish you” (7:49), “and I will inform you” (10:38); in other words, he assumes the role of a wisdom teacher.<sup>54</sup> Other heavenly revealers also interact with the human recipient; take, for example, Gabriel, who instructs Daniel on the meaning of the seventy years (Dan 9). But Uriel’s role as teacher is made unique by the extensive use of pedagogical dialogues as well as quizzes (as demonstrated above), parables, analogies and visual imagery. In Episode 1, for example, Uriel begins his instruction by testing Ezra with quizzes (4:5) to indicate

<sup>52</sup> This psalm is also significant in the background of scriptural influence on the author in that its major themes resonate with 4 Ezra’s, e.g. God’s forgiveness of sins (vv 3, 10–12), his mercy and faithfulness (חסד) (vv 4, 13), his revelation of the Law to Moses and Israel (v 7), the divine attributes (v 8 cf. 4 Ezra 7:132–5), and God’s everlasting covenant with those obedient to his commandments (vv 17–8).

<sup>53</sup> An article on the topic of Ezra’s consumption of the cup as the pinnacle of the gradual escalation of his revealed knowledge, is Meredith J. C. Warren, “‘My Heart Poured Forth Understanding’: 4 Ezra’s Fiery Cup as Hierophagic Consumption,” in *SR* 44 (2015): 320–33.

<sup>54</sup> See Knibb, “Apocalyptic and Wisdom in 4 Ezra,” 65–66.

to Ezra his lack of wisdom, thus the absurdity of questioning divine justice. He then uses the parable of the forest and the sea to further demonstrate the limitation of human intellect to understand divine matters (4:13–21). As Ezra queries the delay of the *eschaton*, Uriel answers him with the analogy of a woman waiting to go into travail and the treasures of the underworld in haste to give back the souls of the dead (4:40–43). He further demonstrates the imminent nature of the end by showing Ezra the visual image of the smoke that persists after a flaming furnace, and of drops that remain in the cloud after a rainstorm (4:47–50).

No doubt Uriel as a person is different from God. He makes clear that he was sent by God to answer Ezra's prayers (6:33). He admits the limits of his knowledge and authority, stopping at the signs that he is "permitted to tell" (5:13). When Ezra is afraid after seeing the transformation of the woman into the heavenly Jerusalem, he calls out to Uriel, and the latter takes his hand and strengthened him (10:28). Yet at times the division between Uriel and God is blurred. This is because, while speaking with Uriel, Ezra makes addresses to the Most High instead;<sup>55</sup> and Uriel frequently switches to first person phrases, such as "my judgment," "my law," and "my messiah," etc.<sup>56</sup>

As Ezra is progressing in his transformation, Uriel takes a gradual exit from the picture. In the first four episodes, although the line between the angel and God becomes ambiguous at places, it is still clearly Uriel interacting with Ezra. In Episodes 5–6, however, Uriel is no longer introduced by name; after Ezra's apocalyptic vision and prayer, it is a simple "he" who answers and interprets. That the mediator is Uriel can only be tentatively inferred from his previous appearances. By the last episode, Uriel has completely faded out of the picture; it is God who summons Ezra directly from behind a bush with a double calling of his name in the fashion of the calling of Moses (14:1; cf. Exod 3:4).

Revelation directly from God only takes place when Ezra is deemed entirely worthy. His readiness occurs at the end of the last vision (Episode 6), when Uriel/the Most High praises Ezra because "you have forsaken your own ways and have applied yourself to mine, and have searched out my Law; for you have devoted your life to wisdom, and called understanding your mother" (13:54–5). The role of Salathiel, the questioner of God, is thus complete; so is the profile of Ezra as both a Lawgiver and an

<sup>55</sup> 4:38; 5:36, 41, 56; 6:11; 7:17, 58, 132; 8:6, 63; and 13:50–1.

<sup>56</sup> 5:40–42, 48–49; 6:6, 18–20; 7:11, 28–29, 44; 8:38–40, 47; 9:20–22; and 13:32, 37, 48.

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apocalyptic visionary. His writing of the books (Episode 7) is presented as the culmination of his wisdom.

### *4.4 Summary*

In summary, with authorial intention in mind, the different parts that may first appear inconsistent are shown to work together to achieve specific purposes. For instance, one of the issues is that the debate in the first three episodes appears to be inconclusive; Ezra does not seem to be persuaded by the angel, yet his demeanour becomes totally changed after the apocalyptic visions. The problem is less puzzling, however, if we understand that it is never the author's intention to present a theological debate or treatise in the dialogues, but rather to initiate Ezra into the divine mysteries and to prepare him for the revelations, which are to be established as part of the Torah.

Likewise, another apparent inconsistency involves the personal traits of Ezra. Whereas in the dialogues his questioning of the Most High is relentless, in the visions and the Epilogue he becomes more compliant. But if we grant that the intention of the author is not to carry out a theological debate but to grant the character of Ezra knowledge of the divine mysteries which are to be enshrined as part of the Torah, it is little wonder that Ezra would be unsatisfied with anything until he should receive the divine revelations intended for him.

The apparent problem of disunity and inconsistency found in 4 Ezra is the result of the modern reader's misunderstanding of its authorial intention. The text may appear surprisingly inconclusive and inconsistent in its views, but that is only because we mistakenly regard it as a theological debate or treatise. I do not mean to deny, of course, that the book contains many theological ideas of great interest that can and should be studied in detail; however, such studies should not lose sight of the overall function and purpose of the book.

The psychological approach offers much insight into the underlying religious experience represented by the "conversion" of Ezra; however, it is important to recognize that the purpose of the author goes beyond simply portraying Ezra's spiritual journey to serve as a role model for others. Instead, the author proposes a specific response to the gravest national crisis.

Written at a time when Israel's identity as the chosen people of the Most High was threatened and her covenant relationship with God thrown into question, 4 Ezra was written to convey a specific message. Faithfulness to the Torah and the Mosaic

tradition is the author's answer to the crisis. The Torah shows people the lessons of the past and provides the key to their present life and to future salvation. However, the Mosaic tradition is also modified and expanded to include eschatological revelations about the future when Israel's covenant with God will be fully realized. Ezra is chosen as the pseudonymous mouthpiece to suit this purpose. Before he becomes the recipient of divine revelations, however, a sapiential dimension must be added to his biblical persona as a promulgator of the Law; hence the dialogues and Ezra's questioning in the fashion of Job. With this authorial intention in mind, the different parts of the book become a coherent whole, with the final episode playing a key role for understanding its overall purpose.

In the next part, attention will be switched onto 2 Baruch. Faced with the same crisis as 4 Ezra and sharing the same sentiments, the author of 2 Baruch also came up with a religious programme centred upon the Mosaic Law and modified through a belief in the imminent *eschaton*. He also sought to validate his claims through an appeal to the well-established Mosaic authority. However, 2 Baruch also has much uniqueness in the richness and depth of its thoughts, which can be found in both the conception and the literary presentation of its religious agenda.





**PART II**

**2 BARUCH**



## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF 2 BARUCH IN RELATION TO ITS AUTHORIAL INTENTION

#### 5.1 *The Composition of 2 Baruch*

##### 5.1.1 *Ambiguities in Structural Demarcations*

An issue that has caused different opinions among students of 2 Baruch is how to divide the text into smaller literary units. Compared with 4 Ezra, the structure of 2 Baruch is less easy to delineate. This, however, does not mean to deny that 2 Baruch is a coherent work. The overall narrative structure is very clear. There are three large blocks of material. The first block (or the Prologue) provides the setting for the whole book, with the narrative of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple as God's punishment for Israel's sin witnessed by Baruch. The second block, the longest, contains a series of revelations Baruch receives from God, in the form of either a dialogue or a dream vision. Each aural or visual revelation is prefixed and interspersed with Baruch's lamentations and prayers, as well as having appended to it his post-revelation speech to edify and comfort the people. The third block of material (or the Epilogue) is epistolary in form, featuring a letter of instruction and encouragement that Baruch composed and sent to the tribes in the diaspora. It has been debated whether the epistle forms an original part of 2 Baruch, a topic that will be discussed in the final section of this chapter below. However, the coherence of the three blocks is not questioned here; rather, it is the further divisions within the largest, second block, containing the revelations, that cause disagreements among commentators.

Similar to 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch utilizes a range of discourse markers to indicate the beginning or end of literary units. Two specific dates are given, one as the opening line of the narrative ("The twenty-fifth year of Jeconiah, King of Judah," 1:1),<sup>1</sup> the other at

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<sup>1</sup> Jeconiah began his reign on December 9, 598 BCE at the age of 18; his reign lasted in Jerusalem only three months (2 Kgs 24:8). This date has been used by many as textual evidence to establish a *terminus a quo* for the date of authorship. One interpretation represented by Bogaert (*L'Apocalypse syriaque de Baruch*, I: 281–9) sees it as referring to the 25<sup>th</sup> year after the Babylonian capture of Jerusalem, or in the author's reality, the 25<sup>th</sup> year of Roman destruction of Jerusalem, thus giving 95 CE as the year of composition. However, Collins (*Apocalyptic Imagination*, 212–3; also Sayler, *Have the Promises Failed?*, 107) indicates that the formula, "in the xth year of King X" normally refers to the year of the king's age rather than his reign. King Jeconiah was 18 when he was deported (2 Kgs 24:8), which would place Baruch's activities seven years after the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem. This does not fit the setting of 2 Bar, which is immediately before and after the destruction. Therefore, the 25<sup>th</sup> year reference

the beginning of Baruch writing the letter (“and on the twenty-first day of the eighth month,” 77:18),<sup>2</sup> thus marking the beginning of the Prologue and the Epilogue. Within the second, longest block of material, one finds temporal devices including transitional phrases such as “after these things” (7:1; 13:1; 22:1; and 37:1), or periods of Baruch’s fasting (5:7; 9:1; 12:5; 21:1; and 47:2) in a fashion similar to 4 Ezra, which seems to serve as a boundary between sections of material. Sometimes the transition is marked by a change of Baruch’s physical state. Twice he becomes very weak after his prayer, (21:26 and 48:25) and twice he falls asleep before he receives a vision (36:1 and 52:8). Another frequently used marker is a simple expression such as “and I, Baruch, went” to indicate a change of his physical movement (5:5; 8:3; 21:1; 32:8; 35:1; 44:1 and 77:1). The author also indicates different locations of Baruch: e.g. it is in Zion or Jerusalem that Baruch witnesses the destruction of the city and receives some of his revelations through a dialogue with God (6:3; 10:3, 5; 13:1; 21:2; 35:1 etc.). It is in Kidron Valley that he carries out mourning and fasting, and gives his speeches to the elders and people (5:5; 21:1; perhaps also 44:1 and 77:1, though unspecified). Another place mentioned is the oak tree (אֲלֹנִים), where Baruch first laments over the fall of Zion, and later composes the letters for the lost tribes in the diaspora (6:1; 55:1 where it states simply “a tree” (אֲלֵן); and 77:18). Hebron is also given as the location where Baruch receives a vision and its interpretation; in this instance it seems to be closely

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proves unreliable to establish the date of composition. Instead, Collins (*ibid.*) suggests that the author of 2 Bar may simply be imitating religious works of his day to add authenticity to his book. Readers familiar with the HB would certainly be reminded of the beginning of the narrative in Ezekiel before his visions of the renewed temple that says, “In the twenty-fifth year of our exile ... (Eze 40:1).” The author of 4 Ezra utilized the same technique by opening his book with “in the thirtieth year after the destruction of our city (3:1).” (See a discussion on this issue in Mark F. Whitters, *The Epistle of Second Baruch: A Study in Form and Message*, JSPSup 42 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2003], 150–1.) Gurtner (“The ‘Twenty-Fifth Year of Jeconiah’ and the Date of 2 Baruch,” *JSP* 18 [2008]: 23–32) maintains that the “X year of king Y” formula refers not to the king’s age but his reign, and there is no viable explanation for a symbolic reading of the number 25. He thinks that the author may have been implying the exilic condition he himself was in (31). Henze offers a detailed summary of the different views and points out the symbolic value of the number of 25 years and the name of the King Jeconiah (*Jewish Apocalypticism*, 25–9).

My view, however, is that the author may very well have given a historical date. There were two sieges of Jerusalem and two exiles of Judahites by the Babylonians. The first occurred in 597 BCE, three months after Jeconiah was made king of Judah. The date of crisis given in 2 Baruch refers to the second siege, i.e. in 589 BCE, during the reign of Zedekiah while Jeconiah was in exile, which led to the destruction of the Temple. If Jeconiah was 18 when he was taken captive in 597 BCE after the first siege, he would be around 25 when the second siege took place in 589 BCE—hence the 25<sup>th</sup> year of Jeconiah. The issue is that the author of 2 Bar seemed to be oblivious to the long duration of the siege and presented the siege and the destruction of Jerusalem as if they had occurred within days. An article that reconstructs the chronology of the last Judahite kings is A. Malamat, “The Last Kings of Judah and the Fall of Jerusalem,” *IEJ* 18 (1968): 137–56.

<sup>2</sup> The significance of this date will be discussed below.

associated with the oak tree, as both locations are mentioned (47:1-2; 55:1).<sup>3</sup> Lastly and very importantly, it has been pointed out by Matthias Henze that the different literary genres, namely the dialogues, prayers, lamentations, speeches, dream visions and the epistle, also serve as structuring devices within the larger narrative framework.<sup>4</sup>

These structuring devices help create a coherent text, but they are less useful in identifying more precise divisions within the text. This is because these devices are not applied consistently throughout the text; and more than one device may be used within any passage of material, making where to draw finer divisions within the passage less certain. For instance, within the beginning narrative of the destruction of Jerusalem, the location of Baruch changes from Jerusalem to the Kidron Valley (5:5), to “the oak” (6:1), and to Jerusalem again (6:3), within close proximity. For another example, unlike the regular seven-day fasts that precedes Ezra’s revelations in clearly set out episodes, Baruch’s first fast is only for one day and can hardly be used as a section marker. The other four fasts are weeklong, but they are not used consistently. Three of them cluster in the first twenty-one chapters, and one occurs in chapter 47; and after that no more fasts are mentioned. Other devices such as the phrases “and after these things” (7:1 and 8:4), “and I, Baruch, came” (9:1), overlap with the fasts, making it difficult to consistently apply any one device for divisions throughout the entire narrative. Due to this reason, scholars of 2 Baruch differ in their opinions on where exactly to draw the different parts, even though they unanimously acknowledge that there are seven parts. Henze sums up the variety of views in a chart, which is reproduced here:<sup>5</sup>

*Diverse Views on the Composition of 2 Baruch*

|                      |                      |                     |                     |                       |                           |                       |
|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Charles <sup>6</sup> | Bogaert <sup>7</sup> | Sayler <sup>8</sup> | Murphy <sup>9</sup> | Collins <sup>10</sup> | Nickelsburg <sup>11</sup> | Gurtner <sup>12</sup> |
|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|

<sup>3</sup> Bogaert, *L'Apocalypse syriaque*, I: 322–7; Whittiers, *Epistle of Second Baruch*, 40; and Lied, *Other Lands of Israel*, 154–9. The symbolic meanings of these locations in association with Baruch’s activities and the overall message of 2 Baruch will be further explored in Chapter Six.

<sup>4</sup> Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 41.

<sup>5</sup> Taken from Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 38.

<sup>6</sup> R. H. Charles, *Apocalypse of Baruch* (London: A & C Black, 1896).

<sup>7</sup> Bogaert, *L'Apocalypse syriaque*, 1:58–67.

<sup>8</sup> Sayler, *Have the Promises Failed?*, 161–2.

<sup>9</sup> Murphy, *Structure and Meaning*, 11–29.

<sup>10</sup> Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 213.

<sup>11</sup> George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction* (London: SCM, 1981), 277–83.

<sup>12</sup> Daniel M. Gurtner, *Second Baruch: A Critical Edition of the Syriac Text* (NY: T&T Clark, 2009), 20–24.

## CHAPTER FIVE

|     |            |            |                         |                         |            |            |            |
|-----|------------|------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| I   | 1.1–5.6    | 1.1–12.4   | 1.1–5.7                 | 1.1–9.1                 | 1.1–9.1    | 1.1–9.1    | 1.1–5.7    |
| II  | 5.7–8.5    | 13.1–20.6  | 6.1–20.6                | 10.1–20.6               | 10.1–12.5  | 10.1–20.6  | 6.1–9.1    |
| III | 9.1–12.4   | 21.1–34.1  | 21.1–30.5               | 21.1–34.1               | 13.1–20.6  | 21.1–30.5  | 10.1–12.5  |
| IV  | 12.5–20.6  | 35.1–47.1  | 31.1–43.3               | 35.1–47.1               | 21.1–34.1  | 31.1–43.3  | 13.1–20.6  |
| V   | 21.1–35.5  | 47.2–52.8  | 44.1–52.7 <sup>13</sup> | 47.2–52.7 <sup>14</sup> | 35.1–47.2  | 44.1–52.8  | 21.1–47.2  |
| VI  | 36.1–46.7  | 53.1–77.17 | 53.1–76.4               | 53.1–77.17              | 48.1–77.26 | 53.1–77.26 | 48.1–77.26 |
| VII | 47.1–77.26 | 77.18–87.1 | 77.1–77.26              | 77.18–87.1              | 78.1–87.1  | 78.1–87.1  | 78.1–87.1  |

The confusion on the divisions of literary units has led Henze to question the validity of the perception that 2 Baruch, like 4 Ezra its sister text, must have a seven-part structure. He attributes this confusion to a synoptic reading of 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra by students of the two texts, which in his view is problematic:

In their description of 2Bar's composition, interpreters have almost unanimously taken their lead from 4 Ezra, which routinely functions as the interpretive template for exegetes working on 2Bar. *Fourth Ezra's* structure into seven sections is unambiguous. With few exceptions, exegetes assume by way of analogy—and typically without feeling the need to provide any textual evidence for their claim—that 2Bar, too, must consist of seven sections. It is simply taken for granted that the eighty-seven chapters of 2Bar also divide into seven units.<sup>15</sup>

This has further led him to conclude that a seven-part structure is “an imposition” imported from 4 Ezra, and should therefore be abandoned.<sup>16</sup>

Henze's criticism of an imposed heptadic structure upon 2 Baruch forms part of his overall objection against subordinating the interpretation of 2 Baruch to that of 4 Ezra. He is correct to emphasize that 2 Baruch should be read first and foremost in its own right. The range of organizing devices in 2 Baruch shows that a strictly schematic structure of seven parts in the fashion of 4 Ezra was probably not the author's conscious intention. As a solution, Henze himself looks at different literary genres, and treats each prayer, dialogue, public address, and vision as well as its interpretation as an independent unit; thus plus the Prologue and the Epilogue together with the epistle, coming to fifteen parts.<sup>17</sup>

### *5.1.2 A Proposed Structure of 2 Baruch Based on Prayer-Revelation-Address Cycles*

For my own analysis, although in my view the multiple organizing devices cannot be depended upon for unit divisions, there is nonetheless an underlying pattern that

<sup>13</sup> *Sic.* This part should finish with verse 52.8, “And when I said this I fell asleep there,” as it is not included in the part following it either.

<sup>14</sup> *Sic.* Same as above.

<sup>15</sup> Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 37.

<sup>16</sup> *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 40.

<sup>17</sup> *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 41–42.

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repeats itself and which creates cycles of revelations. Generally, Baruch's pious prayers are followed by divine revelations—either in the form of a dialogue, or a vision with ensuing interpretation—as a direct result of his pleading. After the revelation, Baruch, either out of his own will or instructed by God, admonishes the people in a public speech. Thus a full cycle of prayer and revelation (dialogue or vision) and public address is found in two chunks of material 21:1–34:1, and 35:1–47:2. A half cycle of prayer and revelation occurs in two chunks 10:1–20:6, and 48:1–52:8. Another half cycle of revelation and public address occurs in 53:1–77:17. Adding the Prologue on the destruction of Jerusalem, and the Epilogue with the epistle attached, I thus come to the outline of 2 Baruch's structure as follows:

### *Structure of 2 Baruch*

|           |            |                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Episode 1 | 1:1–9:1    | Prologue: God's dialogue with Baruch and the destruction of Jerusalem as God's punishment for Israel's sin                                       |
| Episode 2 | 10:1–20:6  | Baruch's prayer and his first revelation in a dialogue with God                                                                                  |
| Episode 3 | 21:1–34:1  | Baruch's prayer, his second revelation in a dialogue with God, and his first public address to the elders                                        |
| Episode 4 | 35:1–47:2  | Baruch's prayer, his third revelation in a dream vision and its interpretation, and his second public address to the elders, his son and friends |
| Episode 5 | 48:1–52:8  | Baruch's prayer and fourth revelation in a dialogue with God                                                                                     |
| Episode 6 | 53:1–77:17 | Baruch's fifth revelation in a dream vision and its interpretation, and his third public address to the people                                   |
| Episode 7 | 77:18–87:1 | Epilogue: Baruch writing and sending letters to the people in diaspora, and the epistle                                                          |

This structure is almost identical to that of Frederick Murphy, as it appears in Henze's chart.<sup>18</sup> It should be stated that the result of seven segments is posterior to the analysis

<sup>18</sup> See Murphy, *Structure and Meaning*, 11–29.

of the text into the above-mentioned “prayer-revelation-speech” units, without the presupposition of a heptadic structure in the fashion of 4 Ezra. The divisions are for the convenience of analyzing the content of the book, and not to be taken as objective parts intentionally set out in the author’s schema.

### 5.1.3 *The Progression of the Narrative*

Despite the cyclic pattern of the revelations, the narrative is nevertheless carried forward to its conclusion and the reader gets a sense of progression. This in 2 Baruch, however, is not achieved markedly by depicting the psychological transformation of the protagonist from doubt and distress to trust and optimism as in 4 Ezra. Gwendolyn Sayler sees in Baruch a deliberate movement from “grief to consolation”,<sup>19</sup> but this reading is not so obvious. The change of the psychological state of the protagonist is much less palpable in 2 Baruch than in 4 Ezra. While this transition is clearly discernible in the character of Ezra with an episode specially dedicated to it (i.e. Ezra’s transformed attitude after seeing the vision of the transfiguration of the mourning lady into heavenly Jerusalem), Baruch appears to be heavy-hearted yet clear-minded throughout the narrative. Rather, the plot of 2 Baruch develops through both structural devices and the progressive contents of the revelations. Murphy observes that one structural device that moves the plot forward is the gradually increasing size of Baruch’s addressees each time after his divine revelation. Murphy’s reckoning is presented as follows:

II. God to Baruch

III. Baruch to elders

IV. Baruch to his son, friend(s),<sup>20</sup> and seven elders

V. Baruch to the righteous

VI. Baruch to the people, “from the greatest to the least”

VII. All of Jewry<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Sayler, *Have the Promises Failed?*, 38.

<sup>20</sup> Henze’s translation (Stone and Henze, *4 Ezra and 2 Baruch*, 109) of this verse is, “And I called my firstborn son, and Gedaliah my friend, and seven of the elders of the people” (44:1). He notes in the footnote that the Syriac has the plural form, “the Gedaliahs, my friends.” In 7a1 this reads ܡܠܚܝܬܐ ܕܓܕܝܠܝܐ, with *seyame* dots over the *dalet* and the *het*, which indicate plural. (See also Gurtner, *Second Baruch: Critical Edition*, 78, n 451 and n 452). The choice of a singular name is due to the consideration that Gedaliah already appears in 5:5 as an individual. The plural form of Gedaliahs, on the other hand, could mean “the great ones,” Baruch’s inner circle friends who are the wise and righteous teachers of the Law, from whom future leaders of Israel shall come forth. Baruch very appropriately gives them this charge, “You, therefore, as much as you are able, instruct the people, because this is our work, for when you teach them you will quicken them” (45:1–2).



The only correction I would make to Murphy's scheme is his interpretation of chapter 52 in Episode 5 as another address of Baruch to "the righteous" of the people.<sup>22</sup>

Although chapter 52 concerns and mentions "the righteous," it is actually Baruch's response to God's words, and therefore part of the dialogue. Despite this error, Murphy's discovery indeed points to an important structural feature of 2 Baruch, that Baruch addresses an increasingly expanded audience: from elders, to elders and family and friends, to the entire people in the Holy Land, and to all Jewry in diaspora, if we consider Baruch's epistle as an extended public address.<sup>23</sup> Not only does it carry the narrative forward, it also reveals the significance of instructing the people as part of the authorial intention.<sup>24</sup>

Another feature that moves the narrative forward is the progressive nature of the content, not only in the sense of the overall structure of prologue–revelations–epilogue, but even in terms of the subject matters of Baruch's revelations in each episode. These subject matters move from an initial concern for the present world in which Israel suffers but the enemies prosper (Episode 2), to a description of the imminent *Eschaton* and the world/age to come (Episode 3), and subsequently to the Last Judgment (Episode 4) and the resurrection (Episode 5) in the world/age to come; then finally, the human history that incorporates its past, present and future is placed within a transcendent divine overview from creation to consummation (Episode 6).

## *5.2 The Epistle of Baruch in Relation to the Structure and Content of 2 Baruch, and to Authorial Intention*

### *5.2.1 The Epistle as an Integral Part of the Book*

Another issue that has been debated in 2 Baruch scholarship is the relationship of the Epistle of Baruch (77:18–87:1) to the rest of 2 Baruch. The only attestation of the intact 2 Baruch is the *Codex Ambrosianus* (coded 7a1) dated circa 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century. Prior to this discovery, the Epistle had already been known to exist independently in at least 38 ancient manuscripts.<sup>25</sup> To further complicate the issue, 7a1 contains two

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<sup>21</sup> Murphy, *Structure and Meaning*, 13. O. Plöger ("Baruchsschriften, apokryphe", *RGG*, I, 900–4) also divides 2 Baruch into parts according to the three addresses plus the letter.

<sup>22</sup> Murphy, *Structure and Meaning*, 22.

<sup>23</sup> This is also the opinion of Whitters, *Epistle of Second Baruch*, 36.

<sup>24</sup> This is also the opinion of Whitters, "Instruction is the clear organizational principle for the latter segment of 2 (Syriac) Baruch, and it is reasonable to look to Baruch's public addresses to discern the major reason for the writing of the book." See his *Epistle of Second Baruch*, 42.

<sup>25</sup> These are listed in the *List of Old Testament Peshitta Manuscripts (Preliminary Issue)* (Leiden: Brill, 1961) by Peshitta Institute, Leiden University.

versions of the Epistle, one as part of the book, and the other as an independent document. After the discovery of 7a1, Ceriani,<sup>26</sup> Kmoskó<sup>27</sup> and Charles<sup>28</sup> published their editions of 2 Baruch that included the letter, but in the edition of the Peshitta Institute,<sup>29</sup> Syriac 2 Baruch appeared without the Epistle. This difference in approach reflects the two different views regarding whether the letter should be considered an integral part of 2 Baruch. The publication of the text of a newly discovered Arabic version of 2 Baruch in 1986<sup>30</sup> did not bring resolution to the issue. Although the Arabic 2 Baruch, dated 9–10<sup>th</sup> century, also contains the Epistle of Baruch, the manuscript is later than 7a1, and the text seems to be a rather free rendition of a Syriac original closely related to the already known Syriac version.<sup>31</sup>

Two questions can be asked: 1) could the letter originally be an independent document unrelated to 2 Baruch and was later attached to the apocalyptic work; and 2) could the letter have existed first and been the source of inspiration for the composition of the entire work of 2 Baruch? It is important to emphasize that these questions can only be discussed in terms of the Syriac text of 2 Baruch, since we do not have evidence for earlier stages of its textual history, being in Greek or in Hebrew/Aramaic.<sup>32</sup> Two arguments are usually found in objections to considering the letter an integral part of the Syriac 2 Baruch. First is the fact that the letter is extant in an independent form attested in numerous manuscripts, whereas only one manuscript attests its inclusion in the apocalypse.<sup>33</sup> Secondly, the epistolary genre of the letter is seen as incompatible with the narrative and apocalyptic writing.<sup>34</sup> As a conclusion of

<sup>26</sup> Ceriani, "Apocalypsis Baruch."

<sup>27</sup> Mihály Kmoskó, "Liber Apocalypseos Baruch filii Neriae translatus de Graeco in Syriacum," cols 1056–1207 in *Patrologia syriaca*, ed. R. Graffin (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1907).

<sup>28</sup> R. H. Charles, *Apocalypse of Baruch*; also his "II Baruch: I. The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch," in *APOT II*: 470–521.

<sup>29</sup> "Apocalypse of Baruch" in *The Old Testament in Syriac*, ed. Sven Dederling (Leiden: Brill, 1973), i–iv and 1–50.

<sup>30</sup> F. Leemhuis, A. Frederik J. Klijn and Geert Jan van Gelder, *The Arabic Text of the Apocalypse of Baruch: Edited and Translated with a Parallel Translation of the Syriac Text* (Leiden: Brill, 1986). Also see Klijn, "The Character of the Arabic Version of the Apocalypse of Baruch," in *Jüdische Schriften in ihrem antio-jüdischen und urchristlichen Kontext*, ed. Hermann Lichtenberger and Gerbern S. Oegema, *SJSHRZ 1* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2002), 204–8.

<sup>31</sup> Klijn, "The Character of the Arabic Version of the Apocalypse of Baruch," 204.

<sup>32</sup> Bogaert (*L'Apocalypse syriaque*), who thinks that the letter is integral to the apocalypse, also emphasizes this point: "Les variantes rédactionnelles que nous avons relevées permettent seulement de conclure qu'au niveau du syriaque, la tradition indépendante est secondaire. Au niveau de l'original, l'hypothèse d'une lettre indépendante qui aurait servi de source à l'auteur de l'apocalypse ne peut être écartée" (73); his emphases.

<sup>33</sup> Murphy, *Structure and Meaning*, 28.

<sup>34</sup> Murphy, *Structure and Meaning*, 28.

her analysis of the literary structure of 2 Baruch, Sayler argues that the Epistle could not have originally been part of the work since the narrative moves to a logical conclusion in Chapter 77 and would be complete without the letter. She also finds that the themes and vocabulary of the Epistle do not match all of those of the rest of 2 Baruch. The similarities between the Epistle and the rest of the apocalypse to her only indicate that the author of the letter was acquainted with 2 Baruch and utilized portions of the document and other traditions in his own composition.<sup>35</sup>

The epistolary genre should not be an obstacle to the letter's being considered part of the apocalypse. There is actually another clear example of letters' being included by an author in a larger apocalyptic work which incorporates a variety of sub-genres. 2 Baruch's contemporary, the Apocalypse of John, is a good illustration. In the case of 2 Baruch, no independent manuscript of the Epistle predates 7a1, which is the oldest extant Syriac Bible that contains the only intact 2 Baruch. More importantly, Bogaert shows that the version included in 2 Baruch is a unique recension, whereas all the other independent letters originated from a common textual family. Textual and grammatical analysis shows that the independent version is a later recension from the attached version. The differences are better explained as changes made by a redactor to facilitate independent circulation of the letter lifted out of its original context.<sup>36</sup> This means that at some point in time the letter became detached from the original book and subsequently circulated in different manuscript traditions.

In terms of theme and terminology, Sayler's opinion based on the discrepancies between the letter and the rest of 2 Baruch is argued against by Whitters, who demonstrates, through detailed analyses of the structure and components of both the apocalypse and the Epistle, that there is an interconnection between the two and that the language of the letter repeats what is found in the apocalypse.<sup>37</sup> Whitters's greatest contribution to this discussion lies in his explanation of how the Epistle, though being original to the book, gained an independent life of its own. He finds numerous common features and shared dimensions between the Epistle, on the one hand, and the Jewish festal letter, the diaspora letter as well as New Testament epistles on the other. All the latter incorporate a strong aspect for use at liturgy and public assemblies. Baruch in the Epistle indeed urges his recipients to read his letter in their assemblies

<sup>35</sup> Sayler, *Have the Promises Failed?*, 98–101.

<sup>36</sup> Bogaert, *L'Apocalypse syriaque*, I, 67–72.

<sup>37</sup> Whitters, *Epistle of Second Baruch*, 32; his detailed analyses are in the second chapter, 35–65. See also Bogaert's analysis in his *L'Apocalypse syriaque*, I: 73–8, which leads him to the same conclusion.

and on the days of their fasts (86:1–2). Ancient audiences would have recognized these features in the Epistle and understood its liturgical function and its suggested context, and thus would be less dependent upon the entire book for its interpretation or acceptance. In other words, the genre itself has sown “the seeds for its own detachment and authoritative autonomy.”<sup>38</sup>

### 5.2.2 *The Crucial Function of the Epistle in 2 Baruch and Authorial Intention*

It is now, therefore, the consensus of the majority that the Epistle forms an integral part of 2 Baruch;<sup>39</sup> this view is supported by textual, structural, thematic as well as grammar-lexical evidence presented above. However, could 2 Baruch be considered a complete work without the Epistle, as Sayler states?<sup>40</sup> Or what is the function of the letter in relation to the entire book? Even Bogaert, who favours the inclusion of the Epistle, seems to consider it merely to provide a summary of the apocalypse in more accessible, exoteric language, so that the major points of the author will not be lost due to the rather esoteric nature of Baruch’s revelations.<sup>41</sup> I argue that the Epistle is not only integral to 2 Baruch; it is the most crucial part and the climax of the book. Its function is comparable to the Epilogue of 4 Ezra, depicting Ezra’s writing of the Law that includes 70 esoteric books. Just as the Epilogue in 4 Ezra is the key to understanding the author’s choice of Ezra as the pseudonymous mouthpiece and his intention of writing the book, likewise, the Epistle of Baruch fulfills the authorial intention of the book of 2 Baruch. It is not an exaggeration to say that the structure and content of the rest of the book prepares for such an intention to be fully realized in the last episode, the Epistle.

As mentioned above, the main body of 2 Baruch is organized in cycles or half cycles of the prayer-revelation-public address pattern. The size of the audience to Baruch’s public address increases each time, from elders in Episode 3 (31:3) to elders,

<sup>38</sup> Whitters, *Epistle of Second Baruch*, 111–2; comparisons of the Epistle of Baruch with Jewish festal letters, diaspora letters and NT letters are found in chapter 3, 66–112. For more on features of the Jewish festal letter, see his “Some New Observations about Jewish Festal Letters,” in *JSJ* 32 (2001): 272–288.

<sup>39</sup> This is the shared view in most recent works on 2 Baruch such as Gurtner, *Second Baruch: Critical Edition*, Stone and Henze, *4 Ezra and 2 Baruch*, Lied, *Other Lands*, and Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*.

<sup>40</sup> Sayler, *Have the Promises Failed?*, 99.

<sup>41</sup> “La lettre ne fait que reprendre les idées maîtresses de l’apocalypse en répondant aux mêmes besoins. Elle souligne l’importance de certaines données qui paraissent accessoires dans le cadre de révélations plus secrètes ou plus étonnantes. Et il y a des raisons de croire que, dans cette présentation exotérique du message ésotérique de l’apocalypse, la hiérarchie des valeurs voulues par l’auteur est moins bouleversée. Les exigences de l’apocalyptique risquaient bien d’entraîner un obscurcissement relatif des intentions de l’écrivain (Bogaert, *L’Apocalypse syriaque*, 76). Murphy (*Structure and Meaning*, 28) and Whitters (*Epistle of Second Baruch*, 57) agree with him.

his son and his friend(s) in Episode 4 (44:1), and to all the people “from the greatest to the smallest” in Episode 6 (77:1). The Epistle of Baruch in Episode 7 should be viewed as an extended public address, in order to bring Baruch’s divinely inspired message to the entire people of Israel. The three verbal addresses only cover those that remain in the Holy Land, but the two letters written by Baruch will take his words to not only the exiles in Babylon, but also the dispersed northern tribes in a faraway land that only an eagle could reach (77:17, 19; 87:1). Therefore, instructing and comforting the entire nation is a priority on the author’s mind and his intention behind the composition of 2 Baruch. This purpose will appear defeated and incomplete without the Epistle as the book’s last episode.

The point is made even more conspicuous if one compares the public address of Ezra in 4 Ezra with those of Baruch. Even though God commands Ezra to “reprove” the people, “comfort the lowly” and “instruct those that are wise” (4 Ezra 4:13), the entire book contains only one public address which takes place prior to Ezra restoring the Law and his assumption immediately after that. The content of his speech can only be described as perfunctory, and does not mention any of his earlier revelations (14:27–36). As it has been argued, in the book of 4 Ezra the function of Ezra as a comfort and help to his people at the time of national crisis lies not in his role as a teacher, but as a giver of the Law that contains knowledge of the eschatological mysteries apart from the conventional Torah. Hence the book culminates in the Epilogue at the high point of the restoration of the Law by Ezra under divine spirit (4 Ezra 14:37–48).

In contrast, 2 Baruch places a great emphasis on the exhortation and encouragement of the people. The following table sums up the contents of the three public addresses that show a progression as Baruch gains more revelations in the process.

*Major Themes of Baruch’s Public Addresses*

| <i>Main themes of Baruch’s exhortation</i>    | <i>Address 1</i> | <i>Address 2</i> | <i>Address 3</i> |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Remember Zion.                                | 31:4             |                  |                  |
| Be warned of more tribulations in the future. | 31:5; 32:2–3, 6  |                  |                  |
| Do not be saddened.                           | 32:5             |                  |                  |
| There will be the renewal and                 | 32:4, 6          | 44:6–8           |                  |

## CHAPTER FIVE

consolation of Zion.

|                                                |      |         |              |
|------------------------------------------------|------|---------|--------------|
| All shall be reversed in the coming age/world. |      | 44:9–15 |              |
| Be steadfast in the Torah.                     | 32:1 | 44:3    | 77:6–7       |
| Disaster is due to Israel's transgressions.    |      | 44:4–5  | 77:3–4, 8–10 |

A glimpse of the themes in Baruch's exhortations shows that the addresses indeed teach the people about both the importance of keeping the Torah and eschatological expectations. They also aim at the consolation of a downtrodden people and the assurance of future hope. Baruch's third address is not as substantial in content as the previous two, and it is also the only one that mentions the fate of "your brothers" in captivity (77:4–5). Torah obedience by the people left in the Holy Land is described as the recompense to bring the exiles back home (77:6). It is immediately after this exhortation that the people request Baruch to write to their brothers in exile (77:11–12). The third public address, therefore, functions as a bridge leading to the Epistle of Baruch in the last episode. This is also extra evidence to show why the Epistle must be seen as part of an organic whole.

The Epistle itself, being a much more extensive and comprehensive public address, covers not only the themes in the three previous speeches, but also more details contained in the episodes of Baruch's revelations. The structure and the content of the Epistle can be summarized as follows:

### *Structure and Content of the Epistle of Baruch*

- |            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 78: 2–7    | <p>I. Introduction on the purpose of the letter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the unity of the twelve tribes as one people;</li> <li>• And for the consolation of the exiles as well as the restoration of their hope and trust in God.</li> </ul>                          |
| 79:1–80:7  | <p>II. The news about the fall of Jerusalem and the exile of Judahites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It happened because of the sins of the people who failed to keep God's commandments;</li> <li>• It was God's own doing and the holy implements were unpolluted.</li> </ul> |
| 81:1–83:23 | <p>III. Baruch's divine revelations in words and visions:</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

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- God will avenge Israel on her enemies at the time of consummation and judge the righteous and the wicked;
  - This age/world is passing and in the coming age/world all things shall be in reverse.
- 84:1–6      IV. Baruch’s exhortation on the importance of Torah observance in order to obtain the promises preserved by God at the time of consummation.
- 84:7–11     V. Baruch’s exhortation on the remembrance of Zion and all pertaining to Israel’s covenant with God.
- 85:1–9      VI. Though intermediary leaderships are lacking, the Torah and the spirit of God remain with Israel.
- 85:10–13   VII. Re-emphasis on the imminence of the *Eschaton* and God’s final judgment.
- 86:1–2      VIII. Closure: Instruction to have the letter read in assemblies and on days of fasts.

The above analysis of the three public addresses and the Epistle not only shows the interconnectedness of the Epistle with the apocalypse, it also demonstrates the author’s genuine concern to offer instruction and consolation to the people after the trauma of losing the centre of their national identity. The Epistle in particular represents the climax that is built up through the book’s narrative, and the fulfillment of its authorial intention. As the Epilogue in 4 Ezra intends to bestow scriptural authority on the Torah of Ezra that includes esoteric teachings, the author of 2 Baruch also intends to grant his teaching to the entire people of Israel an authoritative status, albeit of a different kind and through a different approach.

### 5.2.3 *The Authority of the Epistle of Baruch*

The writing of the letters is given great significance by the author of 2 Baruch. The activity is described as taking place at a highly symbolic location, under the oak at Hebron;<sup>42</sup> it is even assigned a date, “on the twenty-first day of the eighth month” (77:18). This is the only specific date given apart from the one in the opening line of the book.

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<sup>42</sup> More on the significance of this in Chapter Six.

The twenty-first day of the eighth month is precisely forty days after Yom Kippur,<sup>43</sup> the Day of Atonement, which is the tenth day of the seventh month. It is the forty-day period of time that God has allowed Baruch to remain in this world in order to teach the people before his departure (76:4–5). It can be inferred from this that it is on Yom Kippur that Baruch receives the powerful vision of the bright and dark waters in order to see, from a divine perspective, human history in its entirety as merely a short, unhappy episode within the overall transcendent, purposeful design of God. It also means the letter represents Baruch's final word on his last day in this world. On the one hand, the date associated with Yom Kippur is symbolic of national repentance and forgiveness, and therefore hope for a new beginning. On the other hand, it presents the letter as Baruch's farewell speech; and similar to the restoration of the Law by Ezra before his translation into heaven, it is modeled after the last words of Moses in Deuteronomy. The aim of this presentation is to place the teaching of Baruch on a status of authority.

The discussion on the general portrayal of Baruch's character and specifically as a parallel to Moses will take place in another chapter,<sup>44</sup> but here it is necessary to take a closer look into the manner in which such authority is created by the author of 2 Baruch apart from the Mosaic analogy. What type of authority does the author claim for the Epistle of Baruch? In what ways is this authority similar to or different from the authority of Ezra's Torah claimed by the author of 4 Ezra?

Mark Whitters suggests that since the words of Baruch are transcribed and preserved on a scroll (77:12, 19, 22; 87:1), this in itself is an indication of the Torah-like authority of the epistle. In his interpretation the letter on the wings of an eagle, a noble bird that flies the highest, may also point to the superiority of Baruch's source of revelation compared to other prophets in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>45</sup> This evaluation may indeed, as Henze says, go too far. Nowhere in the letter does Baruch present the words as divine utterance, but rather as "a witness between me and you" (84:7). The introductory formula in 78:2 is "Thus speaks Baruch" (כֹּה אָמַר בָּרוּךְ) rather than "Thus speaks the Lord." Henze particularly contrasts this with the explicit claim in the

<sup>43</sup> Whitters, *Epistle of Second Baruch*, 50.

<sup>44</sup> See Chapter Eight.

<sup>45</sup> Whitters, *Epistle of Second Baruch*, 50. Similar arguments are also presented in his "Testament and Canon in the Letter of Second Baruch (2 Baruch 78–87)," *JSP*12 (2001): 149–63.



Epistle of Jeremiah that the letter Jeremiah sent to those in Babylonian exile was “the message that God had commanded him” (Ep Jer 6:1).<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, Henze points out more differences between the writing down of the Law in 4 Ezra and the writing down of Baruch’s letter. Baruch is not under God’s command, like Ezra is, to write the letter, but at the request of the people; nor does he write a record of divine revelation. In Henze’s own words,

It makes no revelatory claims of authority. Instead, it rests squarely on Baruch’s authority with the Jewish community at large. Baruch, in turn, derives his authority from the fact that God has revealed to him visions (81:4) and that he considers himself sent by God and responsible for the people.<sup>47</sup>

Henze’s is a correct evaluation of the nature of the authority of Baruch’s letter. It rests not on a scriptural status claimed by the author as the word of God, but on the authority status of the person of Baruch.

This is most clearly seen if we compare the writing of the Epistle with the writing of the Torah in 4 Ezra. Although the persona of Ezra, depicted as righteous, full of wisdom and a prophet after Moses, also lends authority to the restored Torah, that authority is ultimately traced to the word itself being the word of God. That is why before the writing of the Torah, Ezra is given a cup to drink, “full of something like water, but its color was like fire” (4 Ezra 14:39). It is not Ezra who speaks, but the holy spirit that speaks through him (4 Ezra 14:22). In other words, Ezra’s authority is derived in the same manner as other classic Israelite prophets in the Hebrew Bible, from God himself speaking through him.<sup>48</sup> This is not the approach of 2 Baruch to establish authority for Baruch’s epistle. As Henze has argued,<sup>49</sup> there is no attempt by the author to attribute divine authority to the words of Baruch.

On the other hand, the source of the authority enjoyed by the Epistle is from God’s will nonetheless, although it is the people, not God himself, who requested the writing of the letters. Even though the Epistle is not to record the content of divine revelation, it is God who commanded Baruch to instruct the people (43:3; 76:5). The

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<sup>46</sup> The opening of Ep Jer, “A copy of a letter which Jeremiah sent to those who were to be taken to Babylon as captives by the king of the Babylonians, to give them the message which God had commanded him (6:1)” (Διὰ τὰς ἁμαρτίας, ἃς ἡμαρτήκατε ἐναντίον τοῦ θεοῦ). See Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 353, and n 13 on the same page.

<sup>47</sup> *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 352.

<sup>48</sup> The divine origin of their words is clearly marked by the pronouncement of “thus says the LORD,” or “the word of the LORD;” or in the case of Ezekiel, it is symbolized by the eating of a scroll (Ezek 3:1–2).

<sup>49</sup> *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 352.

Epistle, as an extended speech of Baruch, forms part of his carrying out of that divine commandment, and is therefore authoritative.

More importantly, the above difference in approach between 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch reveals a different type of authority figure that 2 Baruch intends to promote in the post-destruction era. Firstly, Baruch is still presented as a classic prophet in the Hebrew Bible like Jeremiah and Ezekiel. “The word of God was upon” him (1:1; 10:1). In Episode 1, “a strong spirit” raises him up and carries him over the wall of Jerusalem, in the manner Ezekiel was lifted up and carried (Eze 3:14). But Baruch is portrayed not only as a prophet, but also a teacher of the Torah. He is taught by God through revelation and teaches Israel through his own understanding of the word of God. The Epistle of Baruch in the final episode precisely presents the words of a teacher of the Torah with authority. This echoes the concern reflected in the letter itself over the disappearance of the prophets (85:3), as well as the anxiety expressed by the people for a lack of leadership in the wake of the disaster: “where again shall we seek the Torah, or who will distinguish for us between death and life?” (46:3). Faced with this crisis, the author of 2 Baruch intends to promote a different type of divine presence and a different type of authoritative leadership. God no longer speaks directly to Israel through the prophets, nor is he to be sought in the Temple now that Zion is no more, but his presence is to be found in the Torah that remains (85:3). Consequently, the type of leader in the future is a teacher of the Torah after the prototype of Baruch. Or as Baruch answers, “Israel will not be in want of a sage, nor the nation of Jacob of a son of Torah” (46:4). Baruch, being both the last prophet and a sage of the Torah, marks a transition of the authority figure. The Epistle of Baruch is not authoritative because it is the word of God; it is authoritative because the teacher of the Torah has been given divine sanction. Thus, the author of 2 Baruch prophesied correctly the rise of Torah teachers as Israel’s new leaders in the rabbinic age. It is rather an irony that his book undeservingly suffered the fate of oblivion for centuries after its appearance.<sup>50</sup>

### 5.3 Summary

In summary, 2 Baruch is a coherent book that is organized around a series of revelations either in dialogue or in vision, presented in cycles or half cycles of the prayer-revelation-public address pattern. The narrative is carried forward through the

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<sup>50</sup> Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 1–8.

## STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF 2 BARUCH

progression of content in each revelation, and through the increasingly greater audiences of Baruch's public addresses, culminating in the Epistle of Baruch to the exiled tribes in diaspora. The fact that each revelation cycle ends on Baruch's exhortation to the people and that the book is brought to completion with the Epistle as an extended form of public address, demonstrates that the author of 2 Baruch places a great emphasis upon the instruction and the consolation of the people after the catastrophic destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

A study of the structure and content of 2 Baruch has already revealed the major concerns of its author, namely the crisis of Israel's covenantal relationship with God, and a deep anxiety over a lack of Jewish leadership. The response of the author is to uphold the commandments of the Mosaic Law and to have faith in God's promises for the world or age to come. Seen in this light, the Epistle of Baruch is not only an integral part of the apocalypse, but also the crucial climax that fulfills the purpose of the book. On the one hand, the message in the letter is presented as words of Baruch, a recipient of divine revelations and God's chosen teacher of Israel, thus authoritative; on the other hand, unlike the authority of Ezra as a giver of the Law, the author of 2 Baruch intends to promote a different type of authority, that of the sage and teacher of Torah.

The following chapters will examine the major themes of the book on the covenantal crisis as well the author's response with Torah and the *eschaton*.



## CHAPTER SIX

### THE COVENANT IN CRISIS IN 2 BARUCH

The destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in 70 CE served as the *raison d'être* for the composition of 2 Baruch, as it also did for 4 Ezra. Again, as in 4 Ezra, the nature of the crisis is to be found deeper in Israel's covenantal relationship with God, now in jeopardy. In other words, the loss of the Temple represents not the crisis, but its symptom.<sup>1</sup>

Compared with 4 Ezra, however, the expression of the author's attitude towards the Temple is more complicated in 2 Baruch. To start with, Jerusalem and the Temple feature more prominently in 2 Baruch. In 4 Ezra, which is set in Babylon, Zion is the object of Ezra's mourning and the reason for questioning God; however, in addition to that, in 2 Baruch Zion is also chosen as the setting for the first forty-six chapters of the narrative: events and dialogues take place either in Jerusalem or the Temple precinct. The destruction of Zion, which is in the background of the plot in 4 Ezra, is brought to the front in 2 Baruch, as the book opens with God's announcement of his plan to destroy Zion, followed by Baruch's vision of Temple destruction by the angels in Episode 1 (1:1–9:1). The word "Zion" and parallel terms appear much more frequently in 2 Baruch than in 4 Ezra. One might even speculate that 2 Baruch arguably demonstrates a more intense concern for the loss of Jerusalem and the Temple.

On the other hand, however, the author's attitude to the Temple is less easily definable. In 4 Ezra, the loss of the earthly Zion serves as the direct cause of Ezra's obstinate protest (4 Ezra 3:2), and the vision of the transfiguration of the woman into the Heavenly Jerusalem serves as the decisive motivation for his change of attitude (9:38–10:59). Besides, Zion plays a distinct role in Ezra's visions of the age to come; it is implied in the Davidic identity of the Messiah in the vision of the Eagle and the Lion (12:32), and in the vision of the Man from the Sea the advent of the new Zion is to be made manifest to all in the final struggle of the Messiah against the nations (13:35–6). 2 Baruch's attitude to the Temple, in comparison, is less straightforward for interpretation. Baruch also mourns bitterly over the fate of Zion, but as his attention is turned to the world or age to come, there does not seem to be a clearly reserved place

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<sup>1</sup> These are the words of my teacher, Dr. Stephen Llewelyn, private conversation.

for Zion in his eschatological visions. The author's undifferentiated and interchangeable use of terms, such as the Temple, the city, Jerusalem and Zion, further complicates interpretations. Many commentators have come to the conclusion that 2 Baruch suppresses the importance of the Jerusalem Temple and the land generally, by assigning them to this corruptible world, while directing his reader's attention to different categories in the world to come. In other words, the Temple and the land are perceived as at a disjunction with the eschatological future, and are therefore either downplayed or made superfluous.<sup>2</sup>

In this chapter I will argue that a more nuanced understanding of the author's attitude towards the Temple is needed. 2 Baruch attaches great importance to the Temple and the Holy Land and regard them as ineludible symbols of God's covenantal relationship with Israel. The emphasis on the world to come does not necessarily diminish the importance of these earthly symbols. How the author accommodates both the importance of Zion of this world and his focus on the world to come will be more fully discussed in the next chapter. In this chapter I will 1) analyse the way Jerusalem and the Temple are presented in the narrative, 2) explore the reason for the seemingly ambiguous and undistinguished use of terms to refer to Jerusalem, Zion and the Temple, and 3) examine the use of place names in the book and interpret their symbolic meanings. More specifically, the chapter is concerned with the following questions: in what ways does 2 Baruch's attitude to the Temple and the land reveal its understanding of Israel's covenantal relationship with God? How does 2 Baruch use symbols associated with the land to express its concern for the covenant now under threat?

### *6.1 The Catastrophe: The Destruction of Zion*

#### *6.1.1 Narrative on the Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple*

The narrative zooms onto Jerusalem and the Temple in its opening, with God announcing their imminent destruction to Baruch. A dialogue between God and Baruch ensues (chap. 1–5), in the form termed by Murphy as “intercessory bargaining”

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<sup>2</sup> Negative assessment on the importance of the Temple and the land can be gleaned from Sayler, *Have the Promises Failed?*; Murphy, *Structure and Meaning*; as well as his “The Temple in the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch,” *JBL* 106 (1987): 671–83; Whittiers, *Epistle of Second Baruch*, particularly 64, 113, 124 and 138–9; and Géza G. Xeravits, “Conflicting Ideas about the Temple in 2 Baruch 4 and 6,” in *Judaism and Crisis: Crisis as a Catalyst in Jewish Cultural History*, ed. Armin Lange, K. F. Diethard Römheld and Matthias Weigold (Göttingen: V&R, 2011), 153–64. For a summary on this issue, see Liv Ingeborg Lied, *Other Lands*, 5–8.

which is also found in Mosaic traditions in the Hebrew Bible (Num 14:12; 16:21; and Ex 32:10).<sup>3</sup> In this form, God declares punishment to Israel for its sins; Moses intercedes for the people; and finally God relents from carrying out the punishment. In a similar way to Moses, Baruch pleads mercy, saying he would rather die than see the evil come upon mother Zion. In particular, he asks,

... if you destroy *your city*, and you hand *your land* over to those who hate us, how will the *name of Israel* again be remembered? Or how will we speak about *your glories*? Or to whom will be explained what is in *your Torah*? Or should the world return to its [original] nature, and the world [or age] again go to [primeval] silence? And is the multitude of souls taken away, and will the nature of humankind not again be named? And where is all that you said to Moses about us? (3:5–9)

and again,

Will I therefore be guilty on account of *Zion*, that those who hate you will come to this place and defile *your sanctuary*, and take *your inheritance* into captivity and rule over *those whom you love*, and will again go to the place of their idols and boast before them? And what have you done for *your great name*? (5:1)

Baruch's protest betrays an ancient belief about the centrality of the Jerusalem Temple not only for the land and for lives of the Jews, but also for the entire world and humankind; the Temple was even believed to play a cosmic role in establishing the natural order (3:7–8). This cosmic role is confirmed later when it is said that Zion is taken away so that God will "hasten more and visit the world [or age] in its time" (20:2).

More important, however, is Baruch's anxiety over the covenantal relationship between God and Israel, which is marked by the sign of Zion. In his protest, three interconnected elements of that covenantal relationship are highlighted: 1) the sanctuary, the city and the land; 2) the name of Israel, God's inheritance and those whom he loves; and 3) God's glory, his Torah and his great name. The loss of one element, i.e. Jerusalem and the Temple, signifies a much deeper crisis: the reputation of Israel's God<sup>4</sup> and Israel's status as the people of God. What does Baruch refer to, when he asks, "where is all that you said to Moses about us?" (3:9) It seems to imply certain well known Mosaic traditions. Perhaps it refers to God's words, "you shall be my possession among all people" (Ex 19:5; cf. Deut 28: 7–10), and "I will glorify my people above all nations" (LAB 11:1). Yet in reality the promise does not seem to be upheld.

<sup>3</sup> Murphy, *Structure and Meaning*, 72–92. More on 2 Bar's use of this form in Chapter Seven.

<sup>4</sup> The vindication of God's reputation is treated as a major concern of 2 Baruch in Saylor, *Have the Promises Failed?*, 42–74.

## CHAPTER SIX

Unlike Moses, Baruch's intercession is unsuccessful. God's answer to his protest is also threefold. Firstly, the city is delivered up and the people are chastised—but only “for a time” (4:1); secondly, what is to be destroyed is not the heavenly Jerusalem and heavenly Temple which existed from the beginning and is safely preserved with God (4:2–6); and thirdly, God's name and praise are unto eternity, and the enemies are only serving the judge “for a time” (5:2–3). In other words, 2 Baruch intends to mediate the severity of the crisis by emphasizing the temporary nature of the disaster, and by making God himself the actor who demolished Zion and burned down Jerusalem. Moreover, it makes God claim that the earthly city/building is not the one in heaven:

Or do you perhaps think that this is the city about which I said: On the palms of my hands I have inscribed you. This building that is now built in your midst is not the one revealed with me, the one already prepared here when I intended to make Paradise. (4:2–3)

“On the palms of my hands I have inscribed you” is borrowed from Isaiah 49:14–16:

But Zion said, “The Lord has forsaken me,  
my Lord has forgotten me.”  
Can a woman forget her nursing child,  
or show no compassion for the child of her womb?  
Even these may forget,  
yet I will not forget you.  
See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands;  
your walls are continually before me. (NRSV)

In the context of Isaiah 49,<sup>5</sup> however, Zion is used as a code word symbolizing the collective identity of Israel. Zion as a symbol of the people and community is not unique to Isaiah 49, and this usage is especially prominent in Jeremiah.<sup>6</sup> The association of Zion with the people is also present in 2 Baruch, for example, when Baruch refers to Zion as “mother” (3:1, 2, 3) in his protest against God's plan of destruction.<sup>7</sup> However, 2 Baruch's use of Isaiah 49:16 quoted above changes the people reference of the term to explicitly refer to the heavenly city. It was revealed to Adam the first man, to Abraham to whom the promise was given, and to Moses on

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<sup>5</sup> That 2 Baruch has Isa 49 in mind is also demonstrated by 2 Bar 1:4c, when God says, “I am scattering this people among the nations, so that it will do good to the nations”; an allusion to Isa 49:6, “I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

<sup>6</sup> E.g. Ps 79:1–2; Mic 7:8; Isa 46:13; 51:17; Jer 1:3; 4:11; 13:9–10 etc. On the term “Zion,” see G. Fohrer and E. Lohse, “Zion,” *TDNT* 7:292–338.

<sup>7</sup> For a summary of the significance and usage of Jerusalem/Zion as mother, see Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 76, n 14.



Mount Sinai when the Torah was given (4:3–5). The desolation of the earthly Zion is only for a time, but the real Zion in heaven is with God for eternity.<sup>8</sup>

The episode continues with the narrative of the Temple's destruction witnessed by Baruch himself (6:1–8.5). Four angels standing on the four corners of the city, each holding a fiery torch in their hands:

And I saw that he (another angel) descended into the holy of holies. And he took from there the curtain, the holy ephod, the cover, the two tables, the holy garment of the priests, the censer, the forty-eight precious stones, those which the priest wore, and all the holy implements of the sanctuary. And he said to the earth in a loud voice: "Earth, earth, earth, hear the word of God, the Mighty One, and receive these which I commit to you, and preserve them until the last times, so that, when you are commanded you will yield them, so that strangers will not have power over them. Because the time has come that Jerusalem will be handed over for a time, until it will be said that it will again be established forever. And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them. (6:7–10)

The angels then destroyed the wall of Zion and burned the "place of God" (7:1), before the Babylonian army could seize the Temple. Similar to the tradition on Temple destruction in Ezekiel chapter 10, it is God himself who destroyed his own dwelling place through angelic forces, and the presence of God had already left the Temple before the holy place was defiled by the enemies.

The first episode of 2 Baruch, as a narrative account of the destruction of the Temple, both provides the setting for the entire book and offers an explanation for the loss of Jerusalem and the Temple: that it was by God's own will as a punishment for Israel's sins; that the Temple was not defiled by enemies because the spirit of God had already abandoned the place; and that the one that was destroyed was not the heavenly Jerusalem which was pre-existent and for eternity.

### *6.1.2 The Importance of the Temple in 2 Baruch*

Through the narrative in Episode 1, the author intends to alleviate the trauma by minimizing the proportion of the problem; but what is his attitude to the Jerusalem Temple?

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<sup>8</sup> Thus Michael Stone ("Reaction to the Destruction", 199) calls 4:2–6 "The History of Heavenly Jerusalem". The speculation of a heavenly Jerusalem and heavenly Temple received special attention after the post-exilic period, together with the idea that they will replace the earthly ones at the *eschaton* when God's glory is fully revealed. Examples are found in Jub 8:19; 4:26; 1 En 90: 28–9; T Levi 3: 4–5; 13:10; T Mos 1:18; 4 Ezra 7:26; as well as Qumran literature such as the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, 4QFlorilegium, 11QNew Jerusalem. See R. G. Hamerton-Kelly, "The Temple and the Origins of Jewish Apocalyptic," VT 20 (1970): 1–15 (1–4); Stone, "Reaction," 198–9; also Xeravits, "Conflicting Ideas," 156–7, particular nos 8 & 9 for a detailed list of reference works.

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Xeravits finds conflicting ideas in the dialogue between God and Baruch in chapter 4 and the destruction account in chapter 6. For him, chapter 4 denies any interest in the actual Temple but focuses exclusively on the future Temple, whereas chapter 6 places such a great importance on the actual Temple that it is necessary to save it and its holy instruments from the corrupt age. He attributes the apparent conflixtions to the hypothesis that chapter 4 was inserted material secondary to its context.<sup>9</sup> In my opinion, however, Episode 1 is one undisrupted block of narrative, which begins with God's announcement of destruction (chs 1–2), continues with Baruch's failed intercession (3–5), and follows on with what subsequently happens to the city (6–9). There is no need to subject its structure to different sources or stages of redaction. Neither are there different evaluations of the Temple in chapter 4 and 6. In both chapters the Temple building and the city must be destroyed. Also in both of them attention is drawn to a future Temple: in chapter 4 it is through the invocation of the ideal Temple in eternity, whereas in chapter 6 it is through the hope for the resumption of Temple service in the future when "it will again be established forever" (6:9).

Murphy's article in 1987 also aims to examine the attitude of 2 Baruch to Jerusalem and the Temple.<sup>10</sup> Apart from the conversation between God and Baruch (chs 1–5) and the description of the destruction of Jerusalem (chs 6–8), he adds a third cluster of Zion traditions in his study: Baruch's lament over the destruction in chapters 10–12. His answer to the question is that 2 Baruch has a negative attitude to the Temple, both earthly and heavenly. Firstly, he sees the author of 2 Baruch using the heavenly city to make a negative statement about the earthly.<sup>11</sup> In his opinion Baruch is refuted for mistaking the earthly Temple for the heavenly,<sup>12</sup> and for linking God's glory to Jerusalem Temple;<sup>13</sup> he thinks that even Baruch's lament is undermined by the author in order to throw the Temple ideology into doubt.<sup>14</sup> Secondly, Murphy seems to think that the heavenly Temple is also deemphasized, only serving limited purpose of directing the attention of the reader away from the catastrophe of 70 CE. He comments that the image of the heavenly city is not developed, and the author "does not imply

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<sup>9</sup> Xeravits, "Conflicting Ideas," 162–4.

<sup>10</sup> Murphy, "The Temple."

<sup>11</sup> Murphy, "The Temple," 675.

<sup>12</sup> "The Temple," 675.

<sup>13</sup> "The Temple," 680.

<sup>14</sup> "The Temple," 680.

that the heavenly city will ever come to earth.”<sup>15</sup> I agree with Murphy on the point that 2 Baruch “deals with the loss of Zion in part by relativizing its importance,” but Murphy’s view that the author “attacks or downgrades a wide range of beliefs associated with the Temple” must be more cautiously examined.

Both Baruch’s intercession, even though unsuccessful, and his lament over the fallen Zion should not be read as a set up so that Baruch can be rebuked and refuted. Intercessions and lamentations offered by characters such as Moses, Jeremiah, Ezra and Baruch on behalf of the people intend to portray the protagonists as holy and righteous, not the least to be regarded in any polemical sense. The new eschatological revelations Baruch receives indeed draw the eyes of the audience to gaze upon what is to come; they do not, however, deny the importance of what has just been lost.

Firstly, regarding the earthly Temple, Murphy is correct in saying that the author of 2 Baruch shows depreciation of the Temple building, in particular the Second Temple in comparison with the first, and that he deemphasizes the hope to restore the earthly Temple.<sup>16</sup> However, it is the building itself, not the earthly Zion as a place chosen by God, nor the Temple cult, that is relativized. A rebuilt Temple is not expected, not because of the author’s denial of its importance, but because of his belief in the imminent end of the world/age, when the next Temple in Jerusalem will be the eternal, heavenly Temple.

There are two places in 2 Baruch where Baruch makes an *ex eventu* prophecy about the destruction of the Second Temple. First in Baruch’s first public speech:

... after a short time, the building of Zion will be shaken, in order to be built again. But that building will not remain, but will again be uprooted after a time and will remain desolate until the time. (32:2–3)

then when Remiel interprets the vision of the twelfth dark and bright water:

And at that time, after a little [while], Zion will again be built, and her offerings will again be restored, and the priests will return to their ministry, and the nations will also come in order to glorify her—nevertheless, not as fully as in the beginning. (68:5–6)

These two prophecies—according to Henze’s argument, with which I totally concur—provide an unequivocal point of reference for the post-70 dating of the book.<sup>17</sup> A

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<sup>15</sup> “The Temple,” 676.

<sup>16</sup> “The Temple,” 682.

<sup>17</sup> Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 193–5. Here Henze convincingly argues against Bogaert (*L’Apocalypse syriaque*, I: 424), who thinks this refers to a third temple. Murphy (“The Temple,” 682) also proposes that 2 Bar 32:2–4 envisages a third temple building.

tendency to devalue the second Temple building can indeed be detected in the prophecies. By stating that its restoration will not be “as fully as in the beginning” and that it will again be uprooted, the author aims to alleviate the shock and sorrow of his reader who is experiencing the trauma. But this is not to deny that the earthly Temple is also God’s dwelling place. Notice that the Second Temple, though inferior to the First, is represented as the twelfth bright water in Baruch’s dream vision (68:1–8), a positive evaluation in the author’s historical review. He also foresees the temporary second building to be replaced by an eternal Temple, for after its desolation “until the time,” “it must be renewed in glory and completed forever” (32:3–4).

2 Baruch attaches equal importance to the Temple cult. In Episode 1 on the eve of Babylonian invasion Baruch witnesses an angel descend into the holy of holies, take out the Temple vessels and commit them to the care of the earth:

And he said to the earth in a loud voice: “Earth, earth, earth, hear the word of God, the Mighty One, and receive these which I commit to you, and preserve them until the last times, so that, when you are commanded, you will yield them, so that strangers will not have power over them. Because the time has come that Jerusalem will be handed over for a time, until it will be said that it will again be established forever. (6:8–9)

There are other similar traditions about hiding holy cultic vessels found, for example, in 2 Macc 2:4–8, *The Lives of the Prophets* 2:11–18, and 4 Baruch 3:8–11.<sup>18</sup> In 1 Baruch 1:8–9, Baruch is responsible for returning the vessels to Judah from Babylon. However, whereas in these examples, it is a human figure, Jeremiah or Baruch, who takes care of them in order that cultic worship may be restored in the future,<sup>19</sup> in 2 Baruch, it is an angel who entrusts them to the care of the earth. The vessels can only be retrieved at the *eschaton*, when the earth gives back everything that has been committed to it. Two points stand out: 1) the Temple cult is viewed by the author as valuable and must be safeguarded for the future; and 2) the author is not expecting the building of a third Temple, but an everlasting Temple restored at the end-time.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The tradition about hiding the vessels of the First Temple until the day of its restoration predates 2 Baruch. See George W. E. Nickelsburg, “Narrative Traditions in the Paralipomena of Jeremiah and 2 Baruch,” *CBQ* 35 (1973): 60–8; Murphy, “The Temple,” 679; Isaac Kalimi and James D. Purvis, “The Hiding of the Temple Vessels in Jewish and Samaritan Literature,” *CBQ* 56 (1994): 679–85; Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 86.

<sup>19</sup> The texts dated later (*Lives of the Prophets*, 2 Bar and 4 Bar) betray stronger eschatological expectations by telling that the vessels were swallowed up by the earth or a rock for safekeeping, rather than by earthly or human means (1 Bar, 2 Macc).

<sup>20</sup> Murphy (“The Temple,” 679) thinks the restoration refers to the building of the Second Temple, not a third. But it is clear from the text that the author expects the holy vessels to be preserved “until the last times,” when it will be “established forever” (6:8–9). It is only at the *eschaton* that the earth will give

Neither does 2 Baruch downgrade the importance of the heavenly Temple, as Murphy thinks. From what is argued above, the author states emphatically and repeatedly that at the *eschaton* the Temple “will be established forever” (6:9), “it must be renewed and completed forever” (32:4), and “you will see the consolation of Zion” (44:7). These statements should be understood as expectation of the new Jerusalem, expressed otherwise as the city of God in Revelation 21, 1 Enoch 90:29 and 4 Ezra 7:26. Zion also plays an integral part in the eschatological victory of the Messiah. The last enemy of Israel will be bound and taken to Mount Zion to face judgment and punishment by the Messiah (40:1). It is also there that the remnant of God’s people will be protected (40:2; 71:1).

In summary, 2 Baruch aims to alleviate the crisis by relativizing the importance of the physical Temple on earth and focusing attention on the imminent end. However, the importance of Zion as God’s chosen dwelling place is not diminished. Instead, it is precisely in the *eschaton* that the permanent establishment of the Temple is anticipated. The Temple building is not the true Temple inscribed in the palms of God’s hands, but its destruction is still to be mourned. Not only is Baruch’s lament considered a righteous act (10:8–19; 35:1–5), the angels of the Most High and even God himself cannot help but show sorrow (67:2–4). It is because of its importance that Baruch exhorts the people, “Do not forget Zion, but remember the sorrow of Jerusalem” (31:4; cf. 84:8).

### 6.2 Overlapping Terms: Reference, Sense and Associated Idea

2 Baruch does not clearly distinguish between Zion, Jerusalem and the Temple. Although these terms are overlapping in 4 Ezra too, the phenomenon appears even more in need of an explanation in 2 Baruch, as these place names are used in much higher frequency and density.<sup>21</sup> The actual references to “the Temple” or its synonym (the “building”, the “house”, the “place”, “sanctuary”, “holy of holies”) are concentrated in the scene of Temple destruction in Episode 1 (1:1–9:1).<sup>22</sup> Otherwise in

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back what is kept in it. Also given the time of writing (after 70 CE), the author could not have had the Second Temple in mind as the everlasting temple.

<sup>21</sup> This ambiguity can even be traced back to the HB (e.g. Isa 51:16; Amos 1:2, etc.), and is well noted by 2 Baruch’s commentators. See Saylor, *Have the Promises Failed?* 16; Murphy, *Structure and Meaning* 71–116; Murphy, “Temple,” 671; Lied, *Other Lands*, 36; and Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 73, n 7.

<sup>22</sup> “Temple” (8:1; 10:5), “this building” (4:3), “the building of Zion” (32:2; 61:2), “that building” (32:3), “the house” (8:2; 8:4), “your house” (10:18), “this place” (5:1; 35:4), “the place of God” (7:1; 77:9),

Episode 1, the more general term, “this city” or “the city”, is a more frequent choice, referring to either Jerusalem or the Temple.<sup>23</sup> Jerusalem is also called “my mother” by Baruch,<sup>24</sup> a common metaphor shared with 4 Ezra and other Jewish writings both within and outside the Hebrew Bible.<sup>25</sup> “Jerusalem” is mentioned nine times in the text,<sup>26</sup> but by far the most preferred term throughout the text is “Zion”, which occurs forty or so times.<sup>27</sup> It is particularly noticeable that after Episode 1, the author is almost exclusively preoccupied with the word “Zion”.

How can we explain the ambiguous and overlapping use of terms? A consideration for the author’s literary style to avoid repetition cannot be ruled out; in many cases these terms are simply presented in parallelism. However, there is still a certain pattern in the author’s use of these terms. The Fregean idea of “sense and reference” may help shed some light on their significance.<sup>28</sup> Gottlob Frege recognizes three levels of meaning in a proper name: *reference*, *sense* and *associated idea*.<sup>29</sup> The *reference* of a proper name is the object it indicates. The *sense* is what the name expresses, or a “mode of presentation” of certain aspect of the *reference*.<sup>30</sup> A proper name always possesses a sense, even though it may not have a *reference*. For example, the name, “Odysseus,” expresses an intelligible *sense*, even though it does not correspond to an individual object, or a *reference*.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, proper names may have the same *reference*, but each will have a different *sense*. For example, the *reference* of “evening star” would be the same as that of “morning star”, but “evening star” and “morning star” are not of the same *sense*.<sup>32</sup> The third level of meaning is the

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“the place that I have chosen” (42:2), “holy of holies” (6:7), “its walls” (7:1), “the wall of Zion (7:1), “the wall” (8:1).

<sup>23</sup> 1:4; 2:1; 2:2; 3:5; 4:1; 4:2; 6:1; 6:4; 9:1; 21:21 (“our city”); 80:1. If the original language of 2 Baruch was Hebrew, the word city (יְרוּשָׁלַיִם) may reflect the Hebrew word עִיר. Loren Fisher (“The Temple Quarter,” *JSS* 8 [1963]: 34–41) has shown that עִיר could mean both “temple quarter” and “city”. Cited in Hamerton-Kelly, “Temple and the Origins,” 3 n 1.

<sup>24</sup> 3:1; 3:2; 3:3; 10:16 (“this mother”).

<sup>25</sup> E.g. Isa 49:20–22, 25; 50:1; 51:18, 20; 54:1; Ezek 16:20–1, 36; Hos 4:5, 4; 1 Bar 4:8–5:9; 4 Ezra 10:7–8; Gal 4:25–26.

<sup>26</sup> 5:3; 6:3; 6:9; 10:7; 31:4; 35:3; 44:5; 63:9; 67:6.

<sup>27</sup> 5:1; 5:3; 6:2; 10:3; 10:5; 10:7; 10:10; 10:12; 11:1x2; 11:2; 13:1; 13:3; 14:6; 14:7; 20:1; 31:4; 34:1; 35:3; 39:3; 40:1; 44:5; 44:7; 59:4; 61:2; 61:7; 63:3; 63:4; 63:9; 64:4; 67:1; 67:2; 67.3x3; 67:7; 68:5; 77:8; 79:1; 80:6; 81:2; 84:8; 85:3.

<sup>28</sup> Gottlob Frege, “On Sense and Reference,” first published in *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophisch Kritik* 100 (1892): 25–50; English trans. Max Black, in *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, ed. Peter Geach and Max Black (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1960), 56–78.

<sup>29</sup> These terms appear in italic to indicate they represent Frege’s three categories of meaning.

<sup>30</sup> “On Sense and Reference,” 57.

<sup>31</sup> 62.

<sup>32</sup> 57.

*associated idea*. Frege defines it as “an internal image” of an object (*reference*) perceived through the senses, an image “arising from memories of sense impressions,” “often saturated with feelings.” Unlike the *sense*, the *associated idea* of a proper name is subjective and differs from individual to individual.<sup>33</sup> Frege explains the connection between *reference*, *sense* and *associated idea* thus:

The reference of a proper name is the object itself which we designate by its means; the idea, which we have in that case, is wholly subjective; in between lies the sense, which is indeed no longer subjective like the idea, but is yet not the object itself.<sup>34</sup>

In other words, a proper name “designates” its *reference*, “expresses” its *sense*, and evokes an *associated idea*.<sup>35</sup> To use an example to illustrate, the proper name, Land of Canaan, designates that Semitic-speaking region in the ancient Near East (the *reference*); the object is expressed in the *sense* of the name “Canaan” (as compared with other *senses*, e.g. Land of Israel, Palestine or Levant, all sharing the same *reference*); it evokes, no doubt, different *ideas* about the object in individual hearers. Whereas scientific investigations drive us “to advance from the *sense* to the *reference*,”<sup>36</sup> literature and art seek to evoke imaginal *ideas* through colouring and shading of the *senses*.<sup>37</sup>

Therefore, three levels of difference can be recognized between words and expressions: “The difference may concern at most the *ideas*, or the *sense* but not the *reference*, or, finally, the *reference* as well.”<sup>38</sup> Applying the three levels of difference to the use of related terms in 2 Baruch, firstly, two different *references* can be identified: the Temple building itself and the larger object of Jerusalem. The former is expressed through different *senses* such as “this building,” “your house,” “your sanctuary,” and “the place of God;” and the latter through different *senses* such as “my mother,” “Jerusalem,” and “Zion;” whereas “city” can be used to refer to either according to context.<sup>39</sup> It is not surprising, then, that the first group of terms cluster in Episode 1 describing the destruction of the Temple, whereas the second group dominate the rest of the book. Secondly, the various terms express different *senses* that evoke different *associated ideas* in the reader. Both “Jerusalem” and “Zion” induce the

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<sup>33</sup> 60.

<sup>34</sup> 60.

<sup>35</sup> 61.

<sup>36</sup> 63.

<sup>37</sup> 61.

<sup>38</sup> 61.

<sup>39</sup> Given that “city” עיר may mean either the city or the Temple court; see n 23 above.

concept of the City of God and symbolize the people of God,<sup>40</sup> both of which are *ideas* that endure regardless of the Temple building. “Zion” is the most predominant choice of the term in 2 Baruch. This can be attributed to the distinctive *associated idea* it evokes in the reader which is intended by the author. While “Jerusalem” and “Zion” often appear as parallel terms both in the Hebrew Bible and in 2 Baruch,<sup>41</sup> they may also evoke subtly different images. “Jerusalem” has the *associated idea* of the city of sin and judgment, as it appears in Jeremiah and Ezekiel; “Zion”, however, being a preferred term in Isaiah, calls to mind the city of eschatological salvation.<sup>42</sup>

Therefore, through the analysis of the overlapping terms using Frege’s paradigm of three levels of meaning, we see once again the same attitude to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 2 Baruch. What was destroyed was the Temple building, whose importance may be relativized; but Zion as the name of God’s dwelling place and his everlasting covenant with Israel is not compromised. The preferred term, “Zion,” unequivocally conjures up hope for eschatological salvation.

### 6.3 Geographical Locations: Symbols of Covenant

The insight of *associated ideas* can also be applied in the use of other place names which feature significantly in 2 Baruch. There are recurrent mentions of Baruch’s physical location in each episode associated with specific types of activities in which the prophet is engaged. The four specific locations are 1) Jerusalem or Zion, 2) the Kidron Valley, 3) the oak tree and 4) Hebron.

Broadly speaking, two approaches are used to interpret place names in 2 Baruch scholarship. The first approach treats these place names as real geo-physical regions in Palestine; in other words, as actual *references* in Frege’s term. They are studied by Pierre Bogaert, for example, in order to historically locate the author of 2 Baruch and to establish the work’s Palestinian, instead of diaspora, origin.<sup>43</sup> The literal reading of place names is problematic because it ignores the fictional setting and the literary nature of 2 Baruch. For instance, Bogaert investigates the real geographical location of the oak tree under which Baruch composed his epistles; but 4 Ezra also specifies that it is under an oak that Ezra is called by the Most High to write the Law (4 Ezra 14:1), yet

<sup>40</sup> Examples of such usage in the HB are Ps 46:4; Isa 48:2; Neh 11:1; Ps 9:11; 1 Kgs 11:13, 32, 36; 2 Chron 7:16; 12:13; etc.

<sup>41</sup> 2 Bar 5:3; 10:7; 31:4; 35:3; 63:9.

<sup>42</sup> See Fohrer, “Zion,” 1029.

<sup>43</sup> Bogaert, *L’Apocalypse syriaque*, I: 320–34.



Ezra is located (fictionally) in Babylon. Clearly, the oak tree has symbolic meaning of divine providence and should not be regarded as a real locale. Even Bogaert himself cannot apply the literal approach consistently and has to read Babylon symbolically as Rome. In comparison, the second approach, treating the place names as literary devices, is more common. For some interpreters the locations provide the setting for the various stages of the narrative, and function as one of many organizing principles to create structure and coherence.<sup>44</sup> However, these place names have more than just one function<sup>45</sup> and have been investigated for other purposes. For Mark Whitters, for example, they indicate the increasing influence of Baruch's message, i.e. first in Jerusalem before and right after the city's destruction (chapters 1–47), then spread to Hebron outside Jerusalem (47–77), and eventually taken to the world through the epistle beyond the Jewish homeland (78–87).<sup>46</sup> Matthias Henze regards these locations as "*lieux de mémoire*," places of memorial significance to Jewish historical and cultural memory.<sup>47</sup>

In this section I will look into the *associated ideas*, i.e. the symbolic values of these place names, and interpret them in the light of their significance in the HB as well as in association with the specific activities carried out by Baruch the character. The correlations, I argue, are not accidental, but intentional choices which reveal the author's understanding of Israel's covenantal relationship with God.

It should be mentioned first that Israel's covenant with God may be spoken of in more specific terms: 1) the covenant of Abraham, 2) the covenant of Moses, and 3) the covenant of David. These three covenants, centering respectively upon the Land and People, the Torah, and Zion and the Temple, had been further integrated into one in the post-exilic period. It is this integrated covenant that is found in the writing of 2 Baruch. The Zion and Jerusalem Temple covenant originally consisted of the promise of Davidic kingship in Judah, but it was also co-opted into the Mosaic covenant centred upon the Torah. As stated in Isaiah, "out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isa 2:3; cf. Mic 4:2). Here one sees Zion and the Torah become associated terms describing the presence of God's *shekinah*. The author of 2 Baruch fully acknowledges that it was on account of Israel's failure to obey

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<sup>44</sup> See Chapter Five.

<sup>45</sup> Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 41, n 101.

<sup>46</sup> Whitters, *Epistle of Second Baruch*, 40.

<sup>47</sup> Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 122–4.

the Mosaic Torah that Zion was allowed to fall and the Temple destroyed. The Mosaic covenant further incorporated the Abrahamic promise of the Land and the People. As Baruch states in full accordance with Deuteronomic thought, “if you transgress the Torah, you will be scattered, but if you keep it, you will be planted” (2 Bar 84:2). When Baruch commands the people to remember the covenant, he names all three elements at the core of the covenant: Zion, the Torah, Land and People (84:8). The author’s concern about Israel’s covenantal relationship with God is fully revealed in the symbolic use of place names. His understanding of the covenant is reviewed and reaffirmed in the light of the most recent traumatic experience.

### *6.3.1 Jerusalem/Zion*

Jerusalem (interchangeably with Zion) occurs most frequently as Baruch’s physical location, particularly in the first three episodes. It is “over the wall of Jerusalem” that Baruch witnesses the destruction of the Temple by the angels (6:3). “Amid the desolation of Zion” he is ordered by God to stay (10:3). “In front of the gates of the Temple” he laments over the fate of his mother city (10:5). It is “on Mount Zion” that he is granted the first revelation through a dialogue with God (13:1). Baruch’s second revelation in dialogue with God is also received on Mount Zion, this time referred to as “the place where He had spoken with me” (21:2). Finally, it is at the “holy place and the ruins” (35:1) that Baruch receives his third revelation, the vision of the forest, the vine and the fountain. The fountain and the vine represent the Messiah, who will uproot the forest, which symbolizes the enemies of Israel. The Messiah will take the last ruler of the enemies unto Mount Zion, where he will reprove him and kill him, and protect the rest of the people of Israel found there; the rule of the Messiah will stand forever (39:7–40:3). Thus Zion is both the location where Baruch is faced with the desperate reality of devastation and the place of salvation through the Messiah in the triumphant vision.

In 2 Baruch, while Moses and Abraham are upheld as personifications of Israel’s relationship with God (4:4–5), the link of the covenant of Zion with the Davidic throne is of no apparent interest to the author.<sup>48</sup> Although the Zion covenant is associated with

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<sup>48</sup> This lack of Davidic reference is clearly seen if one compares 2 Bar with Isa. God proclaims through Isaiah that he will defend the city “for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David” (Isa 37:35). Baruch also intercedes for Jerusalem, pleading for God’s name’s sake (5:1), but David is never mentioned. Isa 37 is the narrative on the siege of Jerusalem in the time of Hezekiah. This passage (cf. 2 Kgs 19:14–37) was certainly in the consciousness of the author of 2 Bar, for he specifically made Remiel

the Messiah, as seen in Baruch's dream vision of the forest and the vine, the Messiah figure does not have any Davidic connotation. Instead, the Messiah is presented not as an earthly but celestial being, prepared by God before human history and hidden from the beginning, in order to be revealed at the time of consummation. In the vision of dark and bright waters, the Messiah is symbolized by the "shape of a great lightning" at the top of the cloud filled with waters, representing created time of human history (53:1). At the consummation of time, the lightning "took hold" of the cloud and "forced it to the ground" (53:8). It illuminated the earth, healed the places in devastation and ruled the entire earth (53:9–10). This presentation of the Messiah, of primordial origin and without link with the seed of David, is very different from the way the author calls upon Moses and Abraham as witnesses and guarantors of the covenant. David, together with Solomon, is indeed mentioned as the sixth bright water in Baruch's second dream vision, being credited with the building of Zion (61:1–2), yet it was to Abraham and Moses (and particularly to Moses) that the revelation of the heavenly Jerusalem and the blueprint of the sanctuary was given (4:4–5; 59:4).

4 Ezra also upholds Zion as a sign of God's covenant with Israel. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple set Ezra in despair, and the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem transforms his cynicism to optimism, knowing that the covenant and its embodiment are eternally secure. 2 Baruch differs from 4 Ezra in that the Law plays a pivotal role in the dynamics of Zion and the covenant: the Jerusalem Temple is not only a sign of God's covenant with Israel; it is first of all the sign of Israel's faithfulness to the Torah. The Temple stands if Israel is law-abiding; and it is taken away if Israel transgresses the Law. Torah observance is the single criterion of the bright and black waters in Baruch's review of human history, and Israelite history in particular (56:5–74:4). The Temple was shown to Adam, but taken away from him when he transgressed (4:3; 56:5). It was then shown to Abraham (4:4), to whom the "unwritten Torah was named" (57:2). The blueprint of the tabernacle in the "likeness of Zion" was revealed to Moses simultaneously with the "eternal Torah" (59:2–4). The "building of Zion" and the "consecration of the sanctuary" (61:2) occurred at the time of David and Solomon due to the fulfillment of the "righteousness of the commandments of the Mighty One" (61:6). Zion was spared destruction by divine

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say that Remiel was the very angel that slew the Assyrian army (63:6). The contrast clearly shows 2 Bar's lack of interest in the Davidic promise.

providence at the time of Hezekiah because he was righteous in the Law (63:1–11); but his son, Manasseh, transgressed against the Law, and consequently “the glory of the Most High departed from the sanctuary (64:1–6). The wickedness of Manasseh also caused Zion to be “rooted out” in the days of Baruch (64:4); the disaster was postponed only because King Josiah after Manasseh “was firm in the Torah” (66:5).

In short, the Zion covenant in 2 Baruch is seamlessly welded to the Mosaic Torah. The rise and fall of Zion and the Temple mark Israel’s spiritual status measured by Torah obedience.

### 6.3.2 Kidron Valley

The second significant location is the Kidron Valley. It is here that Baruch first informs Jeremiah and others of the Temple’s imminent destruction, and together they mourned Zion (5:5). He later returns here to fast and lament over Jerusalem (21:1). In Episode 3 after his revelation Baruch gives his first public address specifically in the Kidron Valley (31:2). The locations of the two subsequent addresses in Episodes 4 and 5 are not specified, but it is reasonable to assume he returns to the same location where the people gather in waiting.

“Kidron”, קִדְרוֹן, derives from the word קָדַר, meaning “dark” or “mourning”, as the word appears in Jeremiah 4:28<sup>49</sup> and Joel 2:10<sup>50</sup>. Perhaps due to this semantic association the author placed Baruch in the Kidron Valley for fasting and mourning.<sup>51</sup> Yet in the Hebrew Bible Kidron Valley probably carries another symbolic association. It was here that pious kings of Judah, Asa, Josiah and Hezekiah, purged the nation of its sins by burning the idols that defiled Jerusalem Temple (1 Kgs 15:13, 23:4–6, 23:12; 2 Chron 15:16, 29:16, 30:14). 2 Baruch opens with God’s indictment of Israel’s sin in idolatry, which is implied in the pronouncement that “the evils which these two tribes that remained have done are more than [those of] the ten tribes that were led away captive” (1:2). The sin of the northern kingdom was precisely the worship of idols, as indicated in the interpretation of the seventh black water in Baruch’s dream vision. The angel Ramiel declares that it was due to the worship of idols under Jeroboam and Jezebel that the nine and a half tribes were sent into captivity (62:1–6).

<sup>49</sup> על־זאת תאבל הארץ וקדרו השמים ממעל

<sup>50</sup> לפניו רגזה ארץ רעשו שמים שמש וירח קדרו וכוכבים אספו נגהם

<sup>51</sup> The Kidron Valley is also thought to be known as the Valley of Hinnom or Topheth in Jer 7:31–2; 19:2, 6; 32:35 and Isa 30:33, and the Valley of Jehoshaphat in Joel 4:2, 12; a place where human sacrifices were made and dead bodies were disposed of.

Now God announces the imminent destruction of the Jerusalem Temple because of the same sin by the two tribes, which was even more severe than that of their northern co-religionists. It is rather fitting, then, that Baruch's admonitions of Torah adherence to the people should take place in the Kidron Valley, a name that recalls to mind the acts of purification by Israel's past leaders in order for the nation to return to its covenant relationship with God.

Finally, "Kidron Valley" is also associated with Jeremiah's prophecy about the new covenant that God will make with the house of Israel, the promise of the Law to be written on the tablet of people's hearts (Jer 31:33):

The whole valley of the dead bodies and the ashes, and all the fields as far as the Wadi Kidron, to the corner of the Horse Gate toward the east, shall be sacred to the Lord. It shall never again be uprooted or overthrown (Jer 31:40). (NRSV)

This symbolic association with Jeremiah's prophecy of renewal and restoration also makes the Kidron Valley a suitable location for Baruch to convey words of comfort and encouragement in his public addresses, as well as to reassure people of God's ever-lasting covenant with Israel.

### 6.3.3 Oak Tree

The oak tree is first mentioned when Baruch "left the people, went out, and stood by the oak (ܐܠܬܐ *baluṭa*)" in the evening, "grieving over Zion and groaning over the captivity that has come upon the people" (6:1–2). Subsequently, it was "under a tree (ܐܠܬܐ *aylana*),"<sup>52</sup> "in the shade of the branches" (55:1) that Baruch receives the interpretation of the vision of dark and bright waters as a divinely revealed overview of human history. Then again "under the oak (ܐܠܬܐ *baluṭa*) in the shade of the branches" (77:18) Baruch is inspired to write two letters of homily, one to the Jews in Babylon and the other to the nine and a half tribes in a faraway land. The same wording, "in the shade of the branches" (55:1 and 77:18) seems to indicate that the tree in 55:1, though not named, indeed refers to the oak tree.

The oak tree, therefore, is associated with both mourning for the loss of the land and the people, and hope for redemption. The oak tree under which Baruch laments over Zion and the people (6:1) is not described in any way, but as he receives revelations and writes words of hope and consolation the oak tree is described as

<sup>52</sup> The Syriac word for "tree", ܐܠܬܐ *aylana*, shares the same Semitic root as the Hebrew word, "oak", ʾֵלֶךְ. The word, ܐܠܬܐ, "tree", appears once in the HB in the Aramaic section of Dan 4:7.

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having branches, providing a shade (55:1 and 77:18), evoking the idea of regeneration, protection, and divine providence.

The Hebrew equivalent for the Syriac *baluṭa* (ܠܬܐ) is אֵלֶךְ or אֵלֶךְ, translated as oak or terebinth. A survey of its use in the Hebrew Bible shows its symbolic meaning associated with Israel's covenant relationship with God as well as her rise and fall in accordance with her keeping of that covenant.

Firstly, the oak tree is a witness to the establishment of the covenant, as in the Book of Joshua:

So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem. Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a large stone, and set it up there under the oak in the sanctuary of the Lord. Joshua said to all the people, "See, this stone shall be a witness against us; for it has heard all the words of the Lord that he spoke to us; therefore it shall be a witness against you, if you deal falsely with your God." (Josh 24:25–27, NRSV)

It was under the oak tree that the covenant was established, and now Baruch laments also under the oak tree, bemoaning the seeming brokenness of God's age-old covenant with Israel, due to the latter's unfaithfulness to the Law. The oak tree seems to carry the significance for the solemn oath of the covenant based on the Law. On the other hand, Shechem as a location has no significance in 2 Baruch. Instead, the author took up Hebron as a symbol for the Abrahamic covenant, as we shall see below.

Additionally, Baruch's sorrow over Zion as well as the hope and consolation he obtained are both expressed in the setting of the oak tree. The oak tree in these two contexts echoes two prophecies of Isaiah that are associated with the judgment and the consolation of Israel respectively. In the first prophecy, Israel is likened to an oak tree that is condemned:

For you shall be like an oak (אֵלֶךְ) whose leave withers, and like a garden without water (Isa 1:30 NRSV)

The second prophecy, also using the oak tree as a simile, offers hope and consolation after sorrow and affliction:

Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" And he said: "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is utterly desolate; until the Lord sends everyone far away, and vast is the emptiness in the midst of the land. Even if a tenth part remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth (אֵלֶךְ) or an oak (אֵלֶךְ) whose stump remains standing when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump." (Isa 6:11–13 NRSV)

Cities ruined, land deserted and people exiled—these are the same afflictions that fill Baruch with sorrow, a situation faced by the author of 2 Baruch and his audience. Yet amidst the tribulations a promise of renewal is offered: as a stump left in the land after the tree is cut down, it will grow yet again.

Thus the oak tree serves as a symbol that carries the author's overall message of comfort and encouragement for the people. Indeed, as Baruch sits under the oak tree, a witness to the divine covenant, he receives revelations under the symbolic branches of God's protection and providence (55:1). Under the shade of the same oak tree he writes letters of exhortation to the tribes in diaspora, taken to be authoritative teaching of divine inspiration (77:18).

#### 6.3.4 *Hebron*

The last place name symbolic of covenantal significance is Hebron. After Baruch has received his first three revelations in Jerusalem, he goes to Hebron, which he calls "the place where the word was spoken with me" (47:1–2). This is comparable to his referring to Mount Zion as "the place where he had spoken with me" in 21:2. Thus Hebron, like Zion, is also a place of God's presence. It is in Hebron that Baruch receives the vision of the dark and bright waters and its interpretation (Episode 6).

The significance of Hebron lies in its being a symbol of Abrahamic promise, the covenant of Israel with God established through Abraham for all his seeds. Not only that it was the ancestral burial ground for patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as well as the matriarchs (Gen 23:2, 19; 35:27), it was also the location where God promised the Holy Land to the offspring of Abraham according to two Genesis accounts. In one account,

The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Raise your eyes now, and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth; so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. Rise up, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you." So Abram moved his tent, and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre (בְּאֵלֶּיךָ מִמְרֵא), which are at Hebron; and there he built an altar to the Lord. (Gen 13:14–18 NRSV)

and in the other account,

Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak (אֵלֶּיךָ) of Moreh. ... Then the Lord appeared to Abram, and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. (Gen 12:6–7 NRSV)

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These two accounts deal with the same promise God made to Abraham, even though the location is Hebron in the first account, but Shechem in the second; a link can be established between the two through the oak(s) where Abraham built an altar to God as a memorial to the promise. Again, whereas Shechem had lost its significance in 2 Baruch, the symbolic worth of Hebron was fully incorporated in its message. Both the land and the seeds of Abraham are themes in the Hebron account in Genesis 13:14–18; 2 Baruch's concern for pan-Israelite unity (78:4) and for the exiles' return to the Jewish homeland (77:6) is appropriately situated in the promise.

The promise of Land and People is further merged with the promise of the Torah, as well as its fulfillment at the *eschaton*. In Baruch's second dream vision in Episode 6, Abraham and "his son" and "his son's son" (57:1) represent the second bright water. According to the angel's interpretation, it was because of the fulfillment of the "unwritten Torah" by Abraham and the following generations that "the hope for a world that will be renewed was then built, and the promise of the life that is coming after this was planted (57:2)." Not only is the promise of Land and People linked with Torah obedience, the word "forever" (Gen 13:14) is also interpreted by 2 Baruch to mean eternity in the world/age to come.

The symbolic location of Hebron is further juxtaposed with the oak tree by the author of 2 Baruch. It is under a tree while at Hebron (55:1) that Baruch receives the interpretation of the dark and bright waters. This combination harks back to the account in Genesis 13:18, in which Hebron and the tree(s) are also juxtaposed. In other words, Hebron and the oak tree in 2 Baruch are conflated symbols; the oak calls to mind Hebron and, likewise, Hebron brings the oak tree into consciousness. This juxtaposition again implies a conflation of the Mosaic covenant based on the Law (Josh 24:25–27) and the Abrahamic covenant based on the Land and People.

In summary, the use of the geographical locations in association with Baruch's prophetic office shows that the author had all three covenants in mind as one integrated promise of God to Israel, the Torah being the thread running through and holding all together. The author's ultimate concern is to encourage the people to remain steadfast in that covenant through Torah obedience, so that at the end times the people will be brought back to the promised land, and the heavenly Zion, the city carved in God's palms, may be revealed (4:2). All three aspects of the covenant are of paramount importance to the author of 2 Baruch, just as Baruch admonishes the tribes in diaspora,



“Remember Zion and the Torah, and also the Holy Land and your brothers” (84:8). The place names of Jerusalem/Zion, the oak and Hebron carry symbolic significance of these three aspects of the covenant. They invoke the memory of the everlasting nature of the covenant, thus would console and strengthen the intended audience of the book. The evocation of the Abrahamic covenant is particularly significant: whereas a covenant based upon the Law may be broken due to human transgression, a covenant built upon a divine promise can never be broken.

#### *6.4 Summary*

The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple created a grave sense of crisis in Israel’s covenantal relationship with God. 2 Baruch offers an explanation of sin and punishment, so that the justice and power of God is not compromised. It further relativizes the importance of the Temple building, by focusing attention on the eternal, heavenly Jerusalem at the imminent end time. However, although the building is destroyed, the author believes that Zion remains forever the dwelling place of the Most High, and a sign of Israel’s everlasting covenant. The covenant in 2 Baruch is one that integrates the Abrahamic promise of Land and People, the Mosaic Torah and the Zion ideology, of which the Torah is a central thread that bind all elements together. In this understanding of covenant, the rise and fall of the Temple of Zion is the very sign of Israel’s faithfulness to the Torah.

How, then, does the author reconcile the conflict between the importance of Zion and the Holy Land on the one hand, and his belief in the eventual disappearance of this corrupt world to be replaced by the age to come, on the other? How does he justify the apparent incompatibility between the stout Deuteronomic scheme which he espouses on the one hand, and the eschatological programme he promotes on the other? These questions will be explored in the following chapter.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### ESCHATOLOGY AND TORAH IN 2 BARUCH

2 Baruch shares with 4 Ezra not only the same literary genre, historical background and concern for Israel's covenantal identity, it also proposes a similar, two-pronged solution: eschatology and Torah. What particularly interest us in this chapter are the aspects on which 2 Baruch makes a poignant departure from 4 Ezra—in the different emphases it places in its eschatological scheme, and in its understanding of the status quo of Israel's possession of the Torah and God's wider revelation. These divergent emphases stem from its different understanding of the nature of Adam's sin, which is deliberately and clearly articulated in the book. What is particularly remarkable about 2 Baruch's solution is that it is thoroughly Deuteronomic and thoroughly eschatological at the same time. This chapter, therefore, will focus on the features of 2 Baruch's presentation of the *eschaton* and Torah as solutions to the covenantal crisis that are different from that of 4 Ezra. It will also examine how the eschatological (or apocalyptic, as commonly termed in scholarship) response is made completely congruent and harmonious with the author's Deuteronomic outlook. But first of all, did the author of 2 Baruch consciously mark his different views with 4 Ezra in mind?

#### *7.1 Ezra's Questions and Baruch's Answers*

As mentioned in the Introduction,<sup>1</sup> the textual relationship between 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch is an unresolved issue, especially regarding the direction of influence. It has reached such an impasse that Michael Stone concludes that “we have not discovered any arguments in the course of our work that seem to be decisive in the one or the other direction.”<sup>2</sup> Henze, on the other hand, suggests an entire reconsideration of the compositional history of both texts.<sup>3</sup> Suffice to say that the similarities between the two works are not simply an issue of which work used the other as a literary source, as both should be considered independent works sophisticatedly crafted to serve their authorial purpose. The commonalities such as their literary genre, phraseology, motifs and “conceptual concerns”<sup>4</sup> can largely be explained by the shared religious background, intellectual milieu and scriptural heritage, as well as the common

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter One.

<sup>2</sup> *Fourth Ezra*, 39.

<sup>3</sup> *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 186.

<sup>4</sup> To borrow Henze's term, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 180–1.

historical event that gave rise to their compositions.<sup>5</sup> In addition, however, the two works do stand closer to each other—as if in dialogue—than with other Jewish writing sharing common traits. It is not my intention here to offer a solution to the debate, but to highlight some evidence that shows how 4 Ezra can be detected in the background of the narrative of 2 Baruch. There is a need to do so because the existence of 4 Ezra in the consciousness of the author of 2 Baruch could have clearly influenced the articulation of his own solution to the common crisis. In other words, the differences in 2 Baruch’s response can be better understood when it is considered in relation to 4 Ezra.

A number of details in the narrative of 2 Baruch make better sense if the complaint of 4 Ezra is taken into account as the background. For example, in the second episode (chs 10–20), after Baruch has witnessed the destruction of the Temple by the angels, uttering a lamentation he suddenly turns his attention to a comparison of Babylon with Zion:

I, then, Baruch, am saying this against you, Babylon: “If you were prosperous and Zion lived in her glories, it would have been a great pain to us that you should be equal to Zion. Now, however, see, the pain is infinite and the groans without measure, that you, see, are prosperous, while Zion is devastated. . . .” (11:1–2)

Even the words “prosperous” and “devastated” bring to mind Ezra’s outcry because, while located in Babylon, he “saw the desolation of Zion and the wealth of those who lived in Babylon” (4 Ezra 3:2). For Baruch, who is set in Jerusalem, however, this abrupt mention of the prosperity of Babylon is a little out of place, unless it is understood as the author’s intention to respond to the bitter grievance deemed unsatisfactorily addressed in 4 Ezra:

Are the deeds of Babylon better than those of Zion? Or has another nation known thee besides Israel? Or what tribe has so believed thy covenants as Jacob? (4 Ezra 3:31–2)

Whereas in 4 Ezra these questions are not directly answered as the angel switches Ezra’s attention to the end-times, 2 Baruch responds in no ambivalent terms, and the answer covers not just Babylon but the whole earth—i.e. the Gentile world in its prosperity in stark contrast to Zion:

The middle of the day is not always burning, nor do sun’s rays give light constantly. Do not assume and hope that you will always be prosperous and happy, do not be very exalted and subject [others]. For truly, in its own time passion will be aroused against you, which is now held with patience as if by reins. (12:2–4)

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<sup>5</sup> For a detailed exposition on the many contact points of the two texts, see Henze’s *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 177–81.

Baruch's words are further endorsed by the announcement of God, who engages him in a revelatory dialogue, that "the nations will be thoroughly chastised" (13:5) at the end-time: "You who have drunk strained wine, drink also from its dregs!" (13:8). God punishes "his own sons" for their sins so that they "might be exonerated" (13:9–10), but the nations, guilty for treading down the earth and using creation unjustly (13:11), will face severe judgment. The condemnation of the oppressors works as a clear answer to the questions of Ezra.

After Baruch's ensuing long speech in the dialogue, God replies to three questions which Baruch supposedly has misjudged: why human beings perish (15:1), why the wicked prosper while the righteous suffer (15:2) and why mortals cannot know divine judgment (15:3). Again, this response may seem a little puzzling, as in his part of the dialogue Baruch has just shown perfect understanding that the wicked perish for their own sinful choice (14:2), that the righteous die without fear for they inherit the world at the end-time (14:12–13), and that divine judgment is beyond human comprehension (14:8–9; 15). The three questions belong to Ezra (e.g. 4 Ezra 3:31; 4:12; 4:23–24; 5:35; 10:22) rather than Baruch.

Another example implying a presence of 4 Ezra in the mind of the author of 2 Baruch is after Baruch's vision of the twelve bright and dark waters. He is gently chided by Remiel, the *angelus interpretis*, for being "moved" (55:5), "devastated" (55:6), "entirely disturbed" (55:7) and "saddened" (55:8) over the revelation about the fate of the wicked at the coming end-time judgment. However, this rebuke again appears rather undeserved as Baruch, having received the vision, has just proclaimed the wisdom and justice of God's will before the angel's *mise en scène*:

Blessed be my mother among those who bear, and praised among women she who bore me. For I will not be silent to praise the Mighty One, but with a voice of praise, I will tell of his marvellous deeds. For who is like [you] in your marvellous deeds, O God, or who comprehends your deep thought of life? ... Justly do they perish, those who have not loved your Torah, and the torment of judgment receives those who have not subjected themselves to your power. (54:11–14)

The despondency criticized by Remiel fits not Baruch's, but Ezra's outlook before his change of heart (Eps 1–3). The angel's words of chastisement only fully make sense if they are understood as the author's own spontaneous response to the pessimistic mood described in 4 Ezra.

Overall, in 2 Baruch the position of the author comes out as the voice of the protagonist more strongly and clearly than in 4 Ezra.<sup>6</sup> Whereas Ezra questions God why Israel did not receive punishment at his own hands if he truly hates his people (4 Ezra 5:30), Baruch relates in detail how God indeed destroyed his own Temple through his angels as a punishment for the sins of his people. Whereas Ezra emphasizes the permanent and severe effects of Adam's sin on the totality of humanity,<sup>7</sup> Baruch declares that nevertheless each individual does prepare his own fate through choice.<sup>8</sup> Whereas Ezra bitterly laments the loss of the many who perish because of the "evil heart" (Ep 3), Baruch speaks about the justice in the judgment of those who have rejected the Torah and thus perish.<sup>9</sup> Whereas Ezra states that the Torah had been burned in the fire of destruction, "so no one knows the things which have been done or will be done" (4 Ezra 14:21), Baruch calls out, "see, your Torah is with us" (2 Bar 48:22–24). Whereas Ezra's revelations about the end-time remain secret knowledge (4 Ezra 14:46), Baruch teaches the people that such knowledge from God is "not hidden from us" (2 Bar 85:8).

The above examples do not mean that 2 Baruch used 4 Ezra as a literary source or was dependent upon the latter for its structure and content. Neither do they indicate that 2 Baruch was written exclusively as a rebuttal; the primary intention of the book was consolation and exhortation, rather than polemics and refutation.<sup>10</sup> However, they do imply that the author of 2 Baruch knew 4 Ezra and "took issue" with it.<sup>11</sup> This understanding will shed much light on 2 Baruch's presentation of eschatology and Torah, which, though similar to those of 4 Ezra, yet takes distinctive paths from it.

## *7.2 Eschatology in 2 Baruch*

### *7.2.1 2 Baruch's Eschatological Terminology and the Nature of the End*

Like 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch proposes an eschatological solution to the covenantal crisis brought by the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. However, whereas in 4 Ezra, that "the world is hastening swiftly to its end" (4 Ezra 4:26) is presented as a new

<sup>6</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom*, 153.

<sup>7</sup> 4 Ezra 3:21–22, 26; 4:30; 7:48, 68; 7:118–9 etc.

<sup>8</sup> 2 Bar 54:15, 19.

<sup>9</sup> 2 Bar 52:1–7; 54:14, 17; 55:2.

<sup>10</sup> This is also the position of John J. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 224.

<sup>11</sup> Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 224.

divine revelation to Ezra,<sup>12</sup> Baruch's knowledge of the coming end is implied from the very beginning of the book. After he has heard God's announcement of the imminent destruction of Zion, Baruch asks, "should the world return to its [original] nature, and the world [or age] again go to [primeval] silence?" (3:7).<sup>13</sup> His question presumes certain expectations about an end to the current world or age. Both God and the angels who carry out the destruction emphasize that the chastisement is only "for a time" (1:4; 4:1; 5:3; 6:9), and that Israel and Jerusalem will be reestablished forever (1:5; 6:9). The *eschaton*, therefore, is not given to Baruch as news; instead, the revelations are concerned with the manner in which the end will befall (10:3).<sup>14</sup>

As Henze points out, 2 Baruch does not depend on a fixed technical term, such as "the world/age to come," to indicate the end; rather, he utilizes a wide range of eschatological expressions with great poetic power and adjusted to the specific idea intended in a particular context.<sup>15</sup> The key word adopted and fitted into a variety of terms and expressions to indicate the end is *šwlm* ܫܠܡܐ, translated into English as "the end," or "the consummation."<sup>16</sup> "The world/age to come," on the other hand, is not treated as a crucial term for expressing its eschatology. The word, *'alma* ('*lm* ܐܠܡܐ), "world" or "age," appears only a few times, very modest usage indeed compared with the abundant use of *šwlm*.

The word, *'alma*, is commonly recognized as the Syriac equivalent to Latin *saeculum*, Greek αἰών, and Hebrew *'olam* עולם; the word itself could signify either "world" or "age." In 4 Ezra, it is difficult to draw a distinction between the two meanings in many contexts in which it (*saeculum*) appears.<sup>17</sup> For the author of 2 Baruch, however, I incline to think that the concept is most likely to be temporal rather

<sup>12</sup> See Chapter Three.

<sup>13</sup> 4 Ezra also mention the return to primeval silence, but in the context of after the Messiah's death in this world.

<sup>14</sup> Over all, in 4 Ezra it is Ezra who takes the initiative to question God, and it is because of his pursuit of wisdom that higher knowledge about the *eschaton* is revealed to him. In 2 Baruch, on the other hand, God is the one who takes the initiative, first to announce his plan of destruction and to show Baruch "what will befall at the end of days" (10:3).

<sup>15</sup> *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 288–9. See his excellent analysis of 2 Baruch's use of the language of time, 285–93.

<sup>16</sup> The term is translated as "the end" in Gurtner (*Second Baruch*) and Klijn ("2 [Syriac Apocalypse of] Baruch," *OTP* I: 615–52). However, Henze points out that the Syriac term, *šwlm* ܫܠܡܐ, which he translates as "consummation" (*4 Ezra and 2 Baruch*) differs in sense from *'hry* ܠܗܝܬ, or *'hryt* ܠܗܝܬܐ, "the end." Thus he disagrees with Stone ("Coherence and Inconsistency," 231 n 7; *Features of the Eschatology of IV Ezra*, HSS 35 [Atlanta: Scholars, 1989], 84), who considers these Syriac terms as parallels with the Latin *finis*. See Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 286, n 100; 287 n 104; 290 n 143. Cf. 4 Ezra's use of eschatological terminology, Chapter Three.

<sup>17</sup> See Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 218–9.

than spatial. Henze aptly observes that the author's overwhelming preference of time expressions over sparse direct references to "the world to come" indicates that his primary eschatological concern is with the notion of time rather than "the essence of the [physical] world to come."<sup>18</sup> I would further argue that the few times the word '*alma* is used, it most probably refers to "age" rather than "world".<sup>19</sup> This is evidenced by the many cases where '*alma* appears as a parallel term to temporal expressions using words such as "time(s)" and "day(s)" in the author's eschatological terminology. Two examples will suffice to illustrate. In Chapter 51, on the rewards for the righteous at the consummation, it is said that

they will behold the world/age ('*alma*) which is now invisible to them, and they will behold the time (*z̤hana* ܙܚܢܐ) which is now hidden from them (51:8).

Here '*alma* appears in parallelism with the promised future "time," hidden and invisible. In another verse in Chapter 76, Baruch is instructed to be ready,

for you will surely depart from this world ('*ar'a* ܐܪܥܐ), yet it will not be unto death, but you will be kept unto the completion of the times (*z̤hana* ܙܚܢܐ) (76:2).

When the physical world is meant, a word different from '*alma* is used to pose a contrast with the temporal expression. The evidence does not point to '*alma* being exclusively a temporal concept, but it does indicate that the temporal sense is to be preferred where there are no contrary indicators of meaning.

Therefore, the '*alma* expressions belong to the same temporal category and work in concert with the other time expressions in the author's eschatological scheme. Although small in number, they succinctly convey the author's message about the nature of this future age: "the age you [God] have *promised*" (14:13; 51:3); "the age *to come*" (15:7);<sup>20</sup> "the *new* age" (44:12); "the age that is *coming*" (44:15);<sup>21</sup> "that age which *has no end*" (48:50); "the age that *does not die*" (51:3); "the age *now invisible*" (51:8); and "the *renewed* age" (57:2). In other words, the aeon that is to come has the same attributes in 2 Baruch as in 4 Ezra:<sup>22</sup> eternal, immortal, imminent, foreordained

<sup>18</sup> Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 292.

<sup>19</sup> One must certainly use caution, since 2 Baruch is extant only in Syriac; therefore what one sees is a twice translated version of the original. However, there is also a good chance that '*alma* is a rather stable designated term for the translator for the original Hebrew '*olam*, two Semitic cognates.

<sup>20</sup> ܙܚܢܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ

<sup>21</sup> ܙܚܢܐ ܕܥܡܪܐ, different expression from "the age to come" (in previous note) in Syriac, as Henze (*Jewish Apocalypticism*, 286 n 102 and 287 n 115) points out.

<sup>22</sup> See Chapter Three.



by God (also 56:3), preexistent though hidden and a correction of the current sorrowful and corruptible age.

The imminence of the end is particularly emphasized, most likely in order to achieve the purpose of giving hope and consolation as well as exhortation. Those who are righteous like Baruch should not be in agony, for “the consummation of time” “has been summoned” (19:4–5):

see, days are coming and the times will hasten more than the former, and the seasons will run more than those that have gone by, and the years will pass quickly, more than the present ones. (20:1)

As a matter of fact, the destruction of Zion is seen as God’s initiative so that he “will hasten more and visit the world [or age]<sup>23</sup> in its time” (20:2). Given that the end is fast approaching, the audience is warned about heeding the Torah, for time is so short that only the present state in which one is found, but not their previous record, matters at their final judgment (19:6–8; 41:3–42:6).<sup>24</sup> The imminent nature of the end is again powerfully expressed in Baruch’s epistle:

... the youth of the world [or age] has passed, and the strength of creation is already consumed. The advent of the times is very near, and they have passed. The pitcher is near to the cistern, the boat to the harbour, the journey of the road to the city, and life to [its] consummation. (85:10).

The imminence of the end goes hand in hand with the urgency for repentance, for at the consummation of the present age

There will not be there again a place for penitence, nor a limit to the times, nor a duration for the seasons, nor a change in the road, nor a place for petition, nor the sending of requests, nor the receiving of knowledge, nor the giving of love, nor a place of repentance, nor supplications for transgressions, nor intercessions of the fathers, nor a prayer of the prophets, nor the help of the righteous. Then there is there the decree for the judgment of corruption, for the way of fire, and the path that leads to annihilations. (85:12–13)

Here 2 Baruch shares the same view with 4 Ezra that at the time of judgment all possibilities of repentance, prayers and intercession by the righteous for sinners cease (4 Ezra 7:82; 102–115).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> I have kept the original translation of *‘alma* in Stone and Henze, *4 Ezra and 2 Baruch*, in all the direct quotations, even though I have argued that it is more likely to be a temporal concept rather than physical or geographical.

<sup>24</sup> This view of 2 Baruch is comparable to the words of R. Isaac, *tanna* of the 4<sup>th</sup> generation in the 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. that man is judged only according to his actions up to the time of judgment (b. Roš. Haš. 16b).

<sup>25</sup> In view of this, John the Baptist’s call to repentance (“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”; Matt 3:2) must be understood as an eschatological message, as repentance was believed to be a precondition to enter the World/Age to Come. That “Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan,” even many Pharisees and Sadducees, went to him (Matt 3:5–7) perhaps indicate how common

### 7.2.2 *The Stages of the End in the Presentation of 2 Baruch*

Not only does 2 Baruch concur with 4 Ezra on the nature of the *eschaton*, it also shares the conception that the end, or the consummation, denotes not a point in time but a process consisting of a sequence of stages.<sup>26</sup> Like in 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch's eschatology is not presented systematically, but with information scattered in various parts, assuming a familiarity with eschatological knowledge on the part of its audience. The same methodological question which arises in 4 Ezra scholarship pertains to 2 Baruch also.<sup>27</sup> Early source critics saw different passages containing eschatological messages as unrelated accounts, and thus considered them to be evidence of competing, if not conflicting, thoughts. Such a methodology is seriously flawed, as it assumes ancient writing *a priori* to be a careless patchwork of sources of diverse origins instead of a cohesive and coherent composition serving an authorial intent.<sup>28</sup> But if we do consider 2 Baruch to be an organic whole, the different parts containing eschatological messages must be read together in order to form, as much as is allowed by the ancient work itself, a full sketch of the author's eschatological belief.

When the various passages are interpreted together, four stages of the end-time can be identified, though neither are they given equal emphasis, nor are they always clearly delineated, but blend into each other in the narrations. These four stages are: signs of the end, Messianic warfare, Messianic era, and resurrection and the Last Judgment in the Age to Come.

#### *Messianic Woes*

Like 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch also describes the signs of the end, commonly known as the Messianic woes, in the forms of earthquakes, pestilences, wars and disturbances, famines and droughts, demonic attacks, depravity of humanity, etc. As in 4 Ezra,<sup>29</sup> warning about the tribulations of the end is given three times (25:2–28:2; 48:30–41; 70:2–8). The thrice-occurring presentation appears to be a common trope, also found

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the belief was in the first century, that the end was imminent, that one was to be judged according to the last state one was in, and that there was no chance of repentance at the consummation of time.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. "the end" in 4 Ezra; see Chapter Three. The same view is expressed by Henze (*Jewish Apocalypticism*, 291) thus: "The promised time is not a single event but *a sequence of eschatological events viewed together*. 'The end' is a period of undisclosed length that covers the transition from this world to the next." (His original emphasis.)

<sup>27</sup> See related discussions in Chapter Three.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Henze's discussion of the two different suppositions and consequently, different approaches, i.e. treating Jewish apocalypses "as depositories of diverse traditions or as coherent accounts of the end time," in *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 304–5.

<sup>29</sup> 4 Ezra 5:1–12; 6:18–25; 9:3.

in the sending of woes in the book of Revelation: the opening of the seven seals (Rev chs 6–7), the blowing of the seven trumpets (8–9), and the casting of the seven bowls of plagues (15–16). What is the significance of this seeming “repetitiveness”? The number three often represents permanence, as in the Jewish practice of *ḥazakah* (חזקה), that an act performed three times acquires an ensured legal status.<sup>30</sup> Signs of the *eschaton* presented three times in the apocalypses indicate in an emphatic way that the present world/age is coming to a permanent end; they are the final pouring out of God’s wrath before he visits and cleanses his creation. As 2 Baruch explains the signs,

“...when they will say in their thoughts because of their many tribulations, ‘The Mighty One does no longer remember the earth!’ and lose hope, then the time will awake.” (25:4)

Indeed, it will come and pass with acute force, and when it comes it will be agitated with heated vehemence. (48:31)

...the time of the world [or age] will be ripe, the harvests will come of the seeds of the evil ones and of the good ones. (70:2)

The signs are precursors of the advent of the Messiah, which will set the change of aeons in motion.

Like Revelation, which schematizes the signs into parts of seven, 2 Baruch also uses the number seven to measure the time of tribulation into “weeks of seven weeks” (28:2). But at the same time it adopts the number twelve as its main scheme of periodization, dividing the time of tribulation into twelve parts, each marked by a form of disaster or violence (27:1–15). These woes are not to be understood as predictions of events in a chronological order. Rather, they are symbolic of every form of terror and suffering in stylized presentations.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, the use of both seven and twelve, should be understood not as a flaw in the author’s logic and coherence, but as his double dose of symbolism which represents the completeness and fullness of every tribulation to be experienced in this age of corruption and mortality.

### *Messianic Warfare*

The stage of the Messiah’s retribution against other nations is mainly described in the symbolic vision of “the forest and the fountain and vine” (36:1–37:1) as well as its interpretation (39:1–40:4). Baruch saw a forest on the plain with rugged mountains surrounding it which seized much space. But over against it a vine arose, under which

<sup>30</sup> On the concept of *ḥazakah*, see the entry in *The Encyclopedia of the Jewish Religion*, ed. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Wigoder (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966), 178.

<sup>31</sup> That the twelve parts are not sequential is also explained in 2 Baruch (27:13–15); the signs “will be mixed with one another, and they will serve one another.”

ran a fountain. The fountain grew to become waves and uprooted the large forest and brought it low until the last cedar. The vine opened its mouth and passed judgment against the cedar and condemned it to dust and torment beyond the last time (36:1–10). Baruch sees the cedar burning, the vine growing and everything around it filling the plain with unfading flowers (37:1).

The great forest of trees represents four powerful kingdoms each of which arises to overthrow the one before it (39:2–5). The last kingdom in particular will exalt itself over the world and become the shelter for all evil and unrighteousness (39:1–6). The vine of the fountain represents God’s Messiah that will be revealed and uproot the last evil kingdom (39:7–8). The cedar represents the last leader of the enemy (40:1). He will be bound and taken to Mount Zion, where the Messiah will convict him to death and where God’s people will be protected<sup>32</sup> (40:1–2). The Messiah’s reign will last until the end of this world and until the times are fulfilled (40:3).

The vindication of Israel by God’s Messiah is obviously of great significance as part of the author’s end-time scheme. However, compared with 4 Ezra, the force of the Messianic warfare narrative in 2 Baruch is much softened. Whereas 4 Ezra allocates two apocalyptic visions to describe the victory of the Messiah, 2 Baruch has only one. The other place in 2 Baruch where the Messianic retribution against the enemies is mentioned is the brief, plain commentary on the last bright water by Remiel, the *angelus interpres*, that the Messiah will kill the nations that have ruled over Israel, but spare those that have not trodden it down (72:1–6). Even in the Cedar and Vine vision, there is no explicit description of war per se; what bring down the forests are the waves from the fountain. Like the leonine figure in 4 Ezra, the role of the Messiah here is also portrayed in judicial terms: he carries out indictment of crimes, pronouncement of judgment and execution (36:7–37:1).<sup>33</sup> What is lacking, though, is the divine warrior image of the Messiah as depicted in the Man from the Sea vision.<sup>34</sup>

As in 4 Ezra, the choice of symbols in 2 Baruch’s apocalyptic visions demonstrates deeply rooted connections with the Hebrew Bible. The “Four Kingdoms” scheme of Daniel 7 is faithfully followed, symbolized by the vast forest (2 Bar 39:2–5). The cedar that represents the last ruler of the fourth kingdom finds its biblical

<sup>32</sup> That Mount Zion is a location of God’s protection is implied in verse 40:2, “and protect the rest of my people who will be found in the place that I have chosen.”

<sup>33</sup> Stone, “The Question,” 318–9 [210–1].

<sup>34</sup> See Chapter Three for my analysis of the Messianic figure in 4 Ezra.

reference in the prophecy of Ezekiel 31,<sup>35</sup> where it stands for the great power of Egypt and Assyria.<sup>36</sup> Ezekiel's prophetic oracle pronounces the evil of the cedar for towering over other nations of the earth and for its arrogance, and sentences it to death in *Sheol*, "among the uncircumcised, with those killed by the sword" (31:18). Similarly, the vine in 2 Baruch's vision condemns the cedar for its wickedness in extending its proud power over all, and condemns it to death with the forest that disappeared before it (36:7–37:1). The fountain is also familiar imagery found in Ezekiel 47:1–12, Joel 3:18 and Zechariah 14:8, where it refers to the water of life flowing from Zion<sup>37</sup> that nourishes the world. In 2 Baruch, the fountain is the gentle and nourishing source beneath the vine; but this water of life also becomes a strong flood that uproots the mighty trees and demolishes their territory (36:3–4). The vine as a symbol of Israel's Messiah also originates from scriptures, in particular First Isaiah 5:<sup>38</sup> the LORD Almighty planted the choicest vine in his vineyard (5:1–2), which is "the nation of Israel" (5:7). These symbols were undoubtedly chosen precisely because of their strong nationalistic connotations.

That 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra depend heavily on scriptural foundations for their apocalyptic imagery indicates that, for both authors, apocalyptic visions function as a form of biblical exegesis.<sup>39</sup> The visions represent an extended metaphorical format in which the authors interpreted and appropriated authoritative texts.<sup>40</sup> Subsequently, one must infer that the authors aligned themselves with past traditions, intending to derive authority from the Scriptures, rather than challenge established traditions by claiming independent divine revelations to themselves.

#### *Messianic Era and the Age to Come*

Where 2 Baruch departs dramatically from 4 Ezra's presentation of the end is in his elaborate treatment of the Messianic era in the eschatological scheme. We have seen in Chapter Three how 4 Ezra gives only slight consideration to the Messianic era, merely summing it up as a time when the Messiah will make the remnant rejoice and

<sup>35</sup> Also Zech 11:2.

<sup>36</sup> Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 261.

<sup>37</sup> Or "the temple" in Ezek 47:1; "the LORD's house" in Joel 3:18; "Jerusalem" in Zech 14:8.

<sup>38</sup> Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 261.

<sup>39</sup> Precisely because apocalyptic visions should be considered a form of scriptural exegesis, I tend to think it unlikely that the dream visions described in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch are based on real visionary experiences of the respective authors. On the genuine or imaginary nature of the visions, see Stone, "Reaction to the Destruction;" Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 240–5; and Henze's brief summary of the debate in *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 265, n 37.

<sup>40</sup> On visions as metaphor, see Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 261.

show many wonders (7:28; 12:34; 13:50). Instead, an emphasis is placed on the victory of the Messianic force against Gentile enemies before the Messianic rule (Episodes 5 & 6); the “World/Age to Come” afterwards, i.e. the resurrection and Last Judgement, is also described in substantial detail (7:30–43). 2 Baruch, on the other hand, as if compensating for what is lacking in 4 Ezra, paints a much more detailed picture of the Messianic era, the last stage of this aeon. It does this through giving reduced attention to the Messianic warfare and the Age to Come. The Age to Come is especially treated with very scanty information.<sup>41</sup> The meagre account makes it appear almost as a tag to the Messianic era. The only exceptions are the contrasted descriptions of what happens to the righteous and the wicked as the time of resurrection (30:1–5; 50:1–51:16; 85:12–15). They serve a strictly paraenetic purpose, urging the audience to remain faithful to the Torah in order to obtain life in the Age to Come.<sup>42</sup>

Despite the sometimes blurred division between them, the Messianic era and the Age to Come are conceived as two distinct periods.<sup>43</sup> The distinction is evidenced in the Vision of the Forest, the Vine and the Fountain. The Messiah, symbolized by the vine, condemns the cedar, a representation of the last Gentile kingdom, to death and torment “until your last time will come, in which you will come again and be tormented all the more” (36:10). The “last time” here refers to the Age to Come, when resurrection and the last judgment occur. While it is the Messiah who adjudicates the enemies of Israel before ushering in a new era in this world, it is God who summons all the living and the dead for the final judgment in the World/Age to Come. The Messianic era still belongs to this age, as the text indicates that “his rule will stand ... until the world [or age] of corruption is completed and until the ... times will be fulfilled” (40:3). Such a distinction between *ימי המשיח* and *העולם הבא*, in rabbinic terminology,<sup>44</sup> is in agreement with the two other Jewish-Christian apocalypses written around the end of the first century, 4 Ezra and Revelation.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Bogaert makes a similar observation in *L'Apocalypse*, 419.

<sup>42</sup> In Henze's words in *Jewish Apocalypticism* (317), “the strict segregation of the righteous and the wicked in the eschatological future based on one's religious life now ... is used for a paraenetic purpose, too. Once again, our author has combined eschatology and paraenesis, employing the former in the service of the latter.” Also *op. cit.* 320.

<sup>43</sup> This is also the view of Bogaert (*L'Apocalypse*, I: 413–4; 414 n 1).

<sup>44</sup> The two periods do not always appear without confusion in rabbinic teachings, but overall they are treated as fundamentally different from each other. See Klausner, “The Messianic Age and the World to Come,” in his *Messianic Idea*, 408–19; also Joseph Bonsirven, *Le Judaïsme palestinien au temps de Jésus-Christ* (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1934), I: 307–21.

<sup>45</sup> See 4 Ezra 7:28–36, 113; Rev 20:7–22:5.

It has been commented that in no other pseudepigrapha than 2 Baruch can one find so many details of the expectations for the Messianic era.<sup>46</sup> Yet the focus of 2 Baruch's "Messianism" is not on the person of the Messiah,<sup>47</sup> despite his importance in the eschatological scheme. The Messiah is a preexistent and transcendent figure, to be revealed at the consummation of time (29:3; 39:7; 73:1); but his person is never described and is only represented by the symbols of the vine and lightning. He is not presented as an active ruler but rather an honoured representation of God's power on earth, "[sitting] in peace forever on the throne of his kingdom" (73:1).<sup>48</sup> The word "forever" seems to be used to emphasize the long duration of the Messianic era and not to be understood literally, for elsewhere it is said that "his rule will stand forever"—until the end of this age when times are fulfilled (40:3). There is also no indication of any role for the Messiah in the resurrection and the Last Judgment of the Age to Come, except that

... when the time of the advent of the Messiah will be fulfilled and he will return in glory, then all those who have fallen asleep in hope of him will rise. (30:1)

One would infer that the Messiah has a certain role to play in the general resurrection, if the phrase that the Messiah "will return in glory" was interpreted as his second visitation to the earth. However, there is no mentioning of his departure from the earth after the first visitation.<sup>49</sup> It is possible that 2 Baruch is another Jewish work that shares the NT belief in the two comings of the Messiah and in the notion that at his

<sup>46</sup> Klausner, *Messianic Idea*, 331; also noted in Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 293, n 146. Klausner also draws attention to the close resemblance of 2 Baruch's Messianic expectations with those in Rabbinic materials at the time of the completion of the Mishnah.

<sup>47</sup> "Messianism," particularly with a focus on the nature and the role of the Messiah, has been widely studied. Among most recent works are Johannes Tromp, "The Davidic Messiah in Jewish Eschatology of the First Century BCE," in *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives*, ed. James M. Scott, JSJSupp 72 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 179–201; Stanley E. Porter, ed., *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); Andrew Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation: Jewish Messianic and Visionary Traditions and New Testament Christology*, WUNT 207 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007); Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008); and John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

<sup>48</sup> On not exaggerating the role of the Messiah in 2 Baruch, see Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 260, 295.

<sup>49</sup> For example, Henze (*Jewish Apocalypticism*, 296) thinks that 30:1 presupposes a temporary absence of the Messiah, and that "we may infer that the two chapters [29 & 30] describe two consecutive phases during the messianic visitation, or possibly two messianic visitations, that are interrupted by an unspecified period of time" (ibid. 295); also 303. The two comings of the Messiah also underlies the "two-phase Messianism" ("zweistufige Messianologie") in the work of Klaus Koch, "Messias und Menschensohn: Die zweistufige Messianologie der jüngeren Apokalyptik," *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie* 8 (1993): 73–102; repr. in Klaus Koch, *Vor der Wende der Zeiten: Beiträge zur apokalyptischen Literatur*, ed. Uwe Gießmer and Martin Krause, *Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1996), III: 235–66; cited in Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 297–8.

second coming the Messiah will inaugurate the Age to Come, signaled by a general resurrection and the Last Judgment; however, there is insufficient evidence in 2 Baruch for such an assertion. It is more likely that the Messiah's "return in glory" refers to his departure from this world back to his original celestial place, given the Messiah's preexistent, transcendent nature.<sup>50</sup> His departure marks the end of this age, and the beginning of the Age to Come. In this regard, 2 Baruch differs from 4 Ezra, in which the Messianic era ends with the death of the Messiah after 400 years and the world returns to primeval silence for seven days before the dawn of the World/Age to Come (4 Ezra 7:28–30).

The emphasis of 2 Baruch's Messianic era lies not on the person of the Anointed One, but on the transformed state of worldly existence in his days. The Messianic era is first of all a time of plentiful food:

Behemoth will be revealed from its place, and Leviathan will ascend from the sea, those two great serpents that I created on the fifth day of creation and have preserved until that day. And then they will be food for all who are left. Also, the earth will yield its fruits ten-thousandfold. A single vine will have a thousand branches, and a single branch will produce a thousand bunches of grapes, and a single bunch of grapes will produce a thousand grapes, and a single grape will produce a kor of wine. Those who have hungered will rejoice. And furthermore, they will see marvels every day. For winds are going out from before me to bring every morning the fragrance of aromatic fruits, and at the end of the day clouds sprinkle dew of healing. And at that time, the reservoir of manna will again descend from on high, and they will eat of it in those years, because these are the ones who have reached the consummation of time. (29:4–8)

The Messianic era is also a time of healing and renewal for humanity, both physically and spiritually, as well as for the entire earth:

Then healing will be descending in the dew, and disease will vanish, and concern and sorrow and groans will pass from among humans, and gladness will walk about the entire earth. And no one will again die untimely, nor will any peril suddenly befall. And judgments and blame and schisms and vengeance and blood and covetousness and envy and hatred and all those that are like these will go into condemnation when they will be removed, for it is these that have tilled this world [or age] with evils, and because of them the life of human beings has greatly been distributed. Animals will come from the forest and serve humans, the snake and dragons will come out of their holes to subject themselves to an infant. Then women will no longer be in pain when they bear, nor will they be tormented when they give the fruits of the womb. And in those days the harvest will not grow tired, nor will the builders grow weary, for the works will progress quickly by themselves together with those who do them with much rest. (73:1–74:1)

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<sup>50</sup> This also seems to be the interpretation of Charles (*The Apocalypse of Baruch: Translated from the Syriac* [London: A. & C. Black, 1896], 56), Klijn ("2 [Syriac Apocalypse of] Baruch," *OTP* I:631) and Gurtner (*Second Baruch*, 67), who point out the link between the glorious return with the Messiah's being preexistent.



The descriptions of material abundance and healing find their echoes in the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah. The Messianic banquet (Isa 25:6) is fulfilled in the bountiful supply of meat, wine, fruits and manna from heaven. Humanity is healed of its sickness and diseases (Isa 35:5–6). There are no more pains and sorrows, but only gladness and joy (Isa 25:8; 35:10). Animals coexist with humans harmlessly in peace (Isa 11:6–9). Most interestingly, even though humans still die (but not untimely), the moral maladies and the physical travails as consequences of the sins of humanity's primeval ancestors are to be completely eliminated: "vengeance and blood and covetousness and envy and hatred" that first arose from Cain's murder of his brother will be removed; there will be no more pain of child birth as punishment for Eve; nor will there be tiresome toil and labour as penalty for Adam.

It is in these detailed descriptions of the earthly blessings of the Messianic era that 2 Baruch stands apart from 4 Ezra. In the latter, a plenteous earth overflowing with sustenance is a scene that is non-existent. For 4 Ezra, "the root [of evil]", "illness" and "sorrow" will eventually be "banished", but that happens not in the Messianic era, to which it pays scant attention, but in the World/Age to Come, when death and corruptibility itself will be eliminated (8:53).<sup>51</sup> The Messianic era in 4 Ezra is presented as transient, a fulfilment of Israelite national expectations; the long and blissful Messianic era in 2 Baruch, on the other hand, is of universal significance, as it redresses the insufficiency of this world and cures the diseased humanity as a whole. This difference does not necessarily mean that the author of 4 Ezra did not believe in a Messianic era with material abundancy; it simply means that he chose not to describe in any detail about the Messianic rule. On the other hand, abundant food described in 2 Baruch offers new insight if it indeed represents a common component of Messianic expectations of late Second Temple Judaism. The feeding of the five thousand<sup>52</sup> and four thousand<sup>53</sup> recorded in the New Testament, like the accounts of healing and

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<sup>51</sup> Similar to 4 Ezra, for the author of Revelation, the Messianic era is also a transient time, even though it is to last a millennium (20:4), much longer than 4 Ezra's 400 years; the removal of pains, sorrows and death to be replaced with joy and healing (21:4; 22:1–2) is also to occur in the World/Age to Come (21:1).

<sup>52</sup> Mt 14:13–21; Mk 6:30–44; Lk 9:10–17.

<sup>53</sup> Mt 15:32–39; Mk 8:1–10.

exorcism carried out by Jesus, must be understood to be more than a mere act of miracle and compassion, but a significant Messianic statement.<sup>54</sup>

The special care 2 Baruch takes to portray a Messianic era that is bountiful, wholesome and joyous in this world calls for caution against two related assumptions. Firstly, it is often assumed that, by advocating the Age to Come that is other-worldly, 2 Baruch holds a negative view of the material world. This assumption often derives from an over-generalizing tendency in earlier scholarship to define apocalyptic literature as eschatological dualism coupled with a pessimistic outlook towards this world.<sup>55</sup> It assumes that, with an orientation towards a heavenly, transcendent reality, the apocalyptic seers generally tend to be “world-denying” and “uninterested” in creation and human history alike.<sup>56</sup> The attention on the prosperity and happiness of this world in the Messianic era in 2 Baruch indicates that the author’s eschatology does not reject this world and diminish its value and importance; rather, this world is to find the fulfillment of its creation in the extended Age to Come. The author’s presentation of the Messianic era and the following Age to Come tells against a “radical discontinuity between this world and the future one,” as is often claimed in studies of 2 Baruch.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> The same can be said about Jesus’s turning water into wine at the wedding of Cana, as observed by Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 295, n 152, while commenting on the significance of abundant wine in the Messianic era described in 2 Bar and other Second Temple Jewish literature.

<sup>55</sup> E.g. von Rad (*Old Testament Theology*, II: 305) considers apocalypses to be “pessimistic in the extreme.” Both D. S. Russell and Paul D. Hanson identify the apocalyptic genre with an “apocalyptic outlook” that can be described as giving up hope for the present world. See Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964); *idem*, *Divine Disclosure: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic* (London: SCM, 1992); Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979); *idem*, “Prophetic and Apocalyptic Politics,” in *The Last Things: Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Eschatology*, ed. C. E. Braaten and R. W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 43–66. For a critique on this assumption and references of earlier works with this view, see Jonathan Moo, *Creation, Nature and Hope in 4 Ezra*, 9–17, esp. n 5.

<sup>56</sup> Moo, *Creation*, 10–12. A corrective voice, however, is offered by Rowland in his *Open Heaven*, which maintains that there is considerable continuity between the two ages in apocalypses, and that their interest in nature and creation tells against a negative attitude towards this world (146–155). Building on Rowland’s view, Crispin Fletcher-Louis, in his review of the history of the study of Apocalyptic literature, even states that “at its core, apocalyptic literature is world affirming with a high view of human life and culture.” See his “Jewish Apocalyptic and Apocalypticism,” in *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, ed. Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2011), II:1569–1607; here 1604. While Fletcher-Louis may have overstated the case, Moo’s study (*Creation*) has established that there is both a positive outlook towards material creation and continuity between this world and the world to come in 4 Ezra, reputed to be the most pessimistic apocalypse of all. Similarly, John F. Hobbins’s study on 2 Baruch (“The Summing up of History in 2 Baruch,” *JQR* 89 [1998]: 45–79) also concludes that the apocalypse maintains a positive view on human history, that the Age to Come will involve “the healing of history, not its suppression,” “the healing will occur in history and beyond it,” and “God’s saving acts will transform history from within, not destroy it from without” (76).

<sup>57</sup> Murphy, *Structure and Meaning*, 67.

Secondly, 2 Baruch's use of a Deuteronomic scheme has been widely recognized. (This will be discussed in detail in a following section.) It has also been rightly pointed out that 2 Baruch differs from the Deuteronomic idea of covenantal reward by moving it into an eschatological context, replacing earthly rewards of land and prosperity with entrance into a heavenly world.<sup>58</sup> However, can one go as far as to say that 2 Baruch "has altered the point of view of Deuteronomy"<sup>59</sup> and totally abandoned hope for earthly rewards? 2 Baruch's vivid depiction of the Messianic era with its richness in earthly blessings compels us to be more moderate in this judgment. The righteous not only will be rewarded in the Age to Come, they will also inherit the earth and all the good things while still in this world, if they prevail in Torah obedience. This is a point omitted in 4 Ezra, but emphatically featured in 2 Baruch, that in the Messianic era the righteous "will live in the land and enjoy security" (Ps 37:3; cf. 2 Bar 29:2; 40:2; 71:1) and "shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant prosperity" (Ps 37:11; cf. 2 Bar 29:4–8).<sup>60</sup> In other words, the Deuteronomic blessings have been maintained rather than abandoned. The earthly promises are not discarded; rather, the horizon of the Deuteronomic scheme has been expanded to include the Age to Come. Thus Henze's words appear to be more accurate, that "the *Deuteronomic* promise that those who are obedient to the Torah will be richly rewarded with a prosperous life" is "combined with the *apocalyptic* promise of a better life in the world to come."<sup>61</sup> It is an expansion of the Deuteronomic point of view, rather than an alteration.

In summary, 2 Baruch shares with 4 Ezra the same belief in the coming of the new aeon and similar ideas about the nature of the end. 2 Baruch's eschatological concepts tend to be expressed more in temporal terms rather than spatial. The consummation of time comes in stages, as in 4 Ezra; however, as if addressing what its author might have considered an inadequacy in 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch supplies more

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<sup>58</sup> The most thorough comparison of 2 Bar with Deut remains Murphy's *Structure and Meaning*; see particularly 124–6.

<sup>59</sup> Murphy, *Structure and Meaning*, 125.

<sup>60</sup> Ps 37 as a Wisdom psalm appears to have influenced 2 Baruch, in terms of its hortatory function, its sapiential style, the contrast of the righteous and the wicked, the emphasis on the earthly reward of inheriting the land (vv 3, 9, 11, 22, 34), and even in the use of "cedar of Lebanon" as a metaphor for the wicked oppressor (v 35). It would be quite suitable to see Baruch in the voice of the psalmist of Ps 37. The same paraenetic flavour and the attention on earthly rewards for the righteous, however, are not found in 4 Ezra. As demonstrated in Chapter Three, Ezra the character shares great similarities with the psalmist in Ps 119, a seeker of God's Torah, who regards understanding of wisdom itself as the reward.

<sup>61</sup> Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 224, his original emphases.

concrete details about the Messianic era, depicted as the last stage of this age with copious material provisions and abundant earthly blessings.

### *7.3 Torah and Adam's Sin in 2 Baruch*

The analysis of 2 Baruch's eschatology would be insufficient without a study of the nature and function of Torah within it. The Mosaic Torah remains at the centre of the book's eschatological scheme. Its significance is aptly summed up by the author himself as part of Baruch's epistle to his people in diaspora:

... know, then, that in former times and in generations of old our fathers had righteous helpers and prophets and holy men. But we were in our land, and they helped us when we sinned, and they interceded on our behalf with him who made us, because they trusted in their works. And the Mighty One heard them and forgave us. But now the righteous have been gathered, and the prophets have fallen asleep. We, too, have left our land, and Zion has been taken from us, and **we have nothing now except for the Mighty One and his Torah**. Therefore, **if we direct and prepare our hearts, we will receive everything we have lost, many times over, for what we have lost was subject to corruption, and what we will receive is not corruptible**. (85:1–5)

The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple means the loss of land and traditional religious institutions and, therefore, severed previous links with God. The Torah remains the only means of access to the Mighty One, and Torah obedience the sole condition to receive back what has been lost. What is at stake is not of this world like what has been lost, but of the world of incorruption, in which reward for the righteous and condemnation for the wicked will be irrevocable for eternity (85:12–13), as stipulated in the eschatological revelations Baruch has received from God. That the consummation of time is fast approaching (85:10) makes Baruch's call for a return to the Torah even more urgent and compelling.<sup>62</sup>

#### *7.3.1 The Identity of Torah as Both Divine Wisdom and Mosaic Covenant*

The rich sapiential flavour found in apocalyptic literature also permeates the writing of 2 Baruch. As in 4 Ezra, Torah and wisdom frequently appear, along with other synonyms, in parallel structures.<sup>63</sup> The Torah-Wisdom correlation is further extended

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Schnabel's words (*Law and Wisdom*, 154): "The control of the entire apocalypse can indeed be summarized with the statement in 85,3: 'We have nothing now save the Mighty One and his law.'" Cf. also the assessment of Matthias Henze ("Torah and Eschatology in the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch," in *The Significance of Sinai: Traditions about Sinai and Divine Revelation in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. George J. Brooke, Hindy Najman and Loren T. Stuckenbruck [Leiden: Brill, 2008], 201–15; here 202): "Our author has a developed interest in the *eschaton*, not for the sake of predicting the future, but rather in order to spell out how such knowledge about the End Time has an immediate effect on the Mean Time, i.e., the time of the author and his original audience."

<sup>63</sup> E.g. 15:5; 38:2–4; 44:14; 48:24, 36, 38, 40; 51:3–4; 77:16, etc.

to the identification of the teacher of Torah as “sage,” or “wise man” (חכם), and “son of the law” (בן מצוה).<sup>64</sup> In addition, the identification of Torah with wisdom converges with Deuteronomy’s sapiential understanding of the Mosaic covenant. This link is made explicit by Baruch in his prayer:

In you we trust, for see, your Torah is with us. And we know that we will not fall as long as we hold on to your statutes. ... For we all are one renowned people (‘מ’ רם) who received one Torah from the One. And that Torah that is among us aids us, and the surpassing wisdom that is among us will help us. (48:22, 24)

The Torah, i.e. the statutes of God, is identified as the law that Israel received through Moses as described in the Book of Deuteronomy, where it is called “wisdom” and “understanding” to make Israel a wise and great people among all other nations:<sup>65</sup>

“... Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances, as the Lord my God commanded me ... . Keep them and do them; for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples (עמים), who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘surely this great nation (עם) is a wise and understanding people (גוי).’ For what great nation (גוי) is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation (גוי) is there, that has statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day? ...” (Deut 4:5–8)

This correlation of Torah with the Mosaic law is more pronounced and streamlined in 2 Baruch than in 4 Ezra, despite the similarity in their sapiential terminology. Both refer to Torah as divine wisdom; however, whereas in 4 Ezra the concept of Torah also incorporates eschatological knowledge and a cosmic dimension through its correlation with wisdom,<sup>66</sup> in 2 Baruch the cosmic perspective and eschatological content belong to divine wisdom but is not equated with Torah.<sup>67</sup> In other words, Wisdom is the source of the Mosaic Torah and is larger than Torah. This difference is important for the understanding of different authorial intentions. Whereas 4 Ezra intends to establish esoteric knowledge about the end-time in the form of the seventy secret books as part of the rewritten Torah, 2 Baruch insists that the Torah, which remains the one mediated through Moses, “is with us” and “is among us” (48:22, 24).

As in 4 Ezra, Torah observance is expressed in the sapiential sense of Torah piety, rather than halakhic matters.<sup>68</sup> There is otherwise a stronger emphasis on the Torah’s paraenetic or didactic function, achieved through Baruch’s three public

<sup>64</sup> 2 Bar 46:4, 5. This point is also made in Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom*, 159–60. Interestingly, “Sons of Torah” is also the term Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai used to refer to the Sages; see the discussion in Ben Zion Rosenfeld, “Sage and Temple,” 439–42.

<sup>65</sup> On Torah and wisdom in 2 Bar, see also Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 216–8.

<sup>66</sup> See Chapter Three for detailed discussion.

<sup>67</sup> E.g. 21:9–10, 28:1, 44:6; 54:13; 59:7.

<sup>68</sup> Henze also makes this point in “Torah and Eschatology,” 205, and his *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 225–6.

speeches and the epistle. However, the lack of attention to halakhic details does not mean the author understands the practice of Torah in terms of ethical conduct only.<sup>69</sup> In the vision of the bright and dark waters, Torah obedience on the part of David, Solomon, Hezekiah and Josiah is clearly understood as maintaining cultic devotion and purity, in contrast to the idolatry of Jeroboam and Manasseh (61:1–66:8). According to Baruch’s message in the epistle, Torah observance certainly exceeds the limits of ethical conduct to include the keeping of the “festivals,” “Sabbaths” and “traditions of the law (מִצְוֹת)” (84:8–9).

### 7.3.2 *The Function of Torah as Life and Light*

In line with the Deuteronomic identity of Torah, the Deuteronomic notion of Torah’s function as life-giving is also adopted and extended in 2 Baruch. The giving of the covenant by Moses is recalled in the following manner:

Therefore at that time he made for them a covenant and said, ‘See, I have placed before you life and death.’ And he called on heaven and earth to bear witness against them, for he knew that his time was short, while heaven and earth would be forever. They, however, sinned and transgressed after his death, knowing that they had the Torah reproaching [them], as well as that light in which nothing can stray, ...” (19:1–3)

The author makes an explicit connection to Deuteronomy 30:19 by a rare direct quotation from the Hebrew Bible.<sup>70</sup> The Torah, the Mosaic covenant, is life, and rejecting it means death. The life-giving function of Torah naturally needs to be emphasized by the author of 2 Baruch for a post-trauma community, for which the survival of both collective and individual lives is a grave matter. The importance to obtain life through Torah obedience is then configured within the book’s eschatological framework. First, as the world is expecting the Messianic woes as signs of the approaching end, “everything that is will be taken to destruction”:

you, however, if you prepare your hearts and sow in them the fruits of the Torah, the Mighty One will protect you in that time to come, who will shake up all of creation. (31:5–32:1)

Not only will the Torah give life to those who adhere to it in the perilous last stage of this age, it will also grant a transformation into a glorious and eternal form of life to those who “have not withdrawn” and “have kept the truth of the Torah” (44:9) at the time of the Age to Come:

<sup>69</sup> This seems to be the view of Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom*, 157, 159, 160, 161.

<sup>70</sup> Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 208.

as for the glory of those who are now righteous in my Torah, those who have had understanding in their lives, and those who have planted in their heart the root of wisdom—then their splendour will be glorified through transformation: the shape of their faces will be turned into the light (אור) of their beauty, so that they will be able to acquire and receive the world [age] that does not die, which was then promised to them. (51:3–4)

The righteous will see the World to Come now invisible, no longer grow old, live on the summits of the World to Come, and their beauty and glorious splendor become even more excellent than the angels (51:7–12). Those who neglected the Torah, in contrast, will be tormented in the fire (44:14–15; 51:4).

The dichotomy of life and death is further connected with that of light and darkness. In 19:1–3 quoted above, Torah's function is also compared to the light that shows the right way. The life and light convergence is found in other places in the book as well. For example, in one of Baruch's prayers he calls God "the one who always *enlightens* those who conduct themselves with *understanding*" (38:1), and declares that God's "*Torah is life*" and his "*wisdom is uprightness*" (38:2).

The biblical foundation of 2 Baruch's Torah-light metaphor is not at all difficult to find.<sup>71</sup> Take Psalm 119:105 for example, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path"; or Proverb 6:23, "the commandment is a lamp and the Torah is light." The Torah as light metaphor is also common in other Jewish writings in the late Second Temple period<sup>72</sup> including 4 Ezra, where the loss of the Law is described as darkness (14:21), and Ezra is said to be given light in his heart to restore the lost Torah (14:25). 2 Baruch, however, confers upon it more significance through a systematic application of the metaphor throughout the book, embedding it in the interconnected themes of the antitheses between Light and Darkness, between Moses and Adam, and between Life and Death. In these connections, Torah is life and light, given to Israel through Moses, in order to counter the death and darkness brought by Adam through his rebellion against God's commandment, as the following verses demonstrate:

For at that time [of Moses], the lamp (נר) of the eternal Torah enlightened (אור) all those who sat in darkness. It will make the promise of their reward known to those who believe, and the torment of fire to those who deny that is preserved for them. (59:2)

<sup>71</sup> Isa 2:5; 5:20; 45:7; 8:20; 9:1; 10:17; 42:6; 49:6; 50:10, 11; 51:4; 60:1, 20; Micah 7:8–9; Pss 18:29; 27:1; 36:10; 43:3; 119:105, 130; Prov 6:23; 13:9; 20:20; Dan 2:22; 5:11, 14; etc.

<sup>72</sup> E.g. LAB 11:1; T. Levi 14:3–4, 18:3; T. Naph 5:3–4; Jn 12:35–36; 2 Cor 4:4; 1 Thess 5:5; etc. Also see Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 208, n 68. The *Targumim* consistently interpret the symbol of light as the Law. See Géza Vermes, "The Torah Is a Light," *VT* 8 (1958): 436–8.

“... he [Moses] brought the Torah to the seed of Jacob and lit a lamp (נֹרָא) for the nation of Israel.” ... “He who lit (יָאָר) [a lamp] took from the light (אִימָא). Few are those who are like him. However, those many for whom he has lit (יָאָר) [a lamp] have taken from the darkness of Adam and have not taken delight in the light (אִימָא) of the lamp (נֹרָא).” (17:4–18:2)

Thus Moses is contrasted with Adam<sup>73</sup> in that, whereas one brought life to Israel in the form of the Torah, the other introduced death into the world through his disobedience against the word of God.

The light metaphor is applied not only in connection with Moses, but also all those considered by the author as his successors, i.e. Baruch, as well as Israel’s future teachers of the Law prophesied by Baruch.<sup>74</sup> When Baruch has announced his imminent departure from this world, the people lament:

“Truly we will be in darkness, and there will be no light (אִימָא) for the people who are left. For where again shall we seek the Torah, or who will distinguish for us between death and life?” (46:2–3)

“For the shepherds of Israel have perished, and the lamps (נֹרָא) that have shone (יָאָר) are extinguished, and the springs have withheld their stream from which we used to drink. For we have been left in the darkness and in the wood of the forest and in the thirst of the desert.” (77:13–14)

The people express their anxiety of losing Baruch, for as a teacher like Moses, he provides access to the Torah, a crucial matter of light and darkness, life and death. In Baruch’s reply, the Torah itself will be the source of Israel’s future leaders:

“Shepherds and lamps (נֹרָא) and springs come from the Torah. And though we pass on, the Torah abides. If, therefore, you look to the Torah and will be heeding wisdom, the lamp (נֹרָא) will not be wanting and the shepherd not departing and the spring not drying up.” (77:15–16)

In 77:13–16 quoted above, the Torah-light metaphor is further enhanced by the metaphor of the spring.<sup>75</sup> Strictly speaking, then, Light is the reserved metaphor for the

<sup>73</sup> Compared with the Adam-Moses antithesis in 2 Bar, the death and life dichotomy is presented in the contrast of Adam and Christ in Pauline literature (Rom 5:18–21; 1 Cor 15:22).

<sup>74</sup> Ezra is also called “a lamp in a dark place” (4 Ezra 12:42); however, there is no specific link to the Mosaic Torah there, as the lamp metaphor is applied to Ezra in resemblance of all the prophets before him.

<sup>75</sup> Fountain-light-life is a well-established biblical trope. Take, for example, Ps 36:10, “for with you is the fountain of life; in your light shall we see light.” The Torah as spring of water metaphor is also applied consistently elsewhere in 2 Bar, e.g. in the Vision of the Cedar, the Vine and the Spring, in which the spring nourishes the vine and destroys the forest. The water metaphor is also in the Vision of the Bright and Dark Waters. Cf. 4 Ezra, in which Ezra commands his own soul to “drink wisdom” (8:4); divine inspiration of Torah is represented a “cup” “full of something like water” in fiery colour (14:39); and the seventy secret books are said to contain “springs of understanding,” “fountains of wisdom,” and “river of knowledge” (4 Ezra 14:47).



Torah, whereas the teacher of the law is a lamp that sheds light from the Light, which is analogous to the teacher as a spring from which the water flows, another symbol for the Torah.

The systematic usage of the symbol of light and darkness is also testified in the author's historical review as an extensive metaphor—the Vision of the Twelve Bright and Dark Waters (53:1–74:4),<sup>76</sup> The criteria of judgement are based on Torah obedience by a representative biblical figure from a specific period. Thus the times of Adam, Jeroboam and Manasseh are represented as “dark” because of their rebellions against the law; Abraham and his children, Moses, David and Solomon, Hezekiah and Josiah are represented as “bright” due to their faithfulness to the commandments. Light and darkness are further associated with life and death, in that each law-abiding period creates life and hope for future generations, whereas the consequences of the dark periods are death and destruction. By the same the logic, the time of slavery in Egypt, the days of the judges, the destruction of the First Temple and the Babylonian exile are deemed dark as they represent destruction and death, whereas the return from Babylon and the construction of the Second Temple are presented as bright waters because they represent restoration. Similarly, in Remiel's interpretation, the Messianic woes of end-time are also represented as dark waters, whereas Messianic warfare and the Messianic era are bright waters. From the above one sees again how Torah, light and life are interconnected throughout, which superimposes on the Deuteronomic structure a new set of metaphorical interpretations.

It is even easier to see how the light metaphor is conceptualized systematically if the cases where it is applied are considered in Syriac. The word for “lamp”, *šrg'* ܫܪܓܐ, appears six times and in all cases it is used symbolically to refer to Torah. The author (or the translator) seems to make a deliberate distinction when “lamp” means literally “the torch that burns down the temple” by adopting the word *lampada* ܠܡܡܕܐ (6:4, 5; 7:1). The word for “light”, *nuhra* ܢܗܪܐ, appears nine times; apart from three times when it refers to astronomical light such as the sun and other luminaries (10:12; 54:13; 59:11), it is used metaphorically to refer to either the Torah (18:1–2; 19:3; 46:2) or life in the Age to Come (48:50; 51:3, 10). The imagery of light is made more manifest through an extensive usage of the adjective, *nhyra* ܢܗܝܪܐ, “bright”, and the

<sup>76</sup> Once again, the water metaphor is in use side by side with the light metaphor.

verb, *nhr* נִהַר, “to shine, to be bright”, two cognates of *nuhra* נִוְרָא, “light”. Thus the bright waters represent periods of light,<sup>77</sup> with the Torah being obeyed and upheld, whereas the dark waters<sup>78</sup> are periods deprived of light. The verb “to shine” is also used predominantly in a metaphorical capacity,<sup>79</sup> to mean the enlightenment of/with the Torah.<sup>80</sup>

The light metaphor, therefore, appears to be a most salient reflection of the author’s understanding of the function of the Torah. It is understood through a mapping of the properties of light. As light enables someone to see, so the Torah teaches and makes one understand; as light spreads and can be disseminated, so the Torah can be passed on from Moses to Israel and their descendants; as light dissipates darkness, so the Torah overcomes and corrects human wrongs; and as light gives life, so the Torah is the countering measure against darkness of death introduced by Adam.

### 7.3.3 *Torah and the Sin of Adam*

The theme of Adam’s sin plays a significant part in both 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch.<sup>81</sup> However, by presenting Moses as a counterpoint of Adam and by programming this contrast in the overall scheme of gaining life and overcoming death, 2 Baruch presents a better thought-out position on the effects of Adams’s sin than 4 Ezra, which may even have been intended as a critique of the latter. The two implied questions under consideration are: is humanity capable of keeping the Torah, given the effects of Adam’s sin, and is God just in punishing the wicked if they are conditioned by the sin of their first ancestor? 2 Baruch answers both questions affirmatively.

Firstly, 2 Baruch has the same starting point as 4 Ezra, namely, that, because of Adam’s sinning, death was decreed for all his descendants (23:4; c.f. 4 Ezra 3:7).

<sup>77</sup> 53:5, 6; 57:1, 3; 59:1, 12; 61:1, 8; 63:1, 11; 66:1, 8; 68:1, 8; 69:5; 72:1; 74:4.

<sup>78</sup> The dark waters perhaps also allude to Gen 1; they are periods of chaos in contrast to the cosmic order manifest in the Torah.

<sup>79</sup> Except one case, in 12:2, where it literally means for the sun to give light. In 53:9, it refers to the lighting up of the lightning, the symbol for the Messiah in the Vision of the Bright and Dark Waters. In 17:4 and 18:1 it means “to light a lamp” in a metaphorical context.

<sup>80</sup> 21:18; 34:1; 38:1; 53:9; 54:5; 59:2; 77:13.

<sup>81</sup> In this sense both 4 Ezra and 2 Bar are participants of the exegetical tradition which developed around “the Garden of Eden” and “Adam and Eve” in late Second Temple Judaism, appearing both as abundant allusions in literature such as LAB. 26:6 and Paul’s letter to the Romans (5:12) and as complete works dedicated to embellished telling of the story such as the *Life of Adam and Eve*. For a survey on this topic, see John R. Levison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism: From Sirach to 2 Baruch* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1988; London: Bloomsbury, 2015); Michael E. Stone, *A History of the Literature of Adam and Eve* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1992); Gary A. Anderson, Michael E. Stone and Johannes Tromp (eds.), *Literature on Adam and Eve: Collected Essays* (Leiden: Brill, 2000). See also Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 213, n 81.

Baruch even echoes Ezra's lament, "O what have you done, Adam, to all those who were born of you?" (48:42; c.f. 4 Ezra 7:118 – 9, "O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the misfortune was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants".) That is, however, where the commonality ends and divergence begins.

4 Ezra emphasizes that God did not "take away from them their evil heart" so that the Torah "might bring forth fruit in them" (3:20). "The disease became permanent" (3:22); as a result, all Adam's descendants "are full of sins and burdened with transgressions" (7:68), and have been brought into the "ways of death" (7:48). 4 Ezra has a very negative view on the human ability to keep the Torah, for "the Torah was in the people's heart along with the evil root, but what was good departed, and the evil remained" (3:22). This view is used as the main thrust of Ezra's persistent argument against God's announcement of the eschatological retributions to the ungodly depicted in the first three episodes of 4 Ezra.<sup>82</sup>

In sharp contrast, 2 Baruch rejects this pessimistic view. Unsurprisingly, it does not even mention the existence of the "evil heart" or *יצר הרע* in rabbinic terminology, but places the blame of transgressions and death squarely upon the descendants themselves:

For even though Adam was first to sin and brought death upon all who were not in his time but rather [upon all] those who were born of him, each one of them has prepared for himself the torment to come, and, furthermore, each of them has chosen for himself the praises to come. (54:15)

Adam is therefore not the cause, except only for himself, but each of us has become our own Adam. (54:19)

Each human being is therefore responsible for their own choice and face either reward or punishment accordingly. The pairing of Moses and Adam in connection with light-darkness and life-death antitheses further places the audience in a frame of sharp contrast and decisive choice. The hortatory intention is clearly conveyed:

Let all of these [things] that were said beforehand be before your eyes always, because we are still in the spirit and the power of our free will. (85:7)

That individuals determine their own fate through free choice is also emphasised in the review of history. While interpreting the vision for Baruch, angel Remiel comments on how Adam (Man) became not only a danger to himself, but even to the heavenly hosts,

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<sup>82</sup> See Chapter Two.

alluding to the legend of the fallen angels in the Book of the Watchers (1 En chs 6–11; cf. Gen 6:1–4); however, the stress is placed on those who have not fallen through self-control:

... for at that time when he [Adam] was created, they [angels] had freedom. And some of them descended and intermingled with the women. Then those who did so were tormented in chains. But the rest of the multitude of the angels, of whom there is [no] number, restrained themselves. (56:11–14)

2 Baruch argues that the free-will of angels and humans alike has justified the eschatological retributions awaiting the wicked. Whereas Ezra would not stop being burdened with the fate of the ungodly (4 Ezra 8:51; 9:13; etc.), Baruch willingly turns to inquire about the righteous (48:48–50), and is able to proclaim:

Justly do they perish, those who have not loved your Torah, and the torment of judgment receives those who have not subjected themselves to your power. (54:14)

Though both 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch regard Torah as the antidote to Adam's sin, from their different answers to the question about humanity's ability to obey God's commandments, 2 Baruch appears to be closer to the position of the Mosaic command to "choose life over death" (Deut 30:19).

#### *7.4 A Deuteronomic and Eschatological Solution*

We have seen that the author's response to the crisis of 70 CE is thoroughly eschatological; on the other hand, it is also thoroughly Deuteronomic. The Deuteronomic influence on 2 Baruch can be found in many respects, including its understanding of the nature and function of Torah, as demonstrated above, the characterization of its protagonist after the model of Moses in the Book of Deuteronomy, and the teaching of Baruch in both his speeches and his letter in the style of the Mosaic valedictory address in Deuteronomy.<sup>83</sup> The characterization of Baruch as a teacher like Moses will be the subject of the following chapter.<sup>84</sup> The question to be explored in this section is how the two thought systems, eschatological and Deuteronomic, seemingly mutually opposed, are combined seamlessly in 2 Baruch.

<sup>83</sup> For detailed comparisons, see, for example, Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 192–206, 218–224; Murphy, *Structure and Meaning*, 126–7; and Dale C. Allison, *New Moses*, 66.

<sup>84</sup> See Chapter Eight.

7.4.1 *2 Baruch's Adoption and Adaptation of the Deuteronomic Scheme*

O. H. Steck sums up the Deuteronomic scheme of history thus:

the people sin;  
God punishes them;  
the people repent;  
the people return to the land and enjoy prosperity and the enemies are punished.<sup>85</sup>

The same overall structure is adopted in the apocalypse of 2 Baruch.

The Prologue of the book sets the scene for the “sin and punishment” phase. The grave sin of Israel and its severe punishment are announced to Baruch by God himself. Baruch’s prayers and lamentations, on the other hand, serve as repentance offered on behalf of the people. Whereas in Deuteronomy, the sin and punishment stage is described in Moses’s hortative speech to Israel as a warning about their future, 2 Baruch sees its own time (both the fictional and the real) as that of sin and punishment, the fulfilled prophecy of Moses. This is plainly demonstrated in Baruch’s last hortatory address to the people:

See, have you not seen what has befallen Zion? Or do you perhaps think that the place has sinned and therefore it was overthrown, or that the land has acted foolishly and therefore was delivered up? Do you not know that it was because of you who sinned that that which did not sin was overthrown, and that because of those who acted wickedly that which did not act foolishly was delivered up to its enemies? (77:8–10)

The book, therefore, serves as not only consolation after punishment but also exhortation for penitence in order to ensure future restoration.

The author is thus propelling his audience into the repentance phase in preparation for the final phase of renewal. Taking heed to the Torah naturally becomes the crucial means and proof of repentance. The repeated exhortation calling the people (thus also the audience of the book) to prepare their hearts and souls for that which is to come strongly illustrates this point:

...prepare your hearts and sow in them the fruits of the Torah... (32:1)

...prepare your hearts, so that you will obey the Torah... (46:5)

Prepare yourselves for that which is preserved for you, and be ready for the reward that is laid up for you. (52:7)

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<sup>85</sup> O. H. Steck, *Israel und das gewaltsame Geschick der Propheten* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1967), 66 and 139; cited in Murphy, *Structure and Meaning*, 117–118.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

...remove from your heart the vain error... (78:6)

... prepare your hearts for that which you have believed from the beginning ... (83:8)

... if we direct and prepare our hearts, we will receive everything we have lost, many times over, ... (85:4)

... let us prepare ourselves, so that we will possess and not be possessed, and that we will hope and not be put to shame, ... (85:9)

Again, then, prepare yourselves, ... (85:11)

In all the above exhortations, preparation of one's heart is closely related to future expectations that are based on the Deuteronomic promise of rewards for Torah obedience.<sup>86</sup>

The call to prepare one's heart is further strengthened by the author's frequent use of vocabulary related to remembering and forgetting. Murphy attributes this to the influence of Deuteronomy's highly developed "theology of remembering."<sup>87</sup> He finds that the pair of words are also prominent in 2 Baruch, with "remember" occurring 26 times<sup>88</sup> and "forget" 14 times,<sup>89</sup> the objects of these verbs predominantly being God's loving deeds in the past (48:29; 77:11x3; 78:3), the covenant (84:2), the law of God (44:7; 48:38; 84:7, 8), good or evil consequences (i.e. blessings and curses of Deuteronomy; 48:7; 50:1; 82:8; 83:5).<sup>90</sup> In return, God also remembers his part of the covenant; he "remembers" the people who are yet to be born (23:3), the "beginning" and the "end" of his creation (48:7), and his promise that he will not forget Israel (78:6).<sup>91</sup> Thus the phase of repentance comprises acts of remembrance and preparation of hearts which revolve around the Torah and the covenant in the Deuteronomic scheme of 2 Baruch.

What, then, is the renewal and restoration phase of the Deuteronomic scheme in the book? It is precisely the eschatological descriptions in the form of dialogic revelations. The rewards for those who remember the Torah and prepare their hearts accordingly will come both in the Messianic era of this age and in the transcendent

<sup>86</sup> See also Murphy's comparison of this type of exhortation in 2 Baruch with Deuteronomy's emphasis on the "disposition of one's heart and soul" (*Structure and Meaning*, 126–7).

<sup>87</sup> Deut 5:15; 7:18; 8:2, 18; 9:7; 15:15; 16:3, 12; 24:18, 20, 22; 32:7. See Murphy, *Structure and Meaning*, 127–128.

<sup>88</sup> The root,  $\text{𐤀𐤃}$ , appears in 3:5; 19:7; 25:4; 43:2; 48:29, 38; 75:7; 77:23; 78:7; 82:8; 83:5; 84:2, 10; 86:3x3. The root,  $\text{𐤀𐤃𐤁}$ , appears in 23:3x2; 31:4; 48:7; 77:11x3; 78:3; 84:7, 8.

<sup>89</sup> *l'* , 19:3, 6; 23:3; 31:4; 43:2; 44:7; 48:7x2; 51:14; 52:1; 66:4; 78:7; 84:8.

<sup>90</sup> Murphy, *Structure and Meaning*, 128.

<sup>91</sup> Murphy, *Structure and Meaning*, 128.

Age to Come. Therefore, as has been argued above, 2 Baruch has not completely substituted otherworldly rewards for earthly prosperity,<sup>92</sup> for the Deuteronomic promise that “people will return to the land and enjoy prosperity and the enemy be punished” will indeed be realized in the Messianic era underscored by the author in his eschatological programme. The horizon of the Deuteronomic scheme, however, has been expanded beyond this age. Here lies 2 Baruch’s two-step adaptation.

Firstly, longevity alone is of no value; instead, it is the benefits one’s life brings to himself/herself and humanity that count. 2 Baruch has God explain to Baruch:

With the Most High, neither much time nor a few years are reckoned. For what benefits did Adam have that he lived 930 years and transgressed what he was commanded? The long time he lived, therefore, did not benefit him. Rather it brought death and cut off the years of those who were born of him. Or what did it harm Moses that he lived only 120 years? And because he subjected himself to him who created him, he brought the Torah to the seed of Jacob and lit a lamp for the nation of Israel. (17:1–4)

The contrast of Moses and Adam demonstrates an irony which is to change the traditional perception of longevity. The one that lived a long life created death to himself and every one of his descendants, but the other one that had a much shorter life made the source of life (Torah as light) accessible to his people for all generations.

Secondly, the Deuteronomic reward of a long earthly life is transformed into eternal life. Those who die are not dead, but they simply leave this world and are preserved to be raised up at the end-time (27:14; 30:2; 42:8; 50:2). 2 Baruch argues that, as a matter of fact, if there is no consummation of all that is earthly, life in this world only is not reward at all, but misery:

For if there were this life only which is here for everyone, nothing could be more bitter than this. For what benefit is strength that turns into weakness, or food of plenty that turns into famine, or comeliness that turns into ugliness. For human nature changes all the time: what we formerly were is not what we are now, and what we are now is not how we will remain after this. For if there was not to be a consummation of all, their beginning would have been in vain. (21:13–17)

The real reward for the righteous, therefore, is the world that is to come. While this present world is “to them a struggle and labour with much fatigue”, the one to come is “a crown in great glory” (15:8). However, even the exaltation of the World/Age to Come is not to deny that this world was created for the sake of the righteous. In Baruch’s words, “for their sake this world has come—but *also* ... the one which is to come [will be] for their sake” (15:7).

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<sup>92</sup> As is argued, for example, in Murphy, *Structure and Meaning*, 9 and *passim*.

Writing pseudonymously after the destruction of the Second Temple, the author would be soberly aware that even the recovery promised in Deuteronomy would mean at the same time the beginning of another cycle of sin and punishment. He puts the *vaticinium ex eventu* of the second destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in the mouth of Baruch (32:2–3). The eschatological programme he offers is not only a vision of rewards as a Deuteronomic promise to the righteous, but also a solution to the vicious and repeated cycles of sin and punishment. This ingenuity is most clearly demonstrated in Baruch's vision of the bright and dark waters.

#### *7.4.2 The Vision of Bright and Dark Waters as a Presentation of the Eschatological-Deuteronomic Solution*

The vision of the twelve waters occupies a strategic position in the book's literary structure. It takes up more chapters than any other episode, and is placed towards the end of Baruch's revelations, presented as a form of historical review which serves as a natural conclusion to the divine wisdom which Baruch has received. Other Jewish apocalypses may also contain a historical review, either "complete" or "partial"; examples can be found in the Animal Apocalypse (1 En 85–90), the Apocalypse of Abraham and the Book of Daniel.<sup>93</sup> In these cases, the historical review is presented either as a vision report (An. Apoc.) or as a sermon (Apoc. Ab.; Dan). 2 Baruch, however, presents a complete human history both as an apocalyptic vision and with a lengthy interpretation by an angel, showing the great significance of this historical review in the overall narrative scheme of the book. This historical review not only presents the author's interpretation of what he perceived to be significant *Heilsgeschichte*; it also offers the key to understanding the author's Deuteronomic-eschatological solution.

The historical review is typically Deuteronomic in that it presents the same cycles of good periods symbolized by bright waters alternating with evil periods symbolized by dark waters, the sole criterion used is whether the Deuteronomic Torah is judged to be upheld. The episodes chosen by the author to be history's dark periods are represented by Adam and the following generations, Israel's enslavement in Egypt, the Amorites and the days of the Judges, Jeroboam, Manasseh and the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. On the other hand, the episodes chosen to

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<sup>93</sup> The monograph of Robert G. Hall, *Revealed Histories: Techniques for Ancient Jewish and Christian Historiography*, JSPSup 6 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991), examines the forms and techniques of revealed history telling, including apocalyptic world history.



represent the good and upright periods are the Abrahamic patriarchs, Moses, David and Solomon, Hezekiah, Josiah and the return from exile and the construction of the Second Temple. The waters are not distributed in proportion to real historical time-spans; the events closer to the time of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, though considerably briefer by comparison, are given more weight than much longer historical stretches in the past.

The vision also reflects the author's eschatological adaptation of the Deuteronomic scheme. In the angel's interpretation, a last surge of dark waters and bright waters are added to the twelve waters reported in the vision. The dark waters represent the sorrows and woes while the world anticipates the end, and the bright waters the coming of the Messiah and the Messianic era as the final stage of this world/age. The author clearly believed that his time was amid the last dark waters. An *eschaton* is thus added to the Deuteronomic review of human history.

The review is also thoroughly eschatological. It presents not an earthly perspective, but a heavenly one; history is viewed both from above and from without. The author has made human history finite by inserting it as a segment within the entire cosmic scheme, with its beginning and its end foreordained by God. In this view, human history is but a transient episode. Similar to 4 Ezra's circular view of cosmic history,<sup>94</sup> the vision of historical review in 2 Baruch also calls for caution to the common understanding of eschatological beliefs as being typically dualistic in nature. There is no doubt that this world or age is often contrasted with the World or Age to Come in the text,<sup>95</sup> but this vision presents a perspective that sees "this world/age" not as juxtaposed with the next, but as a brief segment, bracketed at both ends by primordial, eternal age.

The vision of the bright and dark waters, therefore, integrates the Deuteronomic belief with the eschatological worldview. Here is the silver lining of the dark cloud. Despite the knowledge that human history, and Israelite history in particular, is burdened with the repeated cycles of sin and chastisement with only brief intervals of repentance and restoration, that history is now fast approaching its end. The audience of 2 Baruch would understand that they are living in the last phase of repentance preparing for the eternal restoration of Israel's covenant, for the promised blessings

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<sup>94</sup> See Chapter Three.

<sup>95</sup> E.g. 2 Bar 15:7–8; 44:9; 83:9–23.

and for the healing of the brokenness of humanity and the entire creation.<sup>96</sup> With the end of this world/age, there will be no more repetitions of transgression and punishment.

If the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple is a sign of the beginning of the consummation of time, the disaster can also be turned into good news. Though the current suffering and the afflictions to come can be severe, what is assured to follow repentance is restoration, according to the Deuteronomic scheme—a restoration that is everlasting as human history has reached consummation, according to the revealed wisdom of eschatology. The vision, therefore, presents perfect harmony between a Deuteronomic worldview and an apocalyptic worldview. It challenges the common scholarly perception which sees the two as competing, non-compatible worldviews.<sup>97</sup> The traditional Deuteronomic view offers a useful explanation for the current catastrophe; the apocalyptic vision, in turn, confirms the traditional Deuteronomic notion of the cycle of sin, punishment, repentance and renewal; and more significantly, it offers a way out. While Deuteronomy has established the pattern of history with certainty, the eschatology promises an eternal restoration after repentance, ensured by the consummation of human history.

### 7.5 Summary

To summarise, like 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch also offers both eschatology and Torah as a solution to the covenantal crisis caused by the catastrophic destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. Despite the many commonalities in their eschatological thinking and in their understanding of Torah as wisdom and its function as key to Israel's redemption, 2 Baruch departs from 4 Ezra, as if addressing what it deems as

<sup>96</sup> The concept of eternity is most often expressed with the word *לחיים* in 2 Baruch, its subjects including the name and praise of God (5:2), the eschatologically restored Jerusalem and Temple (6:9; 32:4), the Messianic rule (40:3; 73:1), the Age to Come (44:12), the Torah (59:2), reward for the righteous (66:6; 78:7), and God's remembrance of the Torah faithful (78:7).

<sup>97</sup> Matthias Henze ("Torah and Eschatology," 204) critiques this modern perception thus: "Our author [of 2 Bar] manages to harmonize two distinct strands of early Jewish thought which, by modern literary standards, are not harmonious but appear to be mutually exclusive, to the extent that they are normally kept in segregation: the *Deuteronomic promise* to those who follow Torah that they will be rewarded with a long and prosperous life, and the *apocalyptic promise* that this life will soon come to an end. The author of 2 Baruch sees no contradiction here but finds the two to be fully compatible." While 2 Bar offers an exemplary case of such harmonization, eschatological beliefs had permeated every stratum of Jewish thinking by the time 2 Baruch was written. At the same time the Deuteronomic schools of thought as the most dominant part of the HB had also become unquestionably authoritative in every Jewish circle. Another case to illustrate is the sectarian writings found at Qumran, both Deuteronomic and eschatological. In other words, in many Jewish writings in the post-exilic and Second Temple period, the two paradigms accommodated each other without conflict.

inadequacies in the latter, by presenting a much more detailed picture of the Messianic era of this world/age that is filled with material abundance and earthly blessings. Further, Torah in 2 Baruch is more clearly defined as the Mosaic Torah functioning as life-giving light, following the Deuteronomic tradition. 2 Baruch also places a greater emphasis on the Mosaic Torah's function as the antidote for Adam's sin, casting Moses and Adam in antithesis as life and death, light and darkness. Enjoining its audience to remain steadfast in the Torah, it demonstrates a much more optimistic view on human capability of exercising free-will, thus placing the responsibility for reward and punishment squarely upon the shoulders of individuals who make their choice. Such reward and punishment, however, are now extended to the eschatological context, adding stress on the urgency and centrality of Torah obedience.

The author's ingenuity is fully demonstrated in his adept utilization of the Deuteronomic scheme of sin, punishment, repentance and renewal, seamlessly reconfigured with an eschatological outlook, in offering an explanation for the national disaster which had occurred, a solution of comfort and hope, as well as exhortations to a post-trauma community in order to ensure its survival and revival.

The authorial intent of consolation and exhortation also percolates through vividly in the portrayal of Baruch as a type of Moses, the topic of the next chapter.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### BARUCH BEN NERIAH

Why was Baruch chosen to be the pseudonymous hero? How is he characterized in 2 Baruch? In what way does his characterization convey the meaning and purpose of the apocalypse? It is with these questions that this chapter is concerned.

Baruch ben Neriah first appeared in the biblical world as the scribe and supporter of the prophet Jeremiah. By the time he became the hero of 2 Baruch, legends and traditions had grown abundantly around this figure. Among extant works attributed to Baruch is a collection of writings that came under his name in the apocryphal book of Baruch (or 1 Baruch), dated to the second century BCE.<sup>1</sup> Apart from the Syriac Apocalypse, Baruch also appears as the hero in a number of other ancient writings that built upon his legacies, including the *Greek Apocalypse of Baruch* (or 3 Baruch, first century CE),<sup>2</sup> the *Paraleipomena of Jeremiah* (or 4 Baruch, second century CE),<sup>3</sup> and the *Ethiopic Apocalypse of Baruch* (or 5 Baruch, seventh century CE).<sup>4</sup> From these works one can perceive a trajectory of the development of the persona of Baruch from a scribe of the prophet Jeremiah, to a sage and leader of the exile community, and to an apocalyptic seer.<sup>5</sup>

The expanded traditions of this persona offer a larger context for the study of the Baruch character in 2 Baruch. However, it is certainly important to beware that the character of Baruch did not grow out of a linear development from the biblical Baruch to the apocryphal Baruch and to the apocalyptic Baruch, even though the

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<sup>1</sup> See the most recent commentary on 1 Baruch, Sean A. Adams, *Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah: A Commentary Based on the Texts in Codex Vaticanus*, Septuagint Commentary Series (Leiden: Brill, 2014), particularly 4–6 for the issue of dating.

<sup>2</sup> H. E. Gaylord, Jr., “3 (Greek Apocalypse of) Baruch,” *OTP* I: 653–80. Also Daniel C. Harlow, *The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch (3 Baruch) in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity*, SVTP 12 (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> Known in the Ethiopic manuscripts as *The Rest of the Words of Baruch*. See Jens Herzer, *4 Baruch (Paraleipomena Jeremiou)* (Atlanta: SBL, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Wolf Leslau, *Falasha Anthology: Translated from Ethiopic Sources with an Introduction*, Yale Judaica Series 6 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951), 57–76, 162–72.

<sup>5</sup> For a description of the evolution of the character of Baruch and his relationship with Jeremiah, see J. Edward Wright, “Baruch: His Evolution from Scribe to Apocalyptic Seer,” in *Biblical Figures Outside the Bible*, ed. Michael E. Stone and Theodore A. Bergren (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1998), 264–89; *idem*, *Baruch Ben Neriah: From Biblical Scribe to Apocalyptic Seer*, Studies on Personalities of the Old Testament (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003); and Matthias Henze, “From Jeremiah to Baruch: Pseudepigraphy in the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch,” *Biblical Traditions in Transmission: Essays in Honour of Michael A. Knibb*, ed. Charlotte Hempel and Judith M. Lieu, JSJSup 111 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 157–77.

characterization of Baruch in 2 Baruch demonstrates much continuity with what we know about him in the earlier books. On the other hand, the biblical Baruch is not the single model out of which Baruch in the Syriac Apocalypse grew; it has been argued that Baruch also bears imprints of other biblical figures, such as Ezekiel and Jeremiah,<sup>6</sup> or even Daniel, Abraham and the biblical Ezra.<sup>7</sup> Henze is certainly right when he comments that 2 Baruch is “an amalgam that resides at the intersection of multiple (biblical) discourses.”<sup>8</sup> However, it is important to see the different ways these discourses contribute to the shaping of 2 Baruch; some do not contribute to the characterization of Baruch, the protagonist.

Here I will utilize the framework of narratology and define characterization as an assemblage of various character-indicators that are distributed in the text. There are two basic types of textual indicators of character: direct definition, or indirect presentation through descriptions of a character’s action, speech, external appearance and/or environment.<sup>9</sup> Being a pseudepigraphon, 2 Baruch portrays the character of its hero through the exclusive means of indirect presentation of Baruch’s action, speech and environment. More specifically, the characterization of its hero is enhanced through analogies drawn between Baruch and other biblical characters. Analogy is a means of reinforcing characterization when a character is presented in circumstances that are similar or in contrast to another through textual links, either explicitly stated or implicitly left for the audience to discover.<sup>10</sup> A character indicator, i.e. the character’s action, speech, or environment in the case of 2 Baruch, does not necessarily suggest one trait to the exclusion of others, and may imply the co-presence of several traits.<sup>11</sup> This framework not only helps define which biblical discourses contribute to the characterization of Baruch and which do not, but also validates the existence of

<sup>6</sup> See for example, Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 101–2; 107–13.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, G. Saylor, *Have the Promises Failed?*, 91–5 for her comparison of Baruch with Abraham; and Balázs Tamási, “Baruch as a Prophet in 2 Baruch,” in *Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch*, ed. Henze and Boccaccini, 195–217, particularly 213–5, for his comparison of Baruch with Daniel and Abraham. Comparison of Baruch with the biblical Ezra is found in Mark Whitters, “Baruch as Ezra in 2 Baruch,” *JBL* 132 (2013): 569–84.

<sup>8</sup> Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 100. His original words are, “Baruch is an amalgam that resides at the intersection of multiple discourses, each tied to a founder.” He makes this remark in the context of discussing the “discourse founder” theory of Hindy Najman (*Seconding Sinai*), using the Mosaic Discourse as a particular example in order to explain the phenomenon of pseudepigraphy in the Second Temple period. Thus the allusions to other biblical figures in 2 Baruch can be seen as a combination of founders contributing to the multiple characteristics of Baruch.

<sup>9</sup> Based on “Chapter 5 Text: Characterization,” in Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 2005), 61–72; here 61.

<sup>10</sup> See Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 69–72.

<sup>11</sup> Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 72.

multiple traits of Baruch's character that are garnered from different biblical characters. The type of characterization that predominates will be, on the other hand, instructive for the understanding of the thematic concerns of 2 Baruch.<sup>12</sup>

In the following sections, I will demonstrate why Baruch is characterized as Jeremiah but not Ezekiel (or Abraham and Daniel), and as a second Moses but not the biblical Ezra. If the choice of a pseudonym offers an interpretational key,<sup>13</sup> a more accurate identity of Baruch will grant us fuller understanding of the message intended by its author.

### *8.1 Baruch and the Biblical Prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah*

Clear influence of both Ezekiel and Jeremiah can be found in 2 Baruch; yet while it depends on Jeremiah for the characterization of its protagonist, the inspirations it draws from Ezekiel are mainly apocalyptic symbols.

#### *8.1.1 The Influence of Ezekiel*

The opening line of 2 Baruch, "The twenty-fifth year of Jeconiah, king of Judah, the word of the Lord was upon Baruch," echoes introductory lines of Ezekiel (Ezek 1:1–3; 40:1) in its use of the name of the King Jeconiah and the twenty-fifth year for its date. It is similar to the prophetic formula in Ezekiel, "the word/hand of the Lord was upon xx." As in Ezekiel, the coming of divine revelation is described as "heaven was opened" (2 Bar 22:1; Ezek 1:1).<sup>14</sup> In 2 Baruch "a strong spirit" raised him up and carried him over the wall of Jerusalem (6:3); this also resembles sayings in Ezekiel where "the spirit" lifted him up and took him to the Temple of Jerusalem (Ezek 3:12; 8:3; 11:1; and 43:5). Apart from these linguistic echoes, the author of 2 Baruch also relied significantly upon Ezekiel for his apocalyptic visions. 2 Baruch's description of angels carrying out God's command to destroy the Holy City by fire (6:4–8:2) rings a clear bell of Ezekiel's vision of the cherubim casting burning coals and fire over Jerusalem (10:1–7). In both cases the destruction of Jerusalem was an act of divine

<sup>12</sup> Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 72.

<sup>13</sup> This touches upon the wider issue of how to understand the phenomenon of pseudonymity of the Second Temple Period, which cannot be expanded here. For a discussion, see Michael E. Stone, "Pseudepigraphy Reconsidered," *RRJ* 9 (2006): 1–15. Hindy Najman offers a new perspective using the expansion of the Mosaic tradition as a case study in her *Seconding Sinai*.

<sup>14</sup> Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 101.

judgment meted out through the angels, and the glory of God had left the Temple before the enemies entered. 2 Baruch uses the same idea even though details vary.<sup>15</sup>

Many of the images and symbols in 2 Baruch, particularly in the two apocalyptic visions, also seem to be drawn from Ezekiel. For example, the eagle taking Baruch's letter to the lost tribes beyond the Euphrates (2 Bar 77:19–26; 87:1)<sup>16</sup> brings to mind the great eagles “with powerful wings, long feathers and full plumage” that brought a shoot from the tree top to another land (Ezek 17:3–8). Baruch's second vision of the twelve bright and dark waters (2 Bar 53) features the images of cloud, lightning and brilliant light (53:1; 2; 3; 8; 9; and 11). These symbols represent divine presence in Ezekiel's theophany of “an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light” (Ezek 1:4). 2 Baruch's uses of these symbols, however, are not simple allusions or exact replications, but creative appropriations to suit its own purpose. The lightning in 2 Baruch, for example, represents the Messiah that was prepared at the primeval beginning and is revealed at the end time to rule over the earth and reunite the twelve tribes of Israel (53:1; 9–11). The symbolism of the divine is maintained, but at the same time the images are adapted for the author's eschatological expressions. An even better example of this creative use of Ezekiel's symbols is found in Baruch's first vision (36:1–37:1), which is made up of images of the forest, the mountain, the cedar, and the vine. The same images are used in the following manner in Ezekiel:

Thus says the Lord God: “I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out. I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. On the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bear branches and produce fruit and become a noble cedar. And under it will dwell every kind of bird; in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest. And all the trees of the field shall know that I am the Lord; I bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it.” (Ezek 17:22–24, NRSV)

What is presented as an oracle in Ezekiel is transformed into a vision in 2 Baruch. The basic message remains the same: that God will bring low high powers of the world, but will make Israel flourish. In the process of changing the form of oracle into a vision, 2 Baruch reconfigured the images at the same time, adding an eschatological depth to it. Thus the lofty cedar represents the most powerful kingdom to date that oppressed Israel (39:5); the vine (tender twig) now symbolizes the Messiah of God the fountain,

<sup>15</sup> Also see Henze's comparison in *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 101–2.

<sup>16</sup> Through the words of Baruch the author associates the eagle with other birds that played a crucial role as aid to communication in the Scriptures: the dove that brought olive to Noah, the ravens that brought Elijah food, and the bird that carried messages for Solomon (77:23–26).



by whose power the vine grows and the cedar is uprooted (39:7). The words of God are now spoken through his Messiah (36:7–10). Parallel to the pronouncement in Ezekiel that the tender twig God planted on the mountain height of Israel will bear branches and produce fruit and become a shelter for every kind of nesting birds, Baruch envisions “the cedar burning and the vine growing and everything that was around it, and plain that was filled with flowers that do not wither” (2 Bar 37:1). The vine is also a symbol used in Ezekiel 15; there, however, it represents an unfaithful Jerusalem that will be consumed by fire for judgment. By using the image of the vine instead to symbolize the triumphant Messiah who avenges Israel of her enemies, 2 Baruch turns a message of doom into a message of comfort and hope.<sup>17</sup>

Therefore, the influence of Ezekiel on 2 Baruch lies in the latter’s creative use of its revelatory concepts and apocalyptic images, but not in the characterization of its hero. The influence of biblical Abraham and Daniel on 2 Baruch can be attributed in a similar way, though to a lesser degree.<sup>18</sup> The influence of Daniel is limited to the eschatological ideas in general, and the reckoning of time in particular. The concept of the four kingdoms (Dan 2; 7 and 8) is adopted by 2 Baruch in the explanation of the vision of the cedar and the vine (2 Baruch 39–40). In this case, Baruch is not so much being depicted as a second Daniel; rather, 2 Baruch adopted the four kingdoms schema as a common convention in the Second Temple period and beyond to generalize the periodization of human history before the *eschaton*. Daniel’s notion of seventy weeks (Dan 9:24) also made its way into 2 Baruch’s measurement of time in weeks of seven weeks (28:2). Similarly, the use of the place name Hebron and the oak tree evokes the concept of Abrahamic covenant and God’s promise to Abraham;<sup>19</sup> there is no other evidence that the author intended to portray Baruch as a second Abraham.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Apart from Ezek, Baruch’s vision is also heavily influenced by the author’s exegesis of Isa 10:33–11:5. The forest in 2 Bar 36:4–6 echoes “the thickets of the forest” in Isa 10:33–34a; the “cedar” is suggested by the “Lebanon” to which Isa 10:34 refers; the fact that the cedar is first thrown down, then judged, sentenced and executed by the vine (the Messiah), may be a sequential reading of Isa 10:34a–11:4. For a detailed reading on how the vision is constructed from an exegesis of Isa—particularly the messianic interpretation of Isa 10:34, in association with other scriptural passages, see Richard Bauckham, “The Messianic Interpretation of Isa. 10:34 in the Dead Sea Scrolls, 2 Baruch and the Preaching of John the Baptist,” *DSD* 2 (1995): 202–16; in particular 206–10. Influences from various biblical books demonstrate the rich tapestry of 2 Bar’s inter-textuality.

<sup>18</sup> Thus I have reservation about the view of Saylor (*Have the Promises Failed?* 91–5) and Tamási (“Baruch as a Prophet in 2 Baruch”, 204; 213–5) that the author of 2 Baruch intended to depict Baruch as Ezekiel, Daniel, or even Abraham.

<sup>19</sup> See Chapter Six.

<sup>20</sup> According to Saylor (*Have the Promises Failed?* 91–5), there is a parallel between Abraham pleading for Sodom and Baruch for Jerusalem. However, here the author of 2 Baruch uses the general type of a

### 8.1.2 *The Influence of Jeremiah*

In contrast to the recasting of concepts and symbols in Ezekiel, the influence of Jeremiah on 2 Baruch is seen in the depictions of Baruch's character traits through his words, deeds and circumstances that are analogous to those of Jeremiah's. Moreover, 2 Baruch transfers many of the roles played by Jeremiah to Baruch. This in turn means a major modification of the roles of both Jeremiah and Baruch from the biblical Book of Jeremiah. The roles of the biblical Jeremiah can be summed up as 1) prophet and recipient of divine messages, 2) oracle of God's condemnation against his own people as well as the nations, 3) lamenter over Jerusalem, 3) intercessor for the people, 4) proclaimer of hope and restoration, and 5) writer of letter of admonishment. Baruch in 2 Baruch has inherited the whole range of these roles of Jeremiah, but with softened tones or changed focus in some roles, and adopted extra roles beyond those of Jeremiah's.

First of all, the relationship between Jeremiah and Baruch seems totally in reverse from that in the Book of Jeremiah.<sup>21</sup> Baruch is mentioned in four places in the Book of Jeremiah. He acted as witness to the legal transaction of Jeremiah's purchase of a field (Jer 32:9–16); he was a scribe to Jeremiah, writing down his prophecies and reading them out to the public, thus endangering his own life for being Jeremiah's associate (36). Both Jeremiah and Baruch were taken to Egypt by force (43:6–7) after Jeremiah had prophesied against going to Egypt to the remaining Judahites; in this instance Baruch was blamed for inciting Jeremiah (43:3), which implies that Baruch had certain influence over Jeremiah. Overall, however, the biblical Baruch is known not as prophet but as a scribe, supporter and friend of Jeremiah, always subordinate to the latter. Finally, a divine message to Baruch through the mouth of Jeremiah was recorded:

The word that the prophet Jeremiah spoke to Baruch son of Neriah, when he wrote these words in a scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah: Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, to you, O Baruch: You said, "Woe is me! The Lord has added sorrow to my pain; I am weary with my groaning, and I find no rest." Thus you shall say to him, "Thus says the Lord: I am going to break down what I have built, and pluck up what I have planted—that is, the whole land. And you, do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them; for I am going to bring

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righteous man pleading on behalf of the sinners, not necessarily with Abraham in mind. In fact, it resembles Moses at Mount Sinai more, as both Moses and Baruch ask God to forgive the sins of their own people Israel, unlike Abraham pleading for Gentiles. See my comparison of Baruch and Moses below.

<sup>21</sup> See also Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 89–94.

disaster upon all flesh, says the Lord; but I will give you your life as a prize of war in every place to which you may go.” (45:1–5 NRSV)

This oracle took place after the incident in chapter 36, in which Baruch suffered persecution together with Jeremiah due to his involvement in writing and promoting Jeremiah’s prophecies against the pro-Egypt party in Judah. In the Masoretic text, this Baruch prophecy is placed before the oracles against the nations (46–51) and the narrative epilogue (52). The LXX Jeremiah, on the other hand, places it twenty chapters after the oracles against the nations, towards the end of the book, functioning as a transition to the Book of Baruch (1 Baruch), which is not included in the Masoretic text. It has been argued that, by this arrangement, Baruch in the LXX is presented as a successor of Jeremiah.<sup>22</sup> The profile of Baruch is indeed more prominent in the LXX Jeremiah; however, as Henze points out, even in the Masoretic text Baruch’s role as the successor of Jeremiah’s prophetic mantle is still clearly discernible,<sup>23</sup> albeit to a lesser degree.

In 2 Baruch, the two characters are still closely associated. They were both commanded by God to leave Jerusalem before the city’s destruction (2:1); and they wept and mourned together over Jerusalem (5:5–7; and 9:1–2). However, it is Baruch who is the prophet called by God (2 Bar 1:1; 10:1; 13:1 and 22:1) and the intermediary of divine messages. It is through him that God gives commands to Jeremiah to leave Jerusalem before the city’s destruction (2:1) and to go with the exiles to Babylon, while Baruch is to remain in the land in order to receive divine revelations (10:1–5). The last reference to Jeremiah occurs when the people reminds Baruch of Jeremiah’s last words to him before departing for Babylon with the deportees (33:1–3); here Jeremiah is referred to as “your friend Jeremiah, the prophet” (33:1). In a nutshell, the character of Jeremiah is subordinated to that of Baruch, who now appears in a role of superiority.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Bogaert argues that Baruch 1–5 was originally an appendix to the Book of Jeremiah in the LXX tradition. See his “Le livre deutérocanonique de Baruch dans la liturgie romaine,” *Mélanges liturgique offerts au R. P. dom Bernard Botte à l’occasion du cinquantième anniversaire de son ordination sacerdotale* (4 juin 1972) (Louvain: Abbaye du Mont César, 1972), 31–48; also Henze, “From Jeremiah to Baruch,” 160–1 and n 12. The different arrangements and their effects on the character of Baruch is also discussed in Wright, *Baruch Ben Neriah*, 33–4.

<sup>23</sup> Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 92, n 73.

<sup>24</sup> In Henze’s words, Jeremiah’s role “is notably comprised and ultimately ancillary to that of the new protagonist, Baruch” (“From Jeremiah to Baruch,” 166).

With Jeremiah relegated first to the background then out of the picture, and with the elevation of Baruch's status, he virtually takes over all the roles of the biblical Jeremiah. Baruch dialogues with God, receives divine revelations, laments for the fate of Jerusalem,<sup>25</sup> condemns the nations for their crime against Israel,<sup>26</sup> intercedes for his people,<sup>27</sup> proclaims hope of return and restoration,<sup>28</sup> and last but not least, writes a letter of exhortations to the deportees in Babylon.<sup>29</sup> In these roles, he is presented as a replacement of Jeremiah.

There are other traits of Baruch, however, that either shadow those of Jeremiah but with significantly altered focus, or appear unique to Baruch. In other words, both similarities and contrasts are drawn through the analogy. For example, the lamentation of Baruch is clearly influenced by Jeremiah; this can be seen in Baruch's use of Jeremianic language: "O that my eyes were springs and my eyelids a fountain of tears. For how shall I groan over Zion, and how shall I mourn over Jerusalem?" (2 Bar 35:2–3).<sup>30</sup> Yet in other cases the same language of mourning is appropriated for a different purpose. While Jeremiah laments over his own suffering (which Baruch never does in 2 Baruch) thus:

Cursed be the day on which I was born! The day when my mother bore me, let it not be blessed! Cursed be the man who brought the news to my father, saying, "A child is born to you, a son," making him very glad. Let that man be like the cities that the Lord overthrew without pity; let him hear a cry in the morning and an alarm at noon, because he did not kill me in the womb; so my mother would have been my grave, and her womb forever great. Why did I come forth from the womb to see toil and sorrow, and spend my days in shame? (20:14–8, NRSV)<sup>31</sup>

the curse is reversed in 2 Baruch and turned into blessing and praise for God after Baruch has received the vision of the bright and dark waters:

Blessed be my mother among those who bear, and praised among women she who bore me. (54:10)

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<sup>25</sup> Jer 8:18–20; 9:2–11; cf. 2 Bar 10:6–19; 35:1–5.

<sup>26</sup> Jer 25:15–32 and 46–51; cf. 2 Bar 13:3–12.

<sup>27</sup> Jer 32:16–25; cf. 2 Bar 21:2–26 and 48:1–25.

<sup>28</sup> Jer 30–31; in 2 Bar hope of restoration is extended to the eschatological end of this world/age and placed in the World/Age to Come.

<sup>29</sup> Jer 29:1–23; cf. 2 Bar 78:1–86:3. Whereas Jeremiah presents his letter as words of God in the first person, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon" (Jer 29:4), Baruch's letter presents the message as words of his own, despite his statement that he received revelation from the Almighty.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Jer 9:1, "O that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"

<sup>31</sup> Also compare with the use of the same curse in 4 Ezra (5:23): "Why then was I born? Or why did not my mother's womb become my grave, that I might not see the travail of Jacob, and the exhaustion of the people of Israel?"

For another example of 2 Baruch's creative use of Jeremiah, when the Almighty commands Baruch, Jeremiah and all the righteous to leave Jerusalem before it is given to destruction, God describes their works as "like a firm pillar" for the city and their prayers as "like a strong wall" (2:2). These two similes bring to mind the metaphor God uses for Jeremiah as "a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls" (Jer 1:18). Yet, whereas in Jeremiah these metaphors place the prophet in an antagonistic position against the whole land and people of Judah (Jer 1:18–9), the same images in 2 Baruch portray him as a protector of his city and his people through his righteousness. Indeed, the contrast is further sharpened if one takes notice that the only Jeremianic characteristic that Baruch does not assume in 2 Baruch is the former's contentious oracles of condemnation on his own people. While Jeremiah is treated with life threatening hostility from his own people, Baruch on the other hand is looked upon as a beloved spiritual father and the only hope for the nation's survival. This role as a leader, comforter and teacher seems either lacking or undeveloped in the character of the biblical Jeremiah. Further, Baruch also stands out as an apocalyptic visionary; this role, characteristic of 2 Baruch's apocalyptic genre, does not belong to Jeremiah.

To sum up, Baruch is not only portrayed in the model of Jeremiah, he is to replace Jeremiah to become the prophet and leader in a post-disaster community. Yet Jeremiah is not the only analogy the author of 2 Baruch drew; he also characterized Baruch as a type of Moses—but the created resemblance is not to replace but to reenact the memory and authority of Moses.

### 8.2 *Baruch as Moses*

The use of the Moses analogy, or the Mosaic type, in 2 Baruch is closely related to the author's overall Deuteronomistic outlook as well as the book's testamental structure that is similar to the Book of Deuteronomy.<sup>32</sup> That both 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch made appeal to the name of Moses is not surprising, given the significance of the figure of Moses throughout the Second Temple period. Two important developments of this period need to be borne in mind when we evaluate the Mosaic influence on the typology of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch. Firstly, the Mosaic tradition into which both authors tapped had been expanded and enriched beyond the limits of the Pentateuch to include the legends behind what we call today the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, such as the

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<sup>32</sup> See Chapter Seven.

Jubilees,<sup>33</sup> the Testament of Moses,<sup>34</sup> and Pseudo-Philo.<sup>35</sup> Secondly, although Moses was remembered most of all as the ideal intermediary between God and humanity, the figure of Moses had become multifaceted to accommodate a wide range of aspirations, so that it was a well-used type to illustrate many different characteristics.<sup>36</sup> It is important, therefore, to identify which aspect(s) of the Mosaic type the author of 2 Baruch had in mind for the protagonist Baruch, if we want to have a more accurate understanding of his message. Both Ezra and Baruch were compared to Moses as a supreme recipient of divine revelation; and 4 Ezra particularly characterizes Ezra in the likeness of Moses the Lawgiver.<sup>37</sup> The characterization of Baruch, on the other hand, imitates Moses as an intercessor for Israel, and as the Teacher of Israel.

### 8.2.1 *Baruch, an Intercessor for Israel like Moses*

The best example of Baruch being an intercessor for his people in the likeness of Moses is found within Episode 1 (1.1–5.2). God announces to Baruch his plan to destroy Jerusalem and the Temple as a punishment for Israel's sin; and Baruch pleads for pardon on behalf of his people. Here 2 Baruch uses what Murphy terms "the intercessory bargaining form" that is also found in biblical and extra-biblical Mosaic traditions such as Exodus (e.g. 32:9–14), Numbers (e.g. 14:10b–23) and Pseudo-Philo (12:4–10), depicting the intercessions made by Moses.<sup>38</sup> In a nutshell, the form has the following elements:

Element 1. God appears to Moses.

Element 2. He announces the coming destruction as a punishment for the sin of the people.

Element 3. He makes an exception of Moses.

Element 4. Moses prays, and enumerates the reasons why God should not destroy his people.

Element 5. God responds to Moses and relents.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>33</sup> O. S. Wintermute, "Jubilees," in Charlesworth, *OTP* II: 35–142; James C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001); and James L. Kugel, *A Walk through Jubilees: Studies in the Book of Jubilees and the World of Its Creation* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

<sup>34</sup> J. Priest, "Testament of Moses," in Charlesworth, *OTP* I: 919–34; and Fiona Grierson, "The Testament of Moses," *JSP* 17 (2008): 265–80.

<sup>35</sup> D. J. Harrington, "Pseudo-Philo," in Charlesworth, *OTP* II: 297–378; Howard Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum, with Latin Text and English Translation*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

<sup>36</sup> Dale C. Allison (*The New Moses*) describes a range of Jewish and Christian figures cast in the type of Moses. In his words, Moses is a well-used type because "he was many things, an occupier of many offices" (91 and 131). D. S. Russell (*The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Patriarchs and Prophets in Early Judaism*, [London: SCM, 1987]) also observes that the Mosaic tradition in the Second Temple period presented multiple pictures of Moses, which he identifies as founder of culture, idealized hero, legendary figure, mediator of revelation and perfect teacher (97–107).

<sup>37</sup> See Chapter Four.

<sup>38</sup> Murphy, *Structure and Meaning*, 71–92.

<sup>39</sup> Adapted from Murphy, *Structure and Meaning*, 73.

The parallels can be demonstrated as follows, using Numbers 14:10b–23 as an example:

|           | <i>Moses (Num 14:10b–23)</i>                                                                                                                                              | <i>Baruch (2 Bar 1.1–5.2)</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Element 1 | God appears at the tent of meeting and speaks to Moses (14:10b–11)                                                                                                        | The word of God is upon Baruch and speaks to him (1:1)                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Element 2 | God threatens to strike Israelites with pestilence and to disinherit them for their unbelief (14:11–12)                                                                   | God announces his plan to bring evil upon Zion, and to scatter the people among the nations, for the two remaining tribes sinned even more than the ten tribes that were led away. (1:2–5)                                                                                           |
| Element 3 | But God will make of Moses a nation great and mighty (14:12)                                                                                                              | But Baruch is told to leave the city with Jeremiah and others (2:1–2)                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Element 4 | Moses pleads, citing two reasons: 1) the reputation and honour of God will be compromised before the nations; 2) God has promised to be merciful to his people (14:13–19) | Baruch pleads God to spare the “mother” city, for the sake of Israel, God’s inheritance, and for his own glories, his Torah, and his great name (3:1–9; 5:1)                                                                                                                         |
| Element 5 | God forgives, but none of the sinful Israelite are permitted to see the promised land except Caleb (14:20–24)                                                             | God says the chastisement is only for a time. The city with the Temple is not the true Jerusalem, which is preserved with God. God’s name and praise are for eternity. It is not the enemies that are demolishing Zion but they are only serving the judge for a time (4:1–7; 5:2–4) |

Like Moses, Baruch stands between God and his people to make intercessions for the latter. He enumerates the same reasons to God in order to avert the coming disaster, i.e. God’s covenant relationship with Israel and his own glory and great name, the two of which, in his mind, are closely combined. The difference, however, lies in God’s response. Whereas Moses succeeds in persuading God to spare the people, Baruch’s intercession cannot change the situation in this world and age. Baruch’s reasons for pleading are not discredited; but he is told to understand the deeper reality than what meets the eyes. The people are chastised and the enemies trample down Zion, but it is only “for a time” (4:1; and 5:3); the eternal city and God’s name are “unto eternity”

(5:2) and God's judgment will be revealed "in its time" (5:2). These explanations can only be convincing to those that believe in the heavenly Jerusalem, in the transient nature of this world and in the imminent coming of God's final judgment; or in other words, those who share an eschatological worldview.

The opening episode of 2 Baruch, therefore, sets Baruch on the pedestal of the intercessor like Moses; it also paves the way for Baruch's eschatological revelations to be subsequently unfolded.

### 8.2.2 *Baruch, the Teacher of Israel like Moses*

Baruch is presented as a great teacher. This authorial intent is clearly collaborated in the emphasis given to Baruch's three substantial speeches (31:1–34:1; 44:1–47:1; and 77:1–17), each of which occurs after Baruch has received revelation from the Most High. The epistle to the Diaspora in the epilogue as an extended hortatory speech further enhances Baruch's status as the Teacher of Israel (78:1–86:3). The epilogue in both 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch serves as a most crucial part that reveals the authorial intent. Whereas in 4 Ezra the epilogue highlights Ezra's rewriting of the Torah which includes the esoteric revelations, in 2 Baruch it is Baruch's teaching of Torah obedience that is the heart of the message of the book. Accordingly, whereas Ezra is portrayed as the second lawgiver like Moses, Baruch, on the other hand, is depicted as the Teacher of Israel like Moses.

Firstly, Baruch the character appears to have a self-awareness of being a teacher in the footsteps of Moses. In each of his speeches, he summons Israel and gives his exhortations in the rhetorical style of Moses in the Book of Deuteronomy. The discourses are introduced with commands such as "hear" and "see":

*Hear, O Israel*, and I will speak to you, and you, *seed of Jacob*, *listen*, and I will instruct you. Do not forget Zion, but remember the sorrows of Jerusalem. For, *see*, days are coming and everything that is will be taken to destruction, and it will be as if it had not been. (2 Bar 31:3–5)

*See*, I will go to my fathers as is the way of all the age. But you, do not withdraw from the way of the Torah but keep [it] and warn the people who are left, lest they withdraw from the commandments of the Mighty One. For you *see* that he is just whom we serve, and our creator shows no partiality. *See* what has befallen Zion and what happened to Jerusalem. (2 Bar 44:2–5)

*Hear, children of Israel*, *see* how many you are who are left of the twelve tribes of Israel. ... And *see*, you are here with me. ... *See*, have you not seen what has befallen Zion? ... (2 Bar 77:2–8)



These introductory discourses not only portray Baruch as a teacher, but clearly echo the words of Moses in Deuteronomy (5:1; 6:4; 9:1; 27:9; and 30:15).<sup>40</sup>

Secondly, the exchange between Baruch and the people after his speech also shows certain resemblance to the Mosaic tradition found in testamentary materials such as the *Testament of Moses*,<sup>41</sup> which can be described as a recast of Deuteronomy 31–34.<sup>42</sup> In this farewell speech of Moses to Joshua, Moses announces his approaching death and encourages his successor to continue to uphold the covenant in his leadership (T. Mos. 10:11–15). Joshua is overwhelmed with the news and bemoans the loss of his master:

Now, master, you are going away, and who will sustain this people? Or who will have compassion on them, and will be for them a leader on (their) way? Or who will pray for them, not omitting a single day, so that I may lead them into the land of their forefathers? ... (T. Mos. 11:9–11)

Similarly, in Baruch's second speech, he announces to his successors—his firstborn son, his friends and elders—his upcoming departure from this world (44:2), and exhorts them to instruct the people so that they may be preserved through Torah obedience (44:3–45:2). His son and the elders react with sorrow,

So much is the Mighty One humiliating us that he will take you from us quickly. Truly we will be in darkness, and there will be no light for the people who are left. For where again shall we seek the Torah, or who will distinguish for us between death and life? (46:1–3)

Like Moses assures Joshua, Baruch assures them that there will always be a sage to lead them as long as they remain faithful to the Torah (46:4–6).<sup>43</sup>

Another passage in 2 Baruch that uses the Mosaic type parallels Baruch's last days with those of Moses in Deuteronomy.<sup>44</sup> Following the interpretation of the vision of the twelve bright and dark waters, the angel Remiel instructs Baruch about his preparation for departure from this world:

...you will surely leave this world [or age], nevertheless not unto death but unto the preservation of times; ascend, therefore, to the top of this mountain, and all the places of

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<sup>40</sup> More on 2 Baruch's imitation of Deuteronomy in its rhetorical style, see Murphy, *Structure and Meaning*, 117–33; and Whitters, *Epistle of Second Baruch*, 156–68.

<sup>41</sup> J. Priest, "Testament of Moses," *OTP* I: 919–34.

<sup>42</sup> Priest, "Testament of Moses," 923. Also George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 80–3.

<sup>43</sup> More on 2 Baruch's use of Mosaic testamentary imagery, see Sayler, *Have the Promises Failed?*, 95–7.

<sup>44</sup> This similarity has been cited by many commentators; see, e.g. Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 104; Sayler, *Have the Promises Failed?*, 97; Murphy, *Structure and Meaning*, 129; and Allison, *New Moses*, 65–6.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

this world will pass before you, the likeness of the inhabited world, the top of the mountains and the depth of the valley, the depth of the sea and the number of the rivers, that you will see what you are leaving where you are going. For this will befall after forty days. (76:2–4)

This message situates Baruch's last speech and epistle in the context of his final instruction to Israel. The similarities to the death of Moses are hard to miss. Just as Moses is commanded by God to go up Mount Nebo to see the Promised Land that he is not to enter (Deut 32:49; 34:1–3), Baruch is to ascend a mountain to view the entire world which he is to leave behind. However, whereas the land is meant to be a reward, now lost to Moses due to the sins of the people while wandering in the wilderness, Baruch is to see the transient world pass away and to forget all its troubles; his departure marks an example of the reward for all the righteous souls (44:9).<sup>45</sup> That Baruch is not to physically die but be preserved to the end of times (76:2) also follows certain tradition that believes Moses was translated to heaven, not buried in a tomb.<sup>46</sup>

A final example to demonstrate the analogy between Baruch and Moses is found within Baruch's epistle. In the previous examples, the Mosaic type is alluded to and implied; here, however, an explicit comparison is drawn between Baruch and Moses. Baruch first reminds the people what Moses did:

Remember that Moses once solemnly called heaven and earth to witness against you and said: "If you transgress the Torah, you will be scattered, but if you keep it, you will be planted." And furthermore, he told you other things when you were together, twelve tribes, in the desert. And after his death, you cast them away from you. Therefore these [things] that were formerly said come to you. And now, Moses spoke to you beforehand, so that it should not befall you—and see, it has befallen you, for you have forsaken the Torah. (84:2–5)

Then he places himself directly as an imitator of Moses:

I, too, see, I say to you, that after you have suffered, if you obey those [things] that were said to you, you will receive from the Mighty One everything that has been set aside and preserved for you. Let then this letter be a testimony between me and you, so that you will remember the commandments of the Mighty One, and so that in this way I will also have an excuse before him who has sent me. Remember Zion and the Torah, also the Holy Land, and the covenant, and your fathers, and the festivals, and the Sabbaths do

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<sup>45</sup> Murphy, *Structure and Meaning*, 129.

<sup>46</sup> Jude 1:9 testifies to a well known tradition of archangel Michael having a dispute with Satan while receiving Moses's soul, which could have been taken from a now lost document called the Assumption of Moses. This book is mentioned in many early Christian lists of Jewish apocryphal books. See the lists in D. S. Russell, *Method and Message*, Appendix I, 391–5. It is thought that the extant T. Mos. is a combined text of both T. Mos. and As. Mos. (See Priest, "Testament of Moses," 925.) Unfortunately, the extant manuscript of T. Mos. is incomplete, and we do not have the ending that probably narrates Moses's death. Richard Bauckham (*Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church*, [Edinburgh: T&T, 1990], 238–9; here 243) has reconstructed the account of Moses's death in T. Mos. and As. Mos.; see Grierson's discussion of the two traditions in her "The Testament of Moses."

not forget. And pass this letter and the traditions of the Torah on to your sons after you, as your fathers have also passed [them] on to you. (84:6–9)

Like Moses, Baruch gives the people the same commandments; like Moses calling heaven and earth to witness, Baruch upholds this letter as a testimony between him and the people. As Moses is the intermediary between God and the people, Baruch also sees himself as charged by God to give an account for the people. As Moses leaves behind the book of the Law, Baruch instructs the people to pass his letter together with the traditions of the Torah on to later generations.<sup>47</sup> These explicit analogies not only cast Baruch as a second Moses, the great Teacher of Israel, they also indicate that, by using the Mosaic type, the author intended not for the replacement of Moses by Baruch, but for the reenactment of the Mosaic memory about Israel's covenant with God that is centred upon the Torah.

### *8.3 Baruch as Ezra of Ezra-Nehemiah?*

While Baruch's resemblance to Moses is well acknowledged, Mark Whitters in a recent paper for the first time presents a case arguing that 2 Baruch also imitates the text and characterization of Ezra in Ezra-Nehemiah.<sup>48</sup> Does Baruch shadow the biblical Ezra even more than the Ezra in 4 Ezra, which claims his name?<sup>49</sup> In this section, I will examine the parallels provided in Whitters's article and argue that the persona of Baruch is actually rather distant from the biblical Ezra. Since Ezra is the pseudonymous protagonist of 4 Ezra, and since both 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch have many connecting points between them, how Baruch stands in relation to the biblical Ezra will further help clarify what we may know about the author's intentions and, alongside with it, his rationale behind the choice of Baruch as his pseudographic voice.

The base texts to compare are Nehemiah 8:1–8, which describes the reading of the Law by Ezra at a formal gathering in the Temple square, and Baruch's speeches to the people (2 Bar 45–6, 2 Bar 77) as well as his epistle sent abroad (2 Bar 78–87). The parallels Whitters draws can be summarized as three-fold. 1) In terms of leadership, both Ezra and Baruch have a core group of helpers to assist with the instruction of the people, consisting of the Levites and the household heads (Neh 8:7, 13–5) in the case

<sup>47</sup> Chapter 84 is also well noticed for Baruch-Moses parallelism. See, e.g. Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism*, 105, and Allison, *New Moses*, 66.

<sup>48</sup> Whitters, "Baruch as Ezra in 2 Baruch."

<sup>49</sup> "Baruch as Ezra," 570.

of Ezra, and the elders and friends in the case of Baruch. 2) Both are presented as covenant renewals, where assemblies serve as the forum for both Ezra's promulgation of his version of the Law and Baruch's promotion of his epistle, both of which based on the traditions of Moses. 3) Common key terms are found in both texts that indicate a high level of reinterpretation of the Law. These terms are associated with the concept of understanding and explaining, as shown in the two base texts juxtaposed below:

... on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Torah before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding [מבין לשמע]. He read from it facing the square ... from early morning until midday in front of the men and the women and the interpreters [המבינים], and all the people were attentive to the book of Torah. ... And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; ... Then the ... Levites helped the people to understand [מבינים, *mēbînîm*] the Torah, while the people remained in their places. So they read from the book, from the Torah of God, with interpretation [מפרש, *mēpōrāš*]. They gave the sense [שום שכל, *sôm šekel*], making the reading comprehensible [ויבינו במקרא]. (Neh 8:1 – 8)<sup>50</sup>

compared with

You [family, friends, elders], therefore, admonish the people as much as you can, for that is our task. For if you teach them, you will preserve them.  
My son and elders of the people answered and said to me, “Up to this time, has the Almighty humbled us as to take you away from us so quickly? Truly we will be in darkness, and there will be no light for the people who remain. For where will we again seek [בין; *Ar. bīnā*] the law [נמשה, *nemūsa*]? Or who will distinguish [מפרש, *mefōrāš*] between death and life? ... Israel will not lack a wise man, nor the race of Jacob a son of the law. But only prepare your hearts, that you may obey the law, and be in submission to those who, by fear, are wise and understanding [סכולתאנן, *sakultānīn*]. And prepare your soul so that you will not be far from them. (2 Bar 45–6)<sup>51</sup>

A number of cognates can be identified: מבין and בין, *bīnā* (to understand, to seek), מפרש and מפרש, *mefōrāš* (to interpret, to tell apart), and שכל and סכולתאנן, *sakultānīn* (wise and understanding).

These parallels lead Whitters to conclude that 2 Baruch used the biblical Ezra as a model in order to adopt the theological agenda of Ezra-Nehemiah. He subsequently gives four implications that flow from this association. 1) 2 Baruch imitates Ezra-Nehemiah in adopting a “restorationist interpretation of Moses,” i.e. Torah observance according to Baruch's interpretation of what is important for community and worship.<sup>52</sup> 2) The communities in 2 Baruch and Ezra-Nehemiah are both “‘start-up’ covenant communities, affording new definitions of the Jewish commonwealth,”

<sup>50</sup> Adapted from Whitters, “Baruch as Ezra,” 572.

<sup>51</sup> Adapted from Whitters, “Baruch as Ezra,” 576.

<sup>52</sup> Whitters, “Baruch as Ezra,” 580.

inclusive and universal in their outlook, open even to Gentiles.<sup>53</sup> 3) Both highlight “scripturalization” and depend on texts for the process of restoration. Ezra reads from the book of the Law, which is in turn interpreted and repeated by his helpers to the people; and Baruch sends “a letter of instruction and scroll of good news” (2 Bar 77:12), to be read and pondered upon at assemblies and days of fast (86:1–2).<sup>54</sup> 4) Finally, both documents promote a “portable” religion focused on the Torah as a specific and recognized text”, in which the Temple and priesthood play a minimal role.<sup>55</sup>

It is important to state upfront that similarities indeed can be drawn between the Baruch in 2 Baruch and the biblical Ezra, as Whittters aptly points out. Apart from the parallels mentioned above, i.e. the existence of a supporting leadership group, a focus on the Law and linguistic terms on interpreting and understanding the Law, I would like to add that both characters share a range of roles. Baruch is known as a scribe from the book of Jeremiah; his scribal role is not verbalized in 2 Baruch, but reflected in his writing of the letters in the epilogue. He is portrayed as a prophet and teacher of the Law after the example of Moses. Nowhere is he called a priest, but in the narrative, he announces his going to the Holy of the Holies to inquire of the Almighty (2 Bar 34:1), which seems to suggest his priestly background. The biblical Ezra, on the other hand, is emphatically called a priest whose lineage reaches back to “Aaron the chief priest” (Ezra 7:1–5, 12), and “a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses” (Ezra 7:6, 12).<sup>56</sup> Although teaching the Law to the ignorant was part of his job description when he was appointed and sent by King Artaxerxes to reestablish Jewish religion in Judah (7:25), his role as a teacher is not fully elaborated in Ezra-Nehemiah. He appears more as a second giver of the Law and the restorer of the Temple cult and religious observances of festivals prescribed by the Law. He is not portrayed as a prophet either,<sup>57</sup> but more as a local ruler or administrator endorsed by the imperial court (7:14, 25). It was in later Jewish traditions, not in Ezra-Nehemiah, that Ezra was characterized as a teacher

<sup>53</sup> “Baruch as Ezra,” 581.

<sup>54</sup> “Baruch as Ezra,” 581–2.

<sup>55</sup> “Baruch as Ezra,” 582.

<sup>56</sup> He is referred to as “Ezra the priest and scribe of the Law of the God of heaven” (Ezra 7:11, 12, 21). In other parts of Ezra-Nehemiah he is intermittently called “Ezra the Priest” (Ezra 10:10, 16; Neh 8:2) or “Ezra the Scribe” (Neh 8:1, 4).

<sup>57</sup> This is perhaps the reason that Ezra-Nehemiah appears in the section of Writings instead of Prophets in the *Tanakh*.

of wisdom and as a prophet. Such a development is indeed found in 4 Ezra.<sup>58</sup> The most important similarity between 2 Baruch and Ezra-Nehemiah, however, is that both uphold the Law of Moses at the core of their religious programmes, and therefore in congruence with the Deuteronomic worldview and with maintaining Jewish religious requirements and avoiding mixing with other nations.<sup>59</sup> This similarity is not surprising, as both works are grafted into the Mosaic tradition. However, given the multifaceted characterizations of the Mosaic type, it is the different aspects of the Mosaic tradition found in the works that tell us more about their author's agenda than shared commonalities.

With that in mind, the similarities between 2 Baruch and Ezra-Nehemiah cited above seem superficial, but the differences are rather profound. Firstly, though a leadership group exists around the main character in both texts, they are of different kinds. Ezra depends on the Levites above all other leaders to implement his agenda. In the religious system after the Deuteronomic reform the Levites are not known for being teachers or authorities of scriptural interpretation; rather, they are associated with Temple services. Their role at the ceremony in Nehemiah 8:1–8 should be understood mainly as interpreters who make the reading more linguistically accessible to those who no longer understand.<sup>60</sup> Notice that Ezra, standing on a platform, read from the book (8:3–4) and blessed the Lord (8:6); the Levites in turn helped the people to understand (8:7). There is no mentioning of Ezra's own version of the interpretation of the Law. "The first day of the seventh month" (8:2) indicates the occasion of celebrating *Rosh haShanah*. What follows in Nehemiah 8:9–18 suggests that the content of the instruction that people received dealt with the reinstitution of celebrating *Sukkot* (the Feast of Tabernacles), which concluded with *Shemini Atzeret* (the assembly on the eighth day after *Sukkot*). Thus the Law that was read is closely associated with Temple services, and the Levites would be a natural choice as

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<sup>58</sup> See Chapter Four, on the characterization of Ezra in 4 Ezra.

<sup>59</sup> In 2 Bar, not mingling with the seed of mixed nations is one of the criteria for the judgment at the consummation of time (2 Bar 42: 4–5). Also Baruch admonishes the people in diaspora, "... and the festivals, and the Sabbaths do no forget. And pass this letter and the traditions of the Torah on to your sons after you, as your fathers have also passed [them] on to you" (84: 8–9).

<sup>60</sup> Or in the words of John J. Collins ("The Transformation of the Torah"), "The interpretation that accompanies the reading of the law in Neh 8 is most plausibly taken to be a matter of translation, for those who did not know Hebrew, or know it well, than of exegesis" (461). He is in agreement with Michael LeFevre (*Collections, Codes and Torah: The Re-Characterization of Israel's Written Law* [New York: T&T Clark, 2006], 129–30), while arguing against Michael Fishbane (*Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, [Oxford: Clarendon, 1985], 107–34), who sees evidence of exegetical praxis in Ezra's reading of the Law.

instructors.<sup>61</sup> In contrast to the cultic function of the Levites, the type of leader that Baruch entrusts over the people after himself is “a sage”, and “a son of Torah” (2 Bar 46:4).<sup>62</sup> It occurs at a time when Torah observances require radical new understanding and adaptation, now that the Temple, as the previous centre of the fulfillment of all religious obligations required by the Law, was made void. The leaders foreseen by the author of 2 Baruch who can take up this challenge are not priests or Levites, but sages.

Secondly, while Nehemiah 8:1–8 is an account of official ceremony of covenant renewal focused on the authority of Torah and the function of Temple services for law fulfillment, the same cannot be said for 2 Baruch. Here Whitters’s position is closely related with his view regarding the intention of 2 Baruch to have the Epistle of Baruch installed for scriptural status. As I have argued against this interpretation in a previous chapter,<sup>63</sup> Baruch does not present the letter as words of God, but his own (78:2). Even though he urges the recipient of the letter to read it at assemblies and on days of fast, these occasions do not resemble ceremonies of covenant renewal. Rather, Baruch’s speeches and letter aim at offering consolation and encouragement.

Thirdly, although linguistic terms on “understanding” (שכל and מִבִּין) are found in Ezra-Nehemiah, they are limited to a small number of occurrences;<sup>64</sup> more importantly, their meanings are limited to understanding the use of language and religious and cultural practice; they completely lack the sapiential dimension as their counterparts in 2 Baruch. In 2 Baruch, הִשְׁלָם and its cognates (“understanding”, “intelligence”) occur in high frequency;<sup>65</sup> and in most cases appear in parallelism with חָכְמָה or a cognate (“wisdom”).<sup>66</sup> In the Hebrew Bible these terms feature conspicuously in wisdom literature such as Proverbs, Qohelet, Job and some Psalms, which represent a divergent theological inclination from the rest of the Hebrew Bible.

<sup>61</sup> The scope of Ezra’s reform programme seems to be limited to a few issues of symbolic importance, primarily concerning mixed marriages (Ezra 9) and the festival calendar (Neh 8), according to Collins (“Transformation of the Torah”, 457–8). Also, in the opinion of Kyong-Jin Lee, “there is no record that Ezra launched a massive educational campaign to inform the people of the content of the Torah” (*The Authority and Authorization of Torah in the Persian Period*, CBET 64 [Leuven: Peeters, 2011], 246).

<sup>62</sup> Henze’s translation (Stone and Henze, *4 Ezra and 2 Baruch*, 110), with different wording from the quotation of Whitters.

<sup>63</sup> See Chapter Five.

<sup>64</sup> These occurrences are מִבִּין (Ezra 8:16; Neh 8:2 and 10:29), שִׁכְלָה (Ezra 8:18; and Neh 8:8), and חָכְמָה (Ezra 7:25).

<sup>65</sup> הִשְׁלָם intelligence, understanding (38:1; 51:3, 4; 56:4; and 75:3); הִשְׁלָם intelligent, understanding (46:5; and 48:33); הִשְׁלָם understanding, intelligence, understanding (15:5; 44:14; 48:9, 36; 51:7; 54:17; 59:7; 61:4; and 66:2).

<sup>66</sup> חָכֵם wise (63:5); חָכָם wise person (46:4, 5; 48:33; 66:2; and 70:5); יָדָע to know, to be wise (28:1; and 48:9); חָכְמָה wisdom (14:9; 38:2, 4; 44:14; 48:24, 36; 51:3, 4, 7; 54:13; 59:7; 61:4; and 77:16).

However, wisdom literature produced in the later Second Temple Period such as Sirach, Wisdom of Solomon and 1 Baruch bear witness to the merging of the legalistic strand and the sapiential strand of Judaism. The Law and Wisdom become one; so do the roles of the wise man and the teacher of the Law,<sup>67</sup> or “sage” and “son of Torah”, as 2 Baruch puts it (46:4). This convergence is reflected in apocalyptic writings such as 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, but not to be found (yet) in Ezra-Nehemiah.

In view of the above differences between 2 Baruch and Ezra-Nehemiah, what can be said about each work’s theological agenda? Here I depart completely from Whitters and argue that they are fundamentally different in several ways. Firstly, if Ezra represents a “restorationist theology”, the same is far from being the case for 2 Baruch. This difference is determined by their divergent contexts and purposes. Ezra-Nehemiah advocates the restoration of Jewish nationhood on the foundation of the Mosaic Law centred upon the Temple cult and the leadership of priests and Levites. It is seen as a fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy of renewal, in the “here” and “now” of this world (Ezra 1:1). 2 Baruch, on the other hand, aims not at renewal but at preservation of a people and preparation for restoration in the end time, in another age or world. This different context also leads Whitters to see the oddity for 2 Baruch, under drastically different circumstances, to find a model in traditional Ezra, but he justifies the discrepancy by citing the rabbis in the following centuries, who featured Ezra as their chosen prototype.<sup>68</sup> The stage for the rabbis, however, was precisely of social and religious renewal and restoration in Jewish history. The characterization of the Ezra of the rabbis has been further developed centuries after “Ezra the priest and scribe” of Ezra-Nehemiah. While the biblical Ezra shows zeal to restore Temple worship according to the priestly code, the Ezra of the rabbis was reluctant to return to Judah to rebuild the Temple, but rather put more value in studying the Torah.<sup>69</sup> The Ezra in 4 Ezra, though based on the biblical Ezra, also went through a process of enlargement of persona.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> See Chapter Seven.

<sup>68</sup> Whitters, “Baruch as Ezra,” 571, n 5.

<sup>69</sup> The Babylonian Talmud (b. Meg. 16b) records R. Joseph quoting R. Samuel b. Martha, saying, “The study of the Torah is superior to the building of the Temple, for as long as Baruch b. Neriah was alive Ezra would not leave him to go up to the land of Israel.” Translation from Epstein, *Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud*.

<sup>70</sup> 4 Ezra chose its protagonist with good reason, focusing on his profile as a lawgiver. However, as we have seen in Chapter Four, the author still must modify his character by adding a sapiential dimension



Secondly, I would argue against the perception that both Ezra-Nehemiah and 2 Baruch offer a new definition for the Jewish commonwealth that is more inclusive and less hierarchical.<sup>71</sup> On the contrary, both are highly Jewish-centric and keenly aware of the importance of leadership control. Ezra-Nehemiah in particular has a definition for the true remnant narrowly focused on the returnees of Judah and Benjamin, rejecting “people of the land” and aggressively promoting a policy of segregation from Gentiles and other “impure” Jews.<sup>72</sup> Leadership roles are highly hierarchical, restricted to priests and Levites. The mention of “lay leaders” such as the “heads of ancestral families”<sup>73</sup> is consistent with the traditional hierarchy of “*Bet Av*” in ancient society. It would be an exaggeration to say that Ezra intends to pass on the responsibility of restoration “to the whole people.”<sup>74</sup> It would also be mistaken to think that 2 Baruch promotes an “inclusive covenantalism.”<sup>75</sup> For 2 Baruch, membership of Israel is not as exclusive and restricted as in Ezra-Nehemiah; however, the line between Israel and the Gentiles is clearly drawn. The salvation of the Gentiles who have not oppressed Israel is certainly a possibility at the end-time (2 Bar 72:2–5), but universal covenantalism is not at all in the author’s view. Neither does he have any intention to leave the matter of understanding the Law to people collectively “without any regard to rank or status;”<sup>76</sup> on the contrary, he calls on people to “subject” themselves “to those who in fear are wise and understanding” and not to “withdraw from them” (2 Bar 46:5).

Another significant difference in each theological agenda is the position occupied by the Temple. Ezra’s restoration programme centres around the Temple building, its cult and its personnel. Written in the context of rebuilding the Temple, reestablishing Temple services and reinforcing purity regulations, Ezra-Nehemiah is a manifestation of the priestly rendition of the Deuteronomistic theology. A Temple that is run properly is itself the fulfillment of Israel’s covenant with God. 2 Baruch, on the other hand, struggles with maintaining that covenant in the wake of the recent trauma of losing the Temple. As Baruch says in his letter, “Zion has been taken from us, and we have nothing now except for the Mighty One and his Torah” (2 Bar 85:3). The task

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that is required for an apocalyptic seer. See also my article, “The Unity and Coherence of 4 Ezra,” in particular, 230–34.

<sup>71</sup> Whitters, “Baruch as Ezra,” 581.

<sup>72</sup> Hence the overwhelming concern for mixed marriages and the need for a covenant to divorce foreign wives in Ezra-Nehemiah.

<sup>73</sup> Whitters, “Baruch as Ezra,” 581.

<sup>74</sup> “Baruch as Ezra,” 581.

<sup>75</sup> “Baruch as Ezra,” 581.

<sup>76</sup> “Baruch as Ezra,” 581.

of 2 Baruch is to offer an eschatological perspective to the Deuteronomistic theology enshrined in the name of Moses so it may stand valid and efficacious. The heavenly Temple stays with God undefiled, but the new leader Baruch envisages must be a sage who can fulfill the Law of Moses without the Temple in this age and world.

Finally, if 2 Baruch does not in the least model itself on Ezra-Nehemiah, how can one explain the fact that both the biblical Ezra and Baruch in 2 Baruch make appeal to the Mosaic tradition for their characterization? The answer is that they make use of different aspects of the character of Moses. While Ezra is portrayed as a second Moses as a lawgiver and establisher of cultic service, Baruch makes appeal to the Moses who is a recipient of divine revelations both about this world and the world to come. Baruch is also modeled after Moses as a teacher of the people. It is very telling that, while both Ezra-Nehemiah and 2 Baruch hark back to Mosaic traditions, in Nehemiah 8 the narrative of reading from the Law of Moses and the celebration of religious festivals draws its source from the book of Leviticus 23, a legal code given by Moses as the Lawgiver; whereas the speeches and letter of Baruch resemble the exhortation of Moses in Deuteronomy 30–34 as the Teacher of Israel.

Whitters raises the important question why 2 Baruch chose Baruch as its heroic character, while 4 Ezra chose Ezra.<sup>77</sup> I would say that the answer lies in different authorial intents: one needs a prophet who teaches the Law, the other a giver of the Law. Gravitation to common Mosaic traditions joins them together; but inclinations to different aspects of the Mosaic type set them apart.

#### *8.4 Summary*

In summary, Baruch ben Neriah in the Syriac Apocalypse demonstrates both continuity with and divergence from the biblical Baruch; its characterization represents both received, expanded traditions of Baruch and the author's creative reworking of those traditions. There are sophisticated convergences of diverse biblical discourses; however, whereas 2 Baruch utilizes concepts and images from discourses represented by Abraham, Daniel and Ezekiel, the characterization of Baruch is modeled mainly on Jeremiah and Moses. Whereas Baruch overshadows and replaces Jeremiah, he is portrayed as a type of Moses, with the aim not to replace, but to relive and reenact the latter's memory.

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<sup>77</sup> Whitters, "Baruch as Ezra," 583, n 32.

Though both 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch present their protagonists as a second Moses, they have selected rather different aspects of the Mosaic type through the choice of their respective pseudonym. Whereas Ezra in 4 Ezra, based on the biblical Ezra, is portrayed as the new Lawgiver like Moses, Baruch on the other hand is modeled after Moses the Teacher of Israel. Therefore, although both 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch are self-presented as continuation in the Mosaic authority and tradition, the different emphases reveal rather divergent—if not contradictory—religious agendas for the post-destruction Jewish community, through the choice of pseudonyms. For one, there must be a new beginning marked by a rewriting of Scripture;<sup>78</sup> and for the other, the Law remains intact despite the destruction, but it must be reinterpreted with a new perspective and retaught to Israel.

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<sup>78</sup> Or “reboot”, in Najman’s term (*Losing the Temple*).



**PART III**

**CONCLUSION**

**4 EZRA AND 2 BARUCH**



## CHAPTER NINE

### CONCLUSION

#### WHAT IS IN A NAME? COVENANT TRADITION AND APOCALYPTIC REVELATION IN 4 EZRA AND 2 BARUCH

The previous chapters have centred around the argument that the calamity to which 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch responded was a crisis in Israel's self-identity based on her idea of the covenant. The idea, called the "theology of history" by Jon D. Levenson, was understood by ancient Israel through the covenant formulary of curses and blessings:<sup>1</sup>

Adversity—drought, famine, epidemic, defeat, or whatever—could be accounted for by reference to a violation of covenant obligations. Conversely, the prosperity and tranquillity of either the past or the coming age could be seen as a consequence of faithful partnership with God (prophets did not see the present as blessed). In other words, the last item of the covenant formulary enables Israel to make sense—moral sense—of historical experience.<sup>2</sup>

Levenson continues to point out, however, that there is a great weakness in such an idea of covenant:

What covenant theology could not tolerate was the inability to correlate the two, the observation that the just suffer and the wicked thrive and that Israel may indeed have a just claim against God. Awareness of this possibility, which flourished during and after the Exile, was to deal a deathblow to the classic prophetic theology and to alter radically the Israelite "feeling for history."<sup>3</sup>

A "deathblow" is perhaps an overstatement, since post-exilic and Second Temple Judaism continued to tap into the pre-exilic past as a source of authorization and inspiration, as demonstrated in the case of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch. Nevertheless, the post-exilic period indeed saw the development of a "theology of meta-history" (to use a term paralleling Levenson's "theology of history") to deal with the question of the meaning of history and to entertain the idea of an imminent end of history. History was no longer viewed from within, but from without and from above; no longer perceived as infinite, but finite.<sup>4</sup> The destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple in 70 CE triggered afresh the painful awareness of the incompatibility of the traditional covenant theology and the reality of the covenant people suffering oppression at the hand of

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<sup>1</sup> Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 55.

<sup>2</sup> Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 55.

<sup>3</sup> Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 55–56.

<sup>4</sup> For this significant change in the Second Temple Period of the perspective and expanded horizon of human history according to Michael Stone ("Three Transformations"), see Introduction.

foreign nations. In this sense both 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch were written precisely to address this fault line so that the belief in the covenant would not collapse in the face of a critical challenge. Their strategy was to apply the new perspective on history.

In their response to the crisis, 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch demonstrated that they were true heir to both the earlier covenant theology enshrined in the name of Moses in the Hebrew Bible and the eschatological orientation which was a hallmark of Second Temple Judaism. While both authors relied on Messianic expectations and the Age to Come as the compass for future direction, their proposed solutions were for Israel to return, more than ever, to the roots of the Mosaic tradition, which provided Israel with the “covenant theology” in the first place. In fact, the actual pseudonyms adopted by their respective authors in themselves are the clearest indications of such an attitude.

Why were Ezra and Baruch chosen to be their respective mouthpieces by their pseudonymous authors? If one is not to commit the sin of anachronism by calling them forgery and fraud,<sup>5</sup> how should one understand the phenomenon of pseudonymity in ancient Jewish writing in general and in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch in particular?<sup>6</sup> The issue involved here is how authority was conceived and constructed in Second Temple Judaism: through self-identification with Israel’s pre-exilic past.<sup>7</sup> Ezra and Baruch in the two apocalypses embodied Moses, since Deuteronomy 34 had made Moses the only prophet and the Mosaic tradition the only way to claim authority;<sup>8</sup> at the same time they personified—in their respective author’s own interpretation—the prophet like Moses whom Moses himself had prophesied and whom God, through Moses, had commanded Israel to obey (Deut 18:15–19). The names Ezra and Baruch were evoked

<sup>5</sup> In the words of Hindy Najman (*Seconding Sinai*, 6–7), the application of the modern concept of forgery to antiquity is “an instance of anachronism, one of the cardinal sins of historiography.”

<sup>6</sup> Many studies have been devoted to the question of pseudepigraphy and pseudonymity. Specifically on the Second Temple period, see, for example, Esther G. Chazon and Michael Stone with the collaboration of Avital Pinnick, *Pseudepigraphic Perspectives: The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Proceedings of the International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature*, STDJ 31 (Leiden: Brill, 1999). Hindy Najman has offered the perspective that, by writing pseudonymously, writers of the Second Temple period participated in a discourse attached to a founder of the pre-exilic or even earlier period; see her *Seconding Sinai*. Other studies on this topic with a focus on 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch include Najman, “How to Make Sense of Pseudonymous Attribution: The Cases of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch,” in *A Companion to Biblical Interpretation in Early Judaism*, ed. Matthias Henze (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 308–36; *eadem*, “How Should We Contextualize Pseudepigraphy?” In her *Losing the Temple* (33–47), Najman sees 4 Ezra as reconstructing a past tradition associated with the pseudonymous hero in order to recover the present and imagine the future. Matthias Henze (*Jewish Apocalypticism*, 116–121), on the other hand, suggests pseudepigraphic attribution as a form of memory, particularly in the case of 2 Bar.

<sup>7</sup> Najman, *Seconding Sinai*, 14.

<sup>8</sup> Najman, *Seconding Sinai*, 15.



not only as sources of authority, but also as symbols of identity and attitude. As symbols, they were recognized as confirmation and continuation of both the Mosaic tradition and the exilic past. The significance of the names of Ezra and Baruch as literary constructs may be further elaborated as follows.

Firstly, both Ezra and Baruch were biblical figures situated at the time of the destruction of the First Temple and the exile; their names are therefore natural choices for the intentional fictional settings of the two books. At a time when the Second Temple was destroyed and the nation thrown into confusion and despair, the names Ezra and Baruch through historical memory would summon up sure hope for survival and revival, as both figures were foundations upon which traditions of post-crisis communities were built.

Secondly, Ezra and Baruch belonged to the last generation of prophets before prophecy itself ceased.<sup>9</sup> If God had stopped speaking to Israel through the institution of Temple and prophecy,<sup>10</sup> what would be other avenues through which communication with the divine was to take place? In their answer, both 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch pointed to the “written tradition” (the Scriptures). The names of Ezra and Baruch, as the last prophets of the pre-exilic/exilic period, were used to inaugurate a new era in which God would speak to Israel through the Scriptures. Divine revelation was to be received not in new authoritative writings, but in the acts of studying and understanding the Scriptures.<sup>11</sup> Both authors of the apocalypses indicated that divine revelation and authority would henceforth be within the Torah. For 4 Ezra, the entire body of Jewish literature, and in particular, the books containing messages about the end-time, had to receive the imprimatur of Mosaic Torah, through the name Ezra, the new Law-Giver. 2 Baruch, on the other hand, advocated authoritative interpretation of the Torah; through Baruch, the second Moses the Teacher, it taught that the Law would give Israel its future shepherds, and the leaders of Israel would be interpreters of the Law.

Thirdly, Ezra and Baruch as names conveyed close associations with the Mosaic exegetical tradition, thus betraying the religious and intellectual identities of their

<sup>9</sup> The cease of prophecy does not mean the cease of divine inspiration or, in Hindy Najman’s words, “divine encounter” (*Losing the Temple*, 5).

<sup>10</sup> Examples of biblical claim of the ceasing of prophecy are Lam 2:9–10; Ps 74:9; 1 Macc 4:46; 9:27; 14:41.

<sup>11</sup> Qumranic *peshtarim* are another example of taking scriptural interpretation as authoritative and divinely inspired.

authors. Ezra had long been associated with Moses for being the second giver of Torah at the beginning of the Second Temple period. Baruch was also related to Ezra in pharisaic traditions. The Talmud (b. Meg. 14b) mentions about Baruch prophesying in the period following the destruction in Babylon. It was also in Babylon that Ezra studied the Torah with Baruch. Ezra did not think of returning to the Holy Land during his teacher's lifetime, since he considered the study of the Torah more important than rebuilding the Temple (b. Meg. 16b).<sup>12</sup> No doubt these legends were later rabbinic accounts, yet they may well have been built around kernels of earlier traditions. Two points are of interest. Firstly, Torah is given priority over the Temple in the rabbinic view, which is also behind both 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, one of many points of contact between the two apocalypses and rabbinic thoughts. Secondly, Baruch is given seniority over Ezra; this might be suggestive of 2 Baruch's authorial intention if it indeed contains a reaction to 4 Ezra, as I have argued.<sup>13</sup>

However, written as works of apocalypses, how did 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch deal with the commonly perceived conflict between apocalyptic revelation and the established status of the Mosaic tradition as God's ultimate revelation to Israel? By adopting the names of Ezra and Baruch, the issue was resolved through a double submission. Firstly, the revelations were attributed to Ezra and Baruch, the last prophets of Israel to whom God spoke face to face. Secondly, the revelations received by Ezra and Baruch were made part of the revelation Moses himself had received, as had already been the case in the expansion of the Mosaic tradition in other Second Temple writings outside the Hebrew Bible. Their intention was not to claim apocalyptic visions as a higher form of revelation, nor was it to supplant Mosaic authority. Instead, they aligned themselves with it, through making their mouthpiece into a type of Moses, and through adopting the Mosaic idioms and orientation in their response to the problem of death and defeat. Even the language and the imagery of their apocalyptic visions were strictly speaking metaphorical exegesis of the Hebrew Bible, Israel's written tradition that had already been submitted under Mosaic authority.

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<sup>12</sup> More on Baruch as a prophet and his activities in the exilic period according to rabbinic literature, see Shlomo Zuckier, "Jeremiah in Rabbinic Theology and Baruch in Rabbinic Historiography. A Response to Ishay Rosen-Zvi," in *Jeremiah's Scriptures: Production, Reception, Interaction, and Transformation*, ed. Hindy Najman and Konrad Schmid, JSJSup 173 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 591–607, esp. 604–7.

<sup>13</sup> See Chapter Seven.

Neither 4 Ezra nor 2 Baruch proposed any detailed plan on how to put Torah observance into practice in the permanent absence of the Temple. It became the task of the rabbis after them. Their instinctive response adamantly point Israel to the direction of a return to the Torah and Mosaic tradition, a direction the rabbis followed in the centuries after them.



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