

# Introduction

The two Jewish works that are here translated, *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*, were both composed around the turn of the first century CE, in the aftermath of the Roman destruction of the Second Temple in the year 70. They are apocalypses, and they join certain other works in representing the reactions of Jews of that time to their shock at the destruction and its impact on the faith of Judaism. This group of works includes the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, perhaps the *Biblical Antiquities* of Pseudo-Philo, and certain parts of the *Sibylline Oracles*, at least. These books should be studied together in order to describe Judaism's response to the destruction. This translation presents two central writings of this group, which are particularly closely related, though far from identical.<sup>1</sup>

## THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE TWO WORKS

Students have often regarded *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* as a “matched pair” or as “twins.” They share many features. Both emerge from the struggle of their authors to incorporate the destruction into their religious understanding of the world. Both books are apocalypses, relating vision experiences purportedly undergone by ancient seers. In fact, they form some of the latest of the writings from the first age of Jewish apocalypses (roughly from the third century BCE to the first century CE). The authors of both books chose as their heroes figures from the period of the Babylonian destruction and exile. In the Bible, Baruch was Jeremiah's helper and sometimes his representative, who lived at the time of the destruction of the first temple; Ezra led the return from the Babylonian exile in the fifth century BCE. Dialogues between the seer and God dominate both books; and both propose resolutions of their aporia through the faithfulness of God and the Torah. They also share a dominant literary form, unique in the surviving apocalypses: the revelatory dialogue-dispute between the seer and God. Neither is a sectarian work, speaking to a group or part of the Jewish people as the “true” community of Israel, distinguished and separated from the rest of Israel. Moreover, the two books share many arguments, and they are related by common terms and expressions.

They differ too. *Fourth Ezra* is typified both by an almost rigid literary structure that divides the text into seven segments and also by greater literary

1. We have added cross-references between *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* in the margins of the translation here.

felicity. It speaks of the transmission of secret teachings to an elect group, and in its concluding scene, Ezra writes ninety-four books, seventy of which are considered esoteric and out of reach for the general public. Presumably the author of *4 Ezra* considered his own book to be part of that group. The literary composition of *2 Baruch* is not as rigid as that of *4 Ezra* (see our discussion below). *Second Baruch* begins with a narrative introduction and ends with an epistle, neither of which is found in *4 Ezra*. Neither is Baruch as probing as Ezra in his conversation with God. Finally, there is no distinction between esoteric and exoteric writings in *2 Baruch*. On the contrary, its author strives to be inclusive, showing great concern for all of Israel.

Generally, students have given pride of place to *4 Ezra* and regarded *2 Baruch* as a lesser and, in some ways, derivative work. Indeed, it has been scholarly practice to read *2 Baruch* through the lenses of *4 Ezra*. Only in recent times has *2 Baruch* been analyzed as a work in its own right. The relationship between the two works is complex, and theories that try to explain their relationship by postulating that one text depends on, and responds to, the other have failed to produce a satisfactory explanation.

In the present work, Michael E. Stone has written the introductory remarks, the translation, and the commentary for *4 Ezra*, and Matthias Henze has authored the corresponding sections for *2 Baruch*.

#### 4 EZRA

##### *WHEN AND WHERE WAS 4 EZRA COMPOSED, AND IN WHICH LANGUAGE?*

*Fourth Ezra* opens with a date (3:1): the thirtieth year after the destruction of the temple. This date should probably not be taken literally (see Ezek. 1:1), but in fact it does point to the period that emerges from the investigation of the book. Since they are attributed to figures who lived centuries before their actual composition, in historical visions, apocalypses can present past history as future prophecy. From the point of their composition on, however, prophecies of the future are no longer a retelling of the past but become predictions, usually of the end of the world or a dramatic change of history. By locating the point at which the author moves from recounting actual past history as future prophecy to real future prediction, when the author's "prediction" moves beyond the course of history he knows, we may discover the author's date. In the case of *4 Ezra*, the identification of the eagle's heads in the Eagle Vision (chaps. 11–12) as the Flavian emperors leads us to the conclusion that the work was composed in the time of the Roman emperor Domitian (81–96 CE) and most likely during

the latter part of his reign. Indeed, its date can be set more precisely to the last decade of the first century CE. Other indications of date have been sought in the work, but this is the most convincing. The earliest surviving quotations from *4 Ezra* are by Clement of Alexandria toward the end of the second century CE.

The book survives in eight ancient translations (see below), which were all made from the Greek translation (also quoted by Clement of Alexandria). This is further demonstrated by numerous variant readings that derive from peculiarities of the Greek language. The Greek was translated from Hebrew, as is shown by a substantial number of Hebraisms and mistranslations of Hebrew words.

*Fourth Ezra* was composed by one individual, at points drawing on crystallized, older material, as likely oral as written. The passages 4:35–37; 6:49–52; 13:1–20; and 13:40–47 seem to be preexisting blocks of material included in the book. Furthermore, material shared with *2 Baruch* is most likely drawn from common tradition sources. Previous theories of *4 Ezra*'s jigsaw-puzzle composition from five written documents combined by a redactor are no longer entertained.

#### *WHAT DOES 4 EZRA SAY AND HOW DOES IT SAY IT?*

*Fourth Ezra* is divided into seven visions, separated by fasts. Visions 1–3 are in a form that is unusual in apocalypses. They are composed of addresses, dialogues, and predictions. The fourth is a waking vision of the heavenly Jerusalem and describes Ezra's conversion. Only visions 5 and 6 are symbolic dreams, interpreted by an angel, a vision type typical of most apocalypses. In the seventh segment, which is a waking vision, Ezra is granted a revelation of the secret and the public books of Scripture, totaling ninety-four, and instructed about their disposition.

In visions 1–2, the seer addresses God or an angel. Specifically, after a plaint addressed to God, the angel Uriel appears and Ezra carries on a disputatious dialogue with him. Then the angel moves to predictive dialogue and, finally, to direct prediction. The seer's problems in the addresses are partly answered in the predictive dialogues and the predictions, and both the questions and the answers combine to express the seer's message. The third vision is very long and is much more complex in structure, but it too includes the typical dialogic disputes and revelations, enriched by prayers, a monologue, and other literary forms.

The address of vision 1 (chap. 3) indicts God the creator for the state of the world and of Israel. Israel's suffering under Rome raises the question of theodicy, God's righteousness, for the author. Starting from distress over

Israel's fate, as the vision dialogues progress, the seer's questions become more inclusive, touching eventually on the issue of "the few and the many": Why were many created but only few saved? The angel responds throughout in dialogue and prediction, and the dynamic of the interchange between the angel and Ezra gradually leads the seer from radical doubt of God's justice to acceptance of his incomprehensible providence.

This acceptance provides the basis for the fourth vision, the seer's conversion, which is followed by his waking experience of the heavenly Jerusalem. The very strongest terms describe the psychological impact of Ezra's conversion experience, the culmination of the disputatious revelations of visions 1–3 (10:25–28). In the conclusion of this vision, the angel commands Ezra to enter the heavenly city and perceive as much as he can, perhaps hinting at other revelations not related in the book (10:55–57).

After his conversion, Ezra becomes a more "conventional" apocalyptic seer, as visions 5 and 6 witness. Vision 5 is a historical, even political statement of the future destruction of the oppressive Roman Empire. The coming of the Messiah is foretold, the return of the tribes exiled from the northern kingdom of Israel, and the judgment of the wicked follows (vision 6). Vision 7, which paints Ezra as a second Moses and stresses Ezra's receipt of both secret and open scriptures, complements the preceding revelations. The visions are set within a fixed narrative framework, indicating the progression of the seer's experience.

The message conveyed, therefore, is that however incomprehensible the destruction of Jerusalem may seem, whatever agonies of spirit and soul it may cause, in the end, faith in God's justice and the promise of restoration comfort and console the righteous. In addition, the seventh vision serves as a coda, asserting the continuity of the sacred tradition, both secret and public.

It is impossible to speak with any precision of the author's status and social location. Suffice it to say that his choice of a scribe and renewer of the Torah as his persona might derive from his self-understanding. The book, though it speaks of the transmission of secrets to the wise, bears no clear signs of a sectarian self-consciousness.

#### *THE TEXT, VERSIONS, AND PRESENT TRANSLATION*

Neither the Semitic, apparently Hebrew original nor its ancient Greek translation survives. What we have at our disposal are eight "daughter translations" made from this Greek translation. Complete daughter translations exist in Latin, Syriac, Ethiopic, Georgian, Armenian, and two different ones in Arabic. In addition, fragments of a Coptic version in the Sahidic dialect have been discovered. The English translation given here aspires to be as close as

possible to these ancient sources. How is this to be done, utilizing eight separate translations of the Greek translation between which numerous differences exist? The process is, indeed, a complex one.

Here we cannot present a detailed, individual history of each of these versions; we have done this elsewhere. However, we should explain the considerations that helped establish the text translated here. For many centuries, Latin *4 Ezra* was in the Latin Bible, and this Latin version had a disproportionately preponderant influence on Western translations and studies of the book. Yet, since all eight daughter versions were translated from Greek, if differences occur between them, it is possible that any version might preserve an original Greek reading, changed by others in the course of translation or transmission. All ancient writings that were copied and recopied over centuries developed errors, differences, and changes. Moreover, we must remember that differences doubtless also arose in the Greek translation itself over the centuries, and it is unreasonable to assume that all eight daughter versions were translated from an identical form of the Greek translation. In principle, the same considerations apply to the Hebrew original, but we have evidence for only one point of contact with that original, the text that was translated into Greek, while there are eight points of contact between the daughter versions and Greek.

Above, we said that the Latin version has had a disproportional influence on the European reception of *4 Ezra*, and, indeed, many translations of the book into English were made from the Latin version. In recent centuries, the other versions have been discovered and edited, and they have all been taken into account here. The present translation does not privilege any given ancient version but seeks to resolve points of difference among them on scholarly grounds.

Basically, the surviving versions separate into two groups, and each group reflects a different type of Greek text. One branch of the Greek text is reflected by the Latin and Syriac versions (in the notes to the translation, these are abbreviated as Lat and Syr, respectively), and the other by the Ethiopic, Georgian (Eth and Georg), and fragmentary Coptic texts. The remaining three versions, Arabic<sup>1</sup>, Arabic<sup>2</sup>, and Armenian (Ar<sup>1</sup>, Ar<sup>2</sup>, and Arm), have undergone reworking, either at the level of their Greek original text or at the level of the daughter translations. This limits their value for ascertaining the original text. Arabic<sup>1</sup> is close to the Latin but is somewhat revised, and Arabic<sup>2</sup> and Armenian are considerably changed. Thus the primary textual witnesses to *4 Ezra* are the Latin and Syriac on the one hand and the Ethiopic and Georgian, supported in places by the Coptic fragment, on the other. We have utilized these versions in

our translation, weighing their differences in light of the relationships among them, along with other considerations.

Two principles have determined which variant readings are included in the textual notes. First, we have only recorded variants that make a substantial difference to the meaning of the text. Second, of those variants, the notes include only ones that are likely to reflect a Greek original.

#### *THE INFLUENCE AND TRANSMISSION OF 4 EZRA*

The book of *4 Ezra* was remarkably popular in the various Christian churches. The reason for this may well be the apparent affinity of its view of sin, especially as expressed in the first vision, with that of Paul in the New Testament. In addition, the book is a particularly well-composed and finely written work, and the general issues that it raises were of considerable theological interest.

The book was translated from Greek into many ancient versions, in the languages of the early, oriental churches. Eight of these survive, which is quite remarkable and contrasts starkly with the transmission of *2 Baruch* in only one major Syriac manuscript, which is discussed below. *Fourth Ezra's* extensive translation history is backed up in many daughter versions by a rich manuscript tradition.

The book was very popular in Christian usage, and further translations exist made from these daughter versions. Because of *4 Ezra's* position in medieval Vulgate manuscripts, Latin leads the way in this. Fragments of translations made from the Latin version exist in Arabic and Modern Greek. A second Armenian version was also translated from Latin, as was one in Church Slavonic. A second Georgian translation was made from the Slavonic version, itself translated from Latin. A late-medieval Hebrew version also exists, also made from the Latin. In addition to this flock of translations, secondary to the Latin, a translation of the Syriac into Arabic, called the Syro-Arabic, has also been published. This forms the third Arabic translation, all of them Christian. We mention all these tertiary versions, not because of their textual significance (which is very minor indeed), but because they evidence the widespread use of *4 Ezra* in Christian tradition.

This intensive and widespread translation activity gained *4 Ezra* extensive influence in both East and West—in the Oriental churches, in the Orthodox churches, and in the areas under the leadership of the Latin church.

Ancient, patristic, and other authors cited *4 Ezra*. In 1910, Bruno Violet made a listing of main ancient uses of *4 Ezra*, and some instances of citation have been mentioned in our textual notes. Beyond all this, *4 Ezra* inspired and

attracted a number of ancient works. In general, *4 Ezra* had a deep and broad influence in both Eastern and Western Christianity. No impression of *4 Ezra* on rabbinic or later Judaism has been discerned to date, though further study may uncover such.

In Latin, two short works, *5* and *6 Ezra*, are appended to *4 Ezra*. In addition, a number of works have survived that are derived from or inspired by *4 Ezra*. They nearly all deal with aspects of the fate of the soul after death. We enumerate the chief works here.

1. The Greek Apocalypse of Ezra (abbreviated Gk. Apoc. Ez. in the notes)
2. The Apocalypse of Sedrach (*Apoc. Sedr.*, Greek)
3. The *Revelation of the Blessed Ezra* (Latin)
4. The *Questions of Ezra* (Armenian)
5. Perhaps we should include the extensive *Expansions of 4 Ezra* included in the Armenian version of that work, which were apparently translated from Greek.

#### *THE NAMES OF THE EZRA/ESDRAS WORKS*

Because there is considerable confusion about the numbering of the books of Ezra, also called Esdras in Greek, the main biblical and apocryphal works should be listed.

1. The **book of Ezra** occurs in the Hebrew Bible. It is closely associated with the book of Nehemiah.
2. In the Septuagint, two works associated with Ezra/Esdras occur. The first, a historical writing running roughly parallel to Ezra and Nehemiah, is called **1 Esdras**. The second, composed of Ezra and Nehemiah of the Hebrew Bible, is called **2 Esdras**. Esdras is the Greek form of the name Ezra.
3. In the Vulgate, confusingly, **1 Esdras** is the Hebrew Bible's Ezra and **2 Esdras** is the Hebrew Bible's Nehemiah. The Vulgate's **3 Esdras** is the Septuagint's 2 Esdras, and its **4 Esdras** is the present work.
4. Confusion does not stop here, for the Vulgate texts of 4 Esdras include two additional chapters at the beginning and two at the end. These additional chapters, known as **5 and 6 Ezra**, are found only in the Latin version. They are early Christian compositions that have been prefaced and appended to the apocalypse of Ezra translated here. These additional chapters occur in no other version of the book, though a Greek fragment of 5 Ezra has been found on papyrus.

Current English-language usage is twofold. The Apocrypha are books that were included in the Vulgate in the Middle Ages but do not occur in the Hebrew Bible. At the time of the Reformation, Protestants removed these books from the biblical canon and included them in a separate collection, called the Apocrypha. This category included the Vulgate's 3 Esdras and 4 Esdras, which became called **1 Esdras** and **2 Esdras**. This is the usage of, say, the Church of England.

Scholarly usage differs, however, for it wishes to distinguish the additional chapters 1–2 and 15–16 from the core apocalypse, chapters 3–14. The following has now become usual:

**4 Ezra** is chapters 3–14 of 2 Esdras of the Apocrypha = 4 Esdras of the Vulgate.

**5 Ezra** is chapters 1–2 of 2 Esdras of the Apocrypha = 4 Esdras of the Vulgate.

**6 Ezra** is chapters 15–16 of 2 Esdras of the Apocrypha = 4 Esdras of the Vulgate.

In addition and in parallel, we find a different terminology in English-language collections of the Apocrypha:

**1 Esdras**, which is the work in the Septuagint close to biblical Ezra and Nehemiah but different (the Septuagint's 1 Esdras).

**2 Esdras**, which is 4 Ezra, 5 Ezra, and 6 Ezra.

Finally, the Church of Rome, after the Council of Trent (1545–1563), divided the books of the Old Testament, which included the Protestant Apocrypha, into three categories. The first two categories were deemed authoritative, while the third was deemed not to be authoritative.

1. **Protocanonical**: the books of the Bible that existed in Hebrew.

2. **Deuterocanonical**: the books of the Bible that did not exist in Hebrew.

3. **Tritocanonical**: a few books that had been in the Vulgate and were usually relegated to an appendix following the New Testament. *Fourth Ezra* is in this category.

## 2 BARUCH

The *Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch*, or *2 Baruch*, is a Jewish text of the late first century CE. Like *4 Ezra*, it tells the story of a biblical scribe, Baruch, who lived at the time of the Babylonian exile. As we have seen, there are many points of connection between *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*. And yet, even the most casual reader

of the texts in their English translation will notice how different they are. We are well advised, therefore, to read and interpret each work on its own grounds.

#### *BARUCH AND THE USE OF A PSEUDONYM*

Like many Jewish authors writing around the turn of the Common Era, the author of *2 Baruch* decided not to reveal his own name but to write instead under a pseudonym. He wrote in the name of a biblical figure, Baruch, who in the Hebrew Bible is the confidant and scribe of the prophet Jeremiah. Baruch is mentioned four times in the book of Jeremiah (in chaps. 32, 36, 43, and 45), and even though we learn a bit more about him each time he appears, in the end he remains in the shadow of the prophet Jeremiah, and his character is largely undeveloped. In the last of these texts, in Jeremiah 45, a short oracle to Baruch, God announces that God will bring disaster upon all flesh but that Baruch will be spared and receive his life “as a prize of war” (Jer. 45:5). In other words, God promises Baruch that he will survive the impending doom. Baruch’s close association with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile, the oracle that promises him life, and the fact that he is a scribe may help explain why Baruch became a popular pseudonym in postbiblical times, especially for those authors who wrote about the desecration and destruction of Jerusalem, the exile, and the future of Israel.

The first known author to write under this pseudonym is the author of the apocryphal book of Baruch, or *1 Baruch*, a little booklet included in the Septuagint but not in the Hebrew Bible. The book is commonly dated to the aftermath of the desecration of the Jerusalem temple under Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the year 168 BCE. It relates how Baruch, whom Nebuchadnezzar deported to Babylon, organizes the exiles and sends a letter to the high priest in Jerusalem in which he asks him to intercede on behalf of the exiles. No longer merely an auxiliary figure, in the book named after him Baruch assumes the more prominent role of a community leader who convenes meetings, encourages the exiles, and corresponds with the homeland.

The second author to write in the name of Baruch is the author of our apocalypse, called *2 Baruch* to distinguish it from the older apocryphal book of Baruch. With this book, the figure of Baruch has come into his own. His character fully developed, he has become a prophet in his own right, the rightful heir to the prophet Jeremiah, who, in a curious reversal of roles, plays only a minor role in *2 Baruch*. Now it is Baruch who speaks directly with God and who is promised to survive the impending eschatological doom in order to be a witness to the divine intention regarding Israel and the nations at the end of days.

Yet more books named after Baruch include the Greek *Apocalypse of Baruch*, or *3 Baruch*, in which Baruch is taken on an otherworldly journey, and *4 Baruch*, also known as the *Paraleipomena Ieremiou*, or “Things Omitted from Jeremiah,” both compositions that are thought to be younger than *2 Baruch*. *Second Baruch* is thus part of a larger corpus of writings pseudonymously attributed to Baruch, and it bears testimony to the growth of a Baruch legend that describes the transformation of a minor biblical figure who evolves from being Jeremiah’s secretary to becoming an end-time prophet and apocalyptic visionary.

The author of *2 Baruch* wrote in response to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, though the apocalypse is set fictitiously during and after the Babylonian sacking of Jerusalem in the year 587 BCE. The appeal of the figure of Baruch was not the only thing that prompted the author to set his text in the remote past. This rhetorical move is motivated largely by the significance the Babylonian destruction of the Solomonic temple held for early Jewish intellectuals. For the author of *2 Baruch*, the second destruction of Jerusalem cannot be understood apart from the first destruction. In a deeper sense, the wounds of 587 BCE never healed, and Israel never truly returned from the Babylonian exile. By going back to the sixth century BCE, the author of *2 Baruch* reaches back to the roots of the destruction. The temple ruins are the appropriate place for Baruch to learn from God about the divine plan for Israel and about the eschatological fulfillment of time.

#### DATE OF COMPOSITION AND PROVENANCE

Little is known about the origin of *2 Baruch*. There are no unambiguous quotations of or references to *2 Baruch* in other early writings, Jewish or Christian, that can help us determine *2 Baruch*’s date of composition with any degree of certainty, so we are left entirely with what we can derive from the book itself. We can confidently narrow the time window during which the apocalypse was composed to the half century in between the two failed Jewish revolts against Rome. *Second Baruch* makes frequent reference to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem (e.g., 7:1-8:5; 32:2-4) and therefore must have been written after 70 CE, and it never refers to the Bar Kokhba Revolt in 132-135 CE, presumably because the author did not know of it. Beyond that, there is little in the text that guides us to a more specific date. The dramatic setting of Baruch’s lament on the demolished temple (10:4-5) and the great sadness that saturates every part of the book suggest that not much time elapsed between the fall of the city and the composition of the apocalypse. The author of *2 Baruch*

lived close enough to the destruction that the pain was still raw. And yet, the author shows no signs of hope that things might turn around any time soon and that Jerusalem be rebuilt within the bounds of history, a hope that must have been widespread among Jews living in the aftermath of the destruction, at least initially. A date toward the end of the first century ce therefore seems most plausible, though we cannot be certain.

It is equally difficult to determine *2 Baruch's* provenance. A number of observations point to Israel, and possibly to Jerusalem, as the place of composition. The book is set in Jerusalem, and whenever we are told about the physical location of Baruch, he is in Jerusalem, the Kidron Valley (5:5; 21:1; 31:2; 66:4), near a certain oak (6:1; 77:18), or on his way to Hebron (47:1). Even though the temple lies in ruins, it continues to be the locus of divine revelation. In general, *2 Baruch* shows great concern for Jerusalem and the remnant community that lives there. The Jewish Diaspora, too, is on the author's mind, and at the end of *2 Baruch* the seer writes two letters to the exiles, but the Diaspora is viewed from the perspective of those living in Jerusalem, not from the perspective of an insider as we find it in Diaspora novellas such as Daniel 1–6 or the book of Esther. Finally, the close similarities between *2 Baruch* on the one hand and *4 Ezra* and Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* on the other, both thought to have been composed in Israel, further corroborates our impression that *2 Baruch* was most likely written in Israel, perhaps in or around Jerusalem.

#### SECOND BARUCH'S COMPOSITIONAL STRUCTURE

Unlike *4 Ezra*, which is neatly structured into seven segments or visions, as the text itself makes clear, *2 Baruch* does not have a composition that is easily recognizable as such. There are no seven parts here or any other compositional form that is made evident by the work itself. The reader will find the typical narrative markers, including phrases such as "After these events" (7:1; 13:1; 22:1; 31:1; 37:1), Baruch's seven-day fasts (9:1; 12:5; 20:5; 43:3; 47:2), and Baruch's frequent change of location at important junctures in the text (5:5; 8:3; 21:1; 35:1; 44:1), to name but a few, but their use is sporadic rather than systematic, and even taken together they do not add up to a complete structural grid for the book as a whole. All in all, *2 Baruch* has often seemed disjointed and its composition confused to its modern readers, especially when compared with *4 Ezra*.

The structure of *2 Baruch* becomes intelligible and its composition deliberate, however, when we look beyond the markers in the text and turn our

attention to the use of literary subgenres. On the macro level, *2 Baruch* is an apocalypse of the historical type. The author tries to make sense of the particular of human experience by interpreting it within the general of divine intention. The percussive event in need of an interpretation, in this case the destruction of Jerusalem, is really only a small part of the divine historical master plan that was put into place at the moment of creation and that reaches all the way to the end of days: so the argument of *2 Baruch*. Within this macro genre, the author of *2 Baruch* makes use of a number of subgenres: the prose discourse or narrative frame (1:1-9:1; 77:18-26); the revelatory dialogue between God and Baruch (1:1-9:1; 13:1-20:6; 22:1-30:5; 48:26-52:7); Baruch's prayers (10:1-12:5; 21:1-26; 35:1-5; 38:1-4; 48:1-25; 54:1-22); Baruch's public speeches (31:1-34; 44:1-47:2; 77:1-17); Baruch's symbolic dream visions (36:1-37:1; 53:1-12; some modern exegetes add 27:1-30:5 as a third vision); the discourse of the interpreting angel (55:1-76:5); and the epistle (78:1-87:1). The frequent change in the use of literary genre is deliberate and marks distinct units in the text. What is more, the author of *2 Baruch* uses these genres to advance different aspects of his apocalyptic program. The narrative frame introduces the reader to the book's fictitious setting and use of pseudonym. The revelatory dialogue between God and Baruch provides the author with a literary forum to discuss some of the more contentious issues of the book, matters that pertain to the morality and justice of God and the severe limitations of human knowledge. Baruch's prayers are, for the most part, laments that anchor the book firmly in the tradition of Jeremiah, traditionally thought to be the author of the book of Lamentations; structurally, the prayers serve as literary transitions in the book. Baruch's public speeches strike a more conciliatory tone and condense the apocalyptic message of *2 Baruch*: they emphasize Torah obedience during these final days. The symbolic dream-visions together with their interpretations capture the author's eschatological musings and in particular his sophisticated concept of time. And the epistle, best seen as a direct extension of Baruch's three public speeches, brings the book to a close and serves a distinctly paraenetic function: it summarizes *2 Baruch*'s main apocalyptic concerns and appeals to the unity of Israel.

#### *WHAT DOES 2 BARUCH SAY AND HOW DOES IT SAY IT?*

Unlike *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch* does not have a sevenfold structure or a single organizing principle that determines the structure of the book as a whole. Bearing in mind that the composition of *2 Baruch* can only be grasped if we pay close attention to a host of markers in the text—phrases and expressions

designed to mark transitions; Baruch's fasts; Baruch's changes of location; the deliberate use of different genres; and so on—the structure of the book can be outlined as follows.

*The Narrative Prologue* (1:1—9:1). *Second Baruch* begins with a narrative introduction. On the day before the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem, God announces to Baruch that Jerusalem is about to be destroyed and asks him to leave the city, together with Jeremiah and their companions. Baruch tries to dissuade God, alas to no avail. God responds that destruction and exile, here viewed as forms of divine chastisement, are only temporary and that the heavenly Jerusalem is currently preserved with God. The next day, Baruch witnesses an angel rescue the sacred implements from the temple only moments before the arrival of the Babylonians. Jerusalem is destroyed.

*Baruch's Lament* (10:1—12:5). Jeremiah goes with the exiles to Babylon, whereas Baruch returns to the ruins of the temple and laments over the fallen city. His lament is framed by a beatitude for the dead, who do not have to endure the present destruction. Baruch calls on Israel to mourn with him and on nature to withhold its fruit, since Babylon is prosperous and Jerusalem is devastated.

*God and Baruch in Dialogue* (13:1—20:6). The dialogue between God and Baruch, with which *2 Baruch* began, continues, and the topic shifts to the question of divine justice. In a scene that resembles the prophetic call narrative in the Hebrew Bible, God announces to Baruch that he will be preserved until the end of times in order to proclaim to the nations their punishment. Baruch counters that God should have saved Jerusalem on account of the righteousness of the ancestors. He wonders whether the righteous and the sinners perish alike, to which God replies that the righteous will be amply rewarded. The length of one's earthly life is no indication of one's righteousness, as the example of Adam and Moses illustrates. The former lived a long life but brought death into the world, while the latter, who lived a shorter life, gave Israel the Torah. But it is the future that matters now, not the past. God hastens the progression of time to its ultimate consummation and bids Baruch to remember everything he has learned.

*Baruch's Prayer* (21:1–26). After a seven-day fast, Baruch says another prayer. It begins with a lengthy doxology in praise of God the creator and sustainer of all life. This Baruch contrasts with human life, which is ephemeral. The prayer ends with the petition to God to end human mortality and to bring about the promised end.

*God and Baruch in Dialogue* (22:1—30:5). The dialogue between God and Baruch continues. God explains that the end will come only when a previously

fixed number of those destined to be born will have been reached. Baruch complains that nobody knows that number. God replies that the end will be preceded by some recognizable signs, involving many tribulations. The end time will be divided into twelve parts, each with its own set of end-time woes, and the entire world will be affected. The pericope ends with a description of the messianic age. At the advent of the Messiah, Israel will live in peace and unprecedented prosperity. Then the dead will rise, and the wicked will be condemned.

*Baruch's First Public Address* (31:1–34:1). Baruch calls an assembly of elders in the Kidron Valley to deliver his first public address. He assures the assembled that, if they follow the Torah, God will protect them. The future looks bleak. The second temple will be rebuilt but then destroyed again, until finally it will be “completed forever” (32:4) in the eschaton, when God will renew all of creation. When Baruch tells the assembly that he must leave them, they are afraid that he might leave them for good, and so he assures them that he only wants to go as far as the holy of holies to receive further revelation from God.

*Baruch's Lament* (35:1–5). This sorrowful prayer gains much of its force from its brevity and poignancy of expression. Baruch bemoans that his lament over Jerusalem is bound to be inadequate. He grieves over the cessation of the sacrificial worship and wails that Israel's glory has been made into dust.

*Baruch's Vision of the Forest, the Vine, and the Spring* (36:1–43:3). This time, the divine response comes in the form of an allegorical dream-vision. A gentle fountain turns into a giant stream of water and uproots a forest, save for one cedar. The cedar is brought before a vine and condemned. In his exposition, God explains to Baruch that the last installment of history consists of four consecutive kingdoms. In the end, the Messiah, represented by the vine, will call the last ruler, the cedar in the dream, to Mount Zion, convict him of his offenses, put him to death, and rule victoriously. Baruch inquires about the fate of the apostates and proselytes in particular and is told that everybody will be judged based on the decisions they make late in life. At the end of the passage, God tells Baruch to prepare for his own departure and to instruct the people one more time.

*Baruch's Second Public Address* (44:1–47:2). Baruch convenes a small group of people and delivers his second address. As in his first speech, Baruch admonishes his audience to obey the Torah so that they will witness the consolation of Zion and inherit the new world that does not pass away. What is more, they are to instruct others so that they, too, will live. The people protest that, once Baruch will have left them, they will be without a teacher and

interpreter of Torah, yet Baruch assures them that there will not be a lack of leadership in Israel. Baruch travels to Hebron and fasts for seven days.

*Baruch's Prayer* (48:1–25). The prayer begins again with a doxology in praise of God the creator. The divine attributes are then contrasted with the nature of human life, which is ephemeral. Baruch pleads with God not to cut off hope from Israel, the people whom God has chosen, and ends on a note of confidence in the Torah, a source of wisdom that will sustain Israel.

*God and Baruch in Dialogue* (48:26–52:8). In response, God insists that the Torah demands its right, an unmistakable allusion to the impending judgment that is sure to come. There follows a lengthy description of the time of tribulation. In desperation, Baruch wails over the corruption Adam brought upon all humanity when he transgressed the commandment. But then he shifts the focus to the righteous and inquires about the body of the resurrected. In which shape will they live? The divine interlocutor explains that initially the resurrected assume their original bodies, but then the wicked and the righteous will go separate ways. The wicked will waste away entirely, whereas those faithful to God's Torah will be glorified through transformations. They will be like angels, shine like the stars, and live in the expanses of Paradise among the angels. Baruch concludes the passage by calling on the righteous to end their lamentations and instead to prepare themselves for the heavenly reward that awaits them.

*Baruch's Vision of the Forest, the Vine, and the Spring* (53:1–76:5). Baruch once again falls into a deep sleep and has his second dream. He sees an enormous cloud rising from the sea, which rains on the earth twelve times, alternating between black and bright waters. In prayer, Baruch requests an interpretation, and the angel Remiel appears to give a detailed exposition, the longest continuous pericope in the book. The waters, Remiel explains, represent periods in the history of Israel. The black waters stand for times of wickedness (Adam, Egypt, the Amorites, Jeroboam, Manasseh, and the Babylonian exile), and the bright waters times of righteousness (Abraham, Moses, David and Solomon, Hezekiah, Josiah, and the Second Temple period). There then follow three more periods in Remiel's exposition. The last is the messianic age of peace. Baruch responds with another doxology, praising God for his incomprehensible goodness. God tells Baruch again to instruct the people.

*Baruch's Third Public Address* (77:1–17). In his third public speech, Baruch's farewell address which closely follows Moses's last days as described at the end of Deuteronomy, the seer returns to a central theme of the book, the acknowledgment that the destruction of Jerusalem is a form of divine

chastisement for Israel's sins. In response to Baruch's remarks, the people ask Baruch to send a letter of hope to the exiles in Babylon.

*The Narrative Epilogue* (77:18–26). In compliance with their request, Baruch sits under an oak tree and writes two letters. He sends one by an eagle to the Assyrian exiles and the other by means of three messengers to the exiles in Babylon. Of the two, only the former is preserved in *2 Baruch* 78–87, the final section of the apocalypse.

*The Epistle of Baruch* (78:1—87:1). The purpose of the epistle, as Baruch explains in the opening verses, is to comfort the addressees and to bring them to acknowledge that their current exile is an act of God's judgment, which is just, so that in the end they will be found worthy. The epistle proper begins with a historical review of the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem. Baruch then consoles the exiles by telling them that God will soon overthrow Israel's enemies. This leads to a lengthy exhortation, in which Baruch renews the Mosaic call on Israel to be obedient to the Torah. At last, Baruch requests that his letter be read publicly in the synagogue.

#### THE PRESENT TRANSLATION

*Second Baruch* was probably written originally in a Semitic language, most likely in Hebrew, but nothing of the original survives. Our only complete textual witness of *2 Baruch* is a single Syriac biblical manuscript of the sixth or seventh century in the *Biblioteca Ambrosiana* in Milan, Italy. Antonio Maria Ceriani, the prefect at the time, rediscovered *2 Baruch* in the 1860s and first published the Syriac text in 1871. The manuscript is in very good condition. It states that the Syriac of *2 Baruch* is a translation of a Greek version, of which only a few verses survive among the Oxyrhynchus papyri. There is also a partial Arabic version from the St. Catherine Monastery dating from the tenth or eleventh century, a translation of the Syriac that is of limited text-critical value. Finally, there are a small number of references to *2 Baruch* in Syriac lectionaries.

The manuscript tradition of the epistle (*2 Baruch* 78–87) is rather different. The Ambrosian manuscript includes two versions of the epistle. The epistle appears first at the end of *2 Baruch*, and then again in the same manuscript in the form of a second copy, an independent version with a slightly different text. In addition, there are about forty other manuscripts of the epistle. This shows that at some point the epistle circulated independently of the rest of the apocalypse and that it was used in the liturgy of the Syriac church.

The present English text is a translation of the Ambrosian manuscript. I have marked those cases in which the manuscript appears to be corrupt, and I

have followed Ceriani's emendations. In the case of the epistle, there are some cases in which I have used other manuscripts, and these are marked as well.

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