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Alexander Kulik

3 BARUCH

GREEK-SLAVONIC APOCALYPSE OF BARUCH

COMMENTARIES ON EARLY JEWISH LITERATURE

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Alexander Kulik
3 Baruch

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Early Jewish Literature
(CEJL)

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*For my father and mother,
Eduard Kulik and Maria Neverodsky*

Blessed is he who has acquired knowledge:
He is troubled neither by his people's calamity,
nor by an inclination to unjust action.
He observes the ageless cosmos of immortal nature,
how it has been formed, in what way and manner.
The urge to shameful deeds never dwells with such people.
Euripides, *Fr.* 910

Virtue, unlocking heaven to those who deserve not to die,
tries denied ways ...
Horace, *Odes* 3.2

... you must firmly believe
In the beginnings and in the ends. You must know
Where Hell and Paradise lie in wait for us.
You are given a fearless measure
To measure all that you see.
Your sight – let it be strong and clear.
Erase accidental lines –
And you will see: the world is beautiful.
Alexander Blok, *Retribution*

With the farming of a verse
Make a vineyard of the curse,
Sing of human unsuccess
In a rapture of distress.
In the deserts of the heart
Let the healing fountains start,
In the prison of his days
Teach the free man how to praise.
W.H. Auden, *In Memory of W. B. Yeats*

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My special gratitude is due to my family: my parents, to whom I dedicate this book, and to Lara, Shlomit, Joseph, and Hanna for their long-enduring patience and help.

I would also like to address my reader and humbly ask for forgiveness for any mistakes, omissions or overly bold assumptions that may still be encountered in the text. The responsibility for them remains mine alone. I made a sincere effort to understand the book, and did my best to introduce innovations without at the same time impinging on the usefulness of my study as a handy and lucid reference tool.

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Jerusalem
May 2009

Alexander Kulik

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INTRODUCTION

I. Purposes and Methods

Greek-Slavonic Apocalypse of Baruch (= *3 Baruch*) stands out among apocalyptic writings with respect to both the nature of the composition itself and its treatment in the history of research. Despite the fact that it is one of the six “major” early Jewish apocalypses (*1 Enoch*, *2 Enoch*, *Apocalypse of Abraham*, *2 Baruch*, *3 Baruch*, *4 Ezra*), it has been relatively neglected in modern scholarship. This can be demonstrated by even a cursory glance at the index of sources in any monograph in relevant fields. Whereas citations and detailed analyses of other apocalyptic compositions abound, *3 Baruch* often does not appear in these works at all. At best, it is mentioned in footnotes, and even then, it tends to appear only in lists of other sources containing a common motif. To be sure, there have been some seminal studies devoted to *3 Baruch*, which have stimulated awareness of the book, and I gratefully acknowledge my debt to the authors of these works below. Nevertheless, the book has not been properly integrated into broader scholarly discussion, and in the absence of intensive and polyphonic academic discourse, even brilliant works that have appeared in recent decades cannot bridge the gap. It would seem that the reason for this situation is the fact that *3 Baruch* is one of the most difficult works to comprehend and classify. This sense of obscurity functions as both cause and effect in a vicious circle of lack of understanding and lack of scholarly attention. In addition to this, there are more factors that make this apocalypse one of the most challenging early Jewish texts:

- *3 Baruch* is not a typical apocalypse. The content of *3 Baruch* differs significantly from that of other writings of the same genre. The book preserves syncretistic ideas and tendencies which are combined in unique ways. Its seer (or “visionary”) does not attain the experience of a theophany, which is the ultimate goal of most other seers. Furthermore, collective eschatology, the central issue of apocalyptic literature, does not find its place here. *3 Baruch* is most probably a Jewish composition, but it is universal in its interests, and the vision itself (in contrast to its prologue) does not explicitly mention any specifically Jewish values, concerns, or religious practices. Its lack of interest in the future is matched by its indifference to the past of the nation; it is as loudly silent about the sacral history of Israel as it is about eschatology.

In certain cases, the very fact that the book does not fully belong to a “classical paradigm” of ancient apocalyptic literature can help shed light on the enigmas of other, more typical, compositions. As we know from numerous fields of knowledge, marginal and atypical sources frequently offer a fresh perspective that can provide answers to the most sore questions raised with regard to more “central” and influential exemplars.

- The worldview, the message, and the very textual structure of *3 Baruch* are enigmatic in many aspects. As a result, the book has earned such descriptions as “a good example of a degenerative apocalypse ... strange sights, the account of which is grotesque rather than impressive,”¹ “naïve childishness,”² “trivial invention,”³ “amateurish.”⁴ I will try to show, however, that the incomprehensibility of *3 Baruch* is due to the fact that it is filled with non-explicit data, which may have been clear to its target audience while being hidden from modern readers. It appears that this mode of communication was employed in *3 Baruch* to a greater extent than in other esoteric compositions (see *Implied content and Method: Riddles and subtexts* below).

Implicit meanings, structural links in the text, and conceptions behind the text are partly reconstructable, though there is inevitably a range in the probability of reconstructions of implied data. In this study, some bold assumptions and juxtapositions are introduced when they are needed to make the text intelligible. Such reconstructions are offered mostly when the passage or motif under discussion would otherwise be incoherent due to internal inconsistencies or factors pertaining to inter-textual contexts. Thus, the basic methodological principle underlying this study is a commitment (1) to achieve a comprehension of initial and editorial meanings of the text at different stages of its development, as well as of its message, method, and worldview, while (2) taking into consideration a certain degree of distortion over the course of textual history and (3) defining the place and roots of these topics in Jewish lore and literary tradition, as far as they are preserved in early Jewish sources, including Jewish Hellenistic, Rabbinic, Gnostic, and Christian writings.

¹ Torrey, “Apocalypse,” 674.

² Ferrar, “Baruch,” 93.

³ Dean-Otting, “Baruch,” 120.

⁴ Wright, *Heaven*, 168.

- *3 Baruch* is interesting also for its textual history. The Slavonic translation from Greek preserved a version more authentic than the extant Greek text. The latter is also very instructive, reflecting a reception of an older version by its early readers, and in fact looks like an explanatory *targum* to it. Their common proto-text has also undergone meaningful editorial changes before splitting into two rescensions. In the case of *3 Baruch* these changes may be traced and bring us closer to the original form of the book. The book is obviously of a composite nature, and in this case we need not rely upon such dubious criteria as types of outlook or style in order to identify the stratification of layers, since the hands of the redactors can be detected by relatively clear basic philological considerations.

Formally, the present study consists of the introduction, translation, notes, and commentaries.

The *introduction* classifies and summarizes the observations and argumentations given in detail in the commentary. Therefore, the introduction contains only the references to the text of *3 Baruch*, while all the argumentation, as well as references to primary sources and research literature may be found in the commentaries to the relevant verses.

The *translation* presents a synopsis of the Greek and Slavonic versions. The latter follows the synthetic text based mainly on ms L. In the cases of polysemantic forms, I have tried to choose the meanings common for both rescensions when they seemed likely to have derived from the common source, in contrast to other cases, when the divergence seemed more likely to have originated from discrepancies in their *Vorlagen*, or to be the result of translation technique or errors in the Slavonic version.

In the *notes* I have tried to confine my remarks to purely textual issues. However, when issues of content have had an impact upon textual choices, these points are raised in the notes as well. Conversely, where textual problems have had an influential role in interpretation, there is expansion of the textual discussion in the commentary. There are more notes to the Slavonic version, due to its more complicated textual history and the large number of copies that have survived from different periods and regions, in contrast to the two Greek manuscripts which contain insignificant, mostly orthographic, discrepancies.

The main body of the research is presented in the form of a detailed *commentary* which follows the order of the text. The fragmented nature of discussion prescribed by the genre of commentary is partly compensated by multiple cross-references to the issues common for different sections of the text. Furthermore, many key issues that arise in several passages and

demand an integrative analysis are treated separately in the introductory sections of the commentaries to specific chapters.⁵

As a rule, ancient sources cited in the commentary were either newly translated or their translations were significantly revised.

⁵ In fact, there are three levels of generalization in this work: the introductory commentaries to chapters are summarized in the general introduction, which in turn is briefly summed up in the *General conclusions* below.

II. Manuscript Evidence

3 *Baruch* is preserved through two Greek and at least twelve South- and East-Slavic manuscripts (not including later reworkings). The Greek texts are found in the British Museum manuscript Add. 10.073 dated to the 15th–16th centuries (hereafter – ms A), and in the Monastery of the Hagia (the island of Andros), manuscript no. 46.39, dated to the beginning of the 15th century (ms B). There are no significant discrepancies between the two, and they even share numerous misreadings, grammatical errors and orthographic deviations. Although Picard regarded ms B as the earlier version, it is not a source for ms A (as is clear from the obvious parablepsis in 6:16, absent in ms A).⁶

The textual history of the Slavonic rescension was elaborated upon in the critical edition by Gaylord.⁷ Among the Slavonic manuscripts, the one closest to the Greek version is the 13th century South-Slavic St. Petersburg, RNB, Greč 70 (ms L). Together with two East-Slavic abridged copies – Moscow, RGB, f. 272, Syn. 363 of the 15th–16th centuries (ms T) and Moscow, GIM, Barsov (signature unknown) of the 17th–18th centuries (ms B) – it constitutes the family α of the Slavonic rescension. Both T and B at times witness readings closer to the Greek version than ms L.

In the family β Gaylord distinguishes two groups of South-Slavic manuscripts:

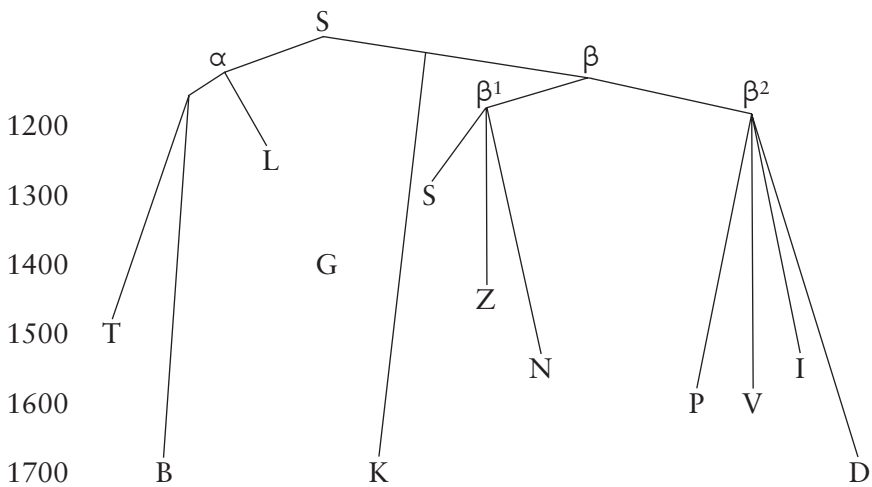
- (1) β^1 , comprised of Belgrade, NB, 651 of the 13th–14th centuries (ms S), Zagreb, KJAZU III.a.20 [Šibenički Zbornik] of the 16th century (ms N), the Glagolitic Zagreb, NSB, R4001 [Petrisov Sbornik] of 1468 (ms Z); and
- (2) β^2 with Sofia, NBKM, 433 [Panagjurski Sbornik] of the 16th century (ms P), Vienna, ÜNB, Slav. 149 of the 16th century (ms V), Sofia, NBKM, 326 (Adžarskij Sbornik) of the 16th century (ms I), Goljamo Belovo, Bulgaria of the 17th–18th centuries (ms D).

⁶ Picard, “Apocalypsis.”

⁷ Gaylord, *Slavonic*, xxi–xxvii.

There are also two copies of which only fragments are preserved: Belgrade, NB, 828 of 1409 (ms G) and Kiev, CBAN, Sp. 168/III of the 18th century (ms K).

Although the family β is in general the result of inner-Slavic redaction (including expansions, omissions and revisions of earlier readings reflected in the Greek version and the family α) in some cases it preserves better readings. This means that the divergence between the textual families took place in the South-Slavic area prior to the 13th century. Some misreadings may witness the Glagolitic Slavonic proto-text and uncial Greek *Vorlage*. The stemma of the Slavic version according to Gaylord are as follows:



The relationship between the Greek and Slavic versions are examined in *Reconstructed Content* below.

III. Scholarship

As observed above, 3 *Baruch* is an “underdog” among ancient Jewish apocalypses, and the history of its research is not rich. It was introduced to scholarship in 1886, when Stojan Novaković published the Slavonic ms N.⁸ The Greek text found in British Museum by E. Cuthbert Butler was published by Montague R. James in 1897.⁹ Since then six more Slavonic manuscripts have been published: ms T by Nikolaj Savvich Tikhonravov in 1894,¹⁰ ms K by Mikhail Mikhailovich Speranskij in 1906,¹¹ mss BPS were published by Mikhail Iur’evich Sokolov in 1907,¹² and ms Z by Eduard Hercigonja in 1964.¹³ Jordan Ivanov republished ms S with discrepancies from mss NP in 1925.¹⁴ The bibliography published by Alexandr Ivanovich Jatsimirskij in 1921 included almost all of the manuscripts known today (except ms D).¹⁵ The second known Greek copy was published by Jean-Claude Picard in his critical edition of the Greek text in 1967.¹⁶ The decisive breakthrough in the textual research on 3 *Baruch* was achieved by Harry E. Gaylord, who prepared a critical edition of the Slavonic version in his dissertation at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1983.¹⁷

The Slavonic ms N was translated to German by Gottlieb Nathanael Bonwetsch in 1896¹⁸ and then into English by William R. Morfill in 1897.¹⁹ Wolfgang Hage translated ms S into German in 1974,²⁰ while Donka Petkanova – the eclectic text based on mss SNPI to Bulgarian in 1981,²¹ A. Iu.

⁸ Novaković, “Otkrivene.”

⁹ James, “Baruch,”

¹⁰ Tikhonravov, “Otkrovenie;” cf. Milkov, “Otkrovenie,” 480–87.

¹¹ Speranskij, *Izvestija*.

¹² Sokolov, “Apokrificheskoe.”

¹³ Hercigonja, “Videnie,” 63–72.

¹⁴ Ivanov, *Bogomilski*, 193–200.

¹⁵ Jatsimirskij, *Bibliograficheskij*.

¹⁶ Picard, “Apocalypse.”

¹⁷ Gaylord, *Slavonic*.

¹⁸ Bonwetsch, “Slavisch.”

¹⁹ Morfill, “Apocalypse.”

²⁰ Hage, *Griechische*, 15–44.

²¹ Petkanova, *Apokrifi*.

Karpov and Vladimir Vladimirovich Milkov – presented a Russian translation of ms T in 1990 and 1999 respectively.²² The Greek version was first translated into German by Victor Ryssel in 1900,²³ into English by Henry M. Hughes in 1913,²⁴ into Hebrew by Eliyahu Shemu'el Hartom in 1967,²⁵ into Spanish by Natalio Fernández Marcos in 1990,²⁶ and into Russian by Maria and Vadim Vitkovskij in 2001.²⁷ The parallel versions were translated by Harry E. Gaylord in 1983.²⁸

Mikhail Iur'evich Sokolov, Emil Turdeanu, and Harry E. Gaylord have made the most noticeable contribution to the textual study of the Slavic recension and its relation to the Greek version. Among relatively recent works, the studies by Richard J. Bauckham, John Collins, Mary Dean-Otting, George W. E. Nickelsburg, Andrei Orlov, Jean-Claude Picard, Rainer Stichel, and Edward J. Wright are of crucial significance in the collective attempt to understand 3 *Baruch*.²⁹ The history of research of 3 *Baruch* has culminated in two studies without which the present work would not be possible: the unpublished critical edition of the Slavonic version by Harry E. Gaylord³⁰ and the thorough and insightful monograph by Daniel C. Harlow.³¹

²² Karpov, "Otkrovenie," 276–82; Milkov, "Otkrovenie," 488–93.

²³ Ryssel, "Apokalypsen."

²⁴ Hughes, "Greek."

²⁵ Hartom, "Hazon."

²⁶ Fernández Marcos, "Apocalipsis."

²⁷ Vitkovskij, "Otkrovenie."

²⁸ Gaylord, "Baruch."

²⁹ See General Bibliography, 3 *Baruch*: Articles and Chapters.

³⁰ Gaylord, *Slavonic*.

³¹ Harlow, *Baruch*.

IV. Original Language

There is no evidence that the Greek text of 3 *Baruch* had a Hebrew or Aramaic original. All obvious Hebraisms found in the book are biblicisms that are also attested in other Judeo-Greek texts. The gematria calculations, based on Greek words put into Hebrew letters, demonstrate that their author knew at least the Hebrew alphabet (4:7G; 4:10). The text probably has several wordplays, some of which are based on polysemy, homophony, and homeophony of Greek words: ἔλαιον “oil” and ἔλεος “mercy” (ms T 4:7S and 15:1S; πτώσεως (gen. sg.) “calamity” and πόσεως (gen. sg.) “drinking” (4:17G); παράπτω “kindle” and “transgress”; θλίβω “compress” and “afflict” (9:7G; 15:1S). A hypothetical wordplay may also refer to the similarity of Hebrew roots עוֹר “bird” and עֵי “faint, weary” (8:2, 3, 6G; the same word-play is attested in *Exod. Rab.* 38).

V. Date

There are no decisive data indicating the dating of *3 Baruch*. Usually any reference to the destruction of the Temple serves as an argument for the post-destruction origin of a composition. Origen (*Princ.* 2.3.6) may provide a *terminus ad quem*, if his reference to a “book of the prophet Baruch,” in which there are “very clear indications of the seven worlds or heavens”, is understood as a reference to a version of *3 Baruch*, though with different ouranology (seven heavens instead of five or fewer in the original text) and different terminology (“world” for heaven) than the extant versions of the book.

VI. Provenance

Like most apocryphal and pseudepigraphical writings, *3 Baruch* has been preserved in Christian tradition. As shown below (see *Reconstructed Content*) the earlier rescension of the book most probably did not include any specifically Christian materials. Nevertheless, as far as we can judge from the extant redactions, it contained contradictory tendencies, which could have been developed in either direction. On the one hand, the vision itself seems indifferent to the sacred history of Israel, both past and future: the latest historical figure mentioned is Noah, a universal patriarchal figure; there are no explicit references to any specifically Jewish values, or to the dichotomy of Israel and the nations, and collective eschatology is not treated at all. On the other hand, the setting of the vision shows a concern for the theodicy pertaining to the destruction of the Temple. The relationship of this “particularist” problem to the universalistic vision is not clarified, and may be interpreted in either Rabbinic or Christian terms – either as a consolation and theodical justification, or as a message about the insignificance of the terrestrial Temple.

At the same time, the text is deeply rooted in Jewish lore and cannot be understood out of the context of traditions preserved in Jewish (and even specifically Rabbinic) literature. Thus, the question of whether its Jewish author believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the true messiah may seem irrelevant or at least impossible to determine, as long as the text does not directly reflect such a belief or a dependence on early Christian texts. Rabbinic Jewish and Christian Jewish authors of the period shared many common traditions and interests. The question of the potential compatibility of the book’s content with Christian ideas is more relevant to the reception of the text, as a Christian hand is recognizable in reworked layers of the composition. Thus some readings of the reworked Greek version, in addition to Christian terminology, citations and paraphrases from the New Testament, may hint that the destruction of the Temple is not only deserved (as in 1:3S), but is not important (1:3G), and that the paradigmatic sinners are the Jews (16:2G). In the case of *3 Baruch* we are delivered from the vicious circle of the assumptions that the Christian passages must be interpolations since the text is Jewish, and that the text must be Jewish, since all that is Christian is interpolated. Here we are lucky to have the Slavonic

version, which serves as a witness to a pre-Christianized stage: the Slavonic version does not contain the Christian materials of the Greek reworking and preserves clues of an earlier redaction (see *Reconstructed Content* below).

Our text shares a significant number of unique or rare traditions with Gnostic writings; however, despite its transcendentalist and probably angelolatric tendencies, it has nothing to do with Gnostic theology. This observation counts in favor of the hypothesis that the uniquely Gnostic traditions which reappear later in Jewish mysticism may reflect a common Jewish heritage³² or may even be rooted in more widely circulating Mediterranean lore. Among these proto-Gnostic traditions one might mention the presentation of the building of the Tower of Babel as a demonic plot (*Paraph. Shem* 24–25); blind celestial forces (cf. blind archons of *Hyp. Arch. passim*); the conception of the cosmic serpent as a place of torment in the afterlife (*Pistis Sophia* 3.126) or as a holder of Hades (*Acts Thom.* 32); traditions about five celestial trees (*Gos. Thom.* 19:3–4; Bala'izah Gnostic fragment; *Pistis Sophia* 1.1 and 10; 2.86; 3.95; etc.); the satanic and serpentine origin of vine (Epiphanius, *Haer.* 3.45.1.2); and chrismatic “seals” for the afterlife (*Ap. John* 31.22–25; Origen, *Cels.* 6.27, 34).

Our interpretation of the relationship between 3 *Baruch* and Gnostic tradition may, with certain precautions, be implemented also for some commonalities found between 3 *Baruch* and early Christian tradition. With the Gnostics, the contradiction between the availability of common material and the obvious disagreement of the respective outlooks point towards a common Jewish substratum rather than direct influence. Such a hypothesis would be less demonstrable for explaining Christian parallels: our text is preserved in Christian tradition and does not contradict Christian doctrines. Nevertheless, we can raise the possibility of proto-Christian motifs in 3 *Baruch*, especially when significant variation in details testify against direct borrowing. These parallels would be of particular interest in instances when they provide a clarification or complementation for some unique or obscure early Christian imagery which, in turn, could have been rooted in the Jewish traditions witnessed by 3 *Baruch*. Among these are the motifs of the Tree of Knowledge planted by Sammael (4:8) and the parable of tares; “false wheat” planted by “the Adversary” when the “man” (Adam?) is asleep (Matt 13:24–30; cf. the Tree of Knowledge as wheat in *Gen. Rab.* 15.7; *b. Ber.* 40a; *b. Sanh.* 70a); angels as bearers of the flowers (of the Paradise of Virtues?; 12:1G; cf. 4:7S; 4:10) and angels as harvesters

³² Idel, *Kabbalah*, 30, 116.

of the same parable (Matt 13:39); the uprooted Vine of Knowledge planted by Sammael (4:10) and the uprooting of the “plant which my heavenly Father has not planted” (Matt 15:13; it is specifically the vine in *Gos. Thom.* 40 and par); the lake of the souls (10:5G) followed by the oil reward (from the Olive of Life?; 15:1–2); the washing in the “water of life” which provides the “right to the Tree of Life” (Rev 22:1–2, 14, 17 and par.); the “Kingdom of Heaven” as an abode of the righteous guarded by a keyholder in 11:2 and in Matt 8:11 and 16:19; the structurally similar descriptions of the angelic offering of flowers (12–15) and the angelic incense offering (Rev 5:8; 8:3–5); the locusts plague (16:3) opposed to the oil reward (chrismatic seal?; 15:2) and the locusts plague opposed to protective seal (Rev 9:3–11); and many more similarities with NT, as well as with Christian pseudepigrapha and the works of the Church Fathers. All these parallels, although only attested in Christian literature, do not contain specifically Christian conceptions, and in this they do not differ from abundant Christian parallels to other traditions more widely attested in early Jewish literature.

Another kind of question is the extent to which the author was influenced by non-Jewish Hellenistic traditions and whether the text reflects a provenance in Palestine or elsewhere. The work in its current form shows a substantial degree of Hellenization. This is evident in the language itself, in gematrias based on Greek words, in names of rivers, and in *translatio graeca* of Hebrew concepts such as the well known substitution of Sheol by Hades, or the correspondence, found only in *3 Baruch*, of the protective bird Ziz by Phoenix (adopting not only the Greek name, but also some of its characteristics). In addition to these elements, which could have been introduced or modified during translation or transmission, we also find Hellenistic concepts and images that are central to the composition. These include: the celestial afterlife, Acherusian lake (though unnamed), and solar and lunar chariots that bear anthropomorphic riders. At the same time, the cosmology of the apocalypse has nothing to do with new Greco-Roman theories, and some of the Hellenistic features mentioned above might have had Near Eastern equivalents, which could have been adopted by Jews without Greek mediation. Among the most prominent Near Eastern traditions partly shared with Greeks are the sun chariots, known to Jews since biblical times, and the complex of Egyptian ideas on the ascent of *ba* (soul-bird), its purification in the celestial lake, and the range of heavenly gates.

One feature that might point toward a Palestinian provenance is the idea that only rain water can cause plants to be productive. This is plausible in Palestine, where the agriculture is based primarily on rain water, but could hardly be raised in countries with developed irrigation cultures.

VII. Content

1. Extant Content

Below is a summary of the last redactions of 3 *Baruch* as attested in the extant versions. The attempts to figure out the contents of earlier redactions, on the one hand, and the most obvious implied data behind the explicit account, on the other, are presented in the following chapters (*Reconstructed Content* and *Implied Content*).

Weeping at the gates of the destroyed Temple, Baruch seeks a theodicy for the catastrophe. In response, an angel sent by God promises to show him the “great mysteries.” The angel takes him to “where heaven was set,” and to the river that cannot be crossed by any “alien breath.” Having arrived at the “first heaven,” they enter the very large door, and after a month-long journey, they find a plain inhabited by strangely shaped creatures. Baruch’s first question is about “the thickness of heaven in which we journeyed;” he learns that it is equal to the height of the sky and the width of heaven (thus G; S equates it to the width of earth, while the width of heaven is as the height of the sky).

The angel takes Baruch to the “second heaven,” where they find almost the same creatures, only dog-faced, who are also identified as the builders of the Tower of Babel. Then Baruch learns how they afflicted a woman in the throes of childbirth and wanted to bore through heaven in order to study its composition; moreover, he learns how they were punished with blindness and confusion of languages.

After further long journey through another long gate, Baruch sees another plain with the Serpent and Hades “around him” (in G; below, the latter is also identified as a belly of the former). Baruch learns about the eating and drinking habits of the monster: “the dragon is he who eats the bodies of those who pass through life wickedly” (G; in S it eats earth instead) and drinks every day a regular portion of water from the sea, which still does not sink, being filled with rivers, a list of which is given.

The vision of Serpent-Hades is interrupted by Baruch’s sudden request to see the Tree of Knowledge. In the response to this request, he hears a story (instead of seeing a vision), which contains the following episodes: (1) On the Garden, where the five different fruit trees were planted by five named

angels; among them, the olive tree was planted by Michael, while the vine was planted by Satanael (only in S); (2) On the Tree of Knowledge that turns out to be the vine planted by Sammael (in G; Satanael in S), and thus is forbidden to Adam, who was divested of the Divine glory for his transgression. (3) On the Flood, which destroyed many giants, entered Paradise, destroyed its flowers and either removed the vine completely (G) or brought a shoot from it outside (S). Noah, after severe hesitation, replanted the vine by God's order. However, he was warned that although "its bitterness shall be changed to sweetness," through excessive drinking major sins still come into the world. Here the account of the Beasts resumes with a question about the dimensions of Serpent's belly, which turns out to be Hades ("insatiable" according to S), and is measured by the distance of a thrown lead.

The angel and Baruch proceed to the east and observe the anthropomorphic figure of the crowned sun riding in its quadriga. It is accompanied by the bird, defined as the "guardian of the world" since it "goes before the sun and, stretching out its wings, receives its fire-shaped rays. For if it did not receive them, the race of men would not survive, nor any other living creature." This bird is gigantic; it is called Phoenix, born in fire, and produces cinnamon. Here Baruch watches the sunrise from the celestial point of view: the 365 gates of heaven open with a great sound as the light is being separated from the darkness, the Bird commands the sun to shine, and the command wakes the roosters on earth.

Baruch wonders about how long the sun can remain motionless and learns that it is a very short period of time "from when the roosters cry until the light comes" (thus in S; in G he asks about its route, but this is probably secondary). Here G repeats the description of the rising sun and the Sun Bird's performances, which at this point is not only heard by Baruch, but is also witnessed by him firsthand.

Baruch then proceeds with the angel to the west to watch the sunset: the crown is taken from the sun's head for the nightly renewal "up to heaven," and the Bird looks exhausted. Baruch learns that the sun's crown is defiled through its rays by human sins, and he learns that the Bird is exhausted by the sun's radiation.

The moon is located in the same heaven. It is shown to Baruch in the morning, in the likeness of a woman, also moving in its chariot of oxen. Although initially having been created "beautiful," now it waxes and wanes, since it did not hide itself during the transgression of Adam and Eve. G adds that the moon and the "suspended" stars do not dare to shine in the presence of the sun. The sun outshines the stars, and the moon, although "being intact," is exhausted by its heat.

In the next heaven, the "third" heaven (only in G), there is another plain

(G; or “mountain” in S) with a lake inhabited by diverse birds, and especially cranes (or birds similar to cranes in size in S). This is the place “where the souls of the righteous come, when they assemble, living together choir by choir” (only G). The “pure” (only S) birds unceasingly praise God (both G and S). The lake is also a source of the rain and – according to G – the “dew of heaven.” They are taken by clouds only from here (S) or also from the sea, while in the latter case only these celestial waters can cause the earth to produce fruit (G).

The angel takes Baruch to the next heaven, identified as the “fifth” heaven (although the “fourth” has not been mentioned), where Baruch faces the closed gate, upon which the names of men are inscribed (S). The gate opens only to admit the commander-in-chief Michael, the key-holder of the Kingdom, descending from behind it with a great sound to receive the prayers of men. He holds a cosmically sized bowl, into which the “virtues” (G; from here on S always has “prayers” instead of the “virtues” in G) of men enter in order to be brought in it to God.

A procession of angels brings baskets filled with flowers and casts them into Michael’s bowl. The flowers represent human virtues (or “prayers” in S). Then other angels, grieving, bring empty (or half-empty) baskets, the offerings from which “did not fill the bowl.” Other angels (either the same “other” or a third group) weep and fear; they ask Michael twice to release them from evil men, whose transgressions they enumerate.

Michael goes behind the gate, which closes after him with a thunder signifying that he brings the virtues of men to God. The gate opens again, and Michael distributes the oil. He puts it into the same baskets (in S “mercy” substitutes for “oil”). This reward is given “to our beloved and those who have diligently done good deeds.” Michael sends those who brought full and half-empty baskets to bless their charges.

Angels that have not brought any offerings are not allowed to leave their men but are ordered to “provoke against them No-Nation” (only G) and to send upon them locusts with “hail and lightning and wrath and cut them in twain with the sword and with death and their children with demons.”

S adds to this a brief notion, that the guiding angel ordered Baruch to see the resting places of the righteous and the tortures of the impious. Baruch hears the lament of the latter and receives permission to weep on their behalf.

Finally, Baruch “comes to himself” (G), or descends to earth (S) and glorifies God.³³

³³ Many of the elements of the above narrative are not found in other Jewish texts. The claim for uniqueness is declared in the prologue to the vision, where Baruch is prom-

If this is the authentic content, it is no wonder that many have considered the book to be a chaotic conglomeration of non-coherent and bizarre fragments. At best this could have been regarded as a dream record, mostly devoid of inner logic and barely integrated into the literary tradition. This would not be typical for what we know about Jewish writings of the period. In other words, it would be highly surprising for a Jewish visionary of the period to see visions out of the context of traditional concepts, and even more so, to organize them in an unfamiliar literary form. I will try to demonstrate that the text, though admittedly laconic and even elliptic, is nonetheless internally coherent, and that many of its seemingly unique, bizarre or non-Jewish motifs are in fact deeply rooted in Jewish tradition. Moreover, the very preterition or *paraleipses* (deliberate but apparent omission of information) in the text, when they are well corroborated by parallel traditions, may paradoxically be useful – they can indicate which topics were taken as self-evident by the authentic author and his audience.

2. Reconstructed Content³⁴

Some of the interpretive cruxes in 3 *Baruch* must have arisen as a result of the complicated textual history of the book. Baruch's promise to "neither

used to see "great mysteries which no man had seen" (1:6S). Among the unique motifs are the following:

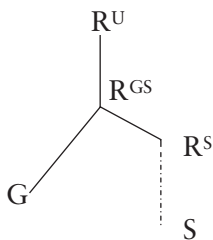
- Builders of the Tower of Babel banished to heaven (2–3)
- The twofold cosmic Serpent-Hades drinking the sea and eating the wicked (4–5G)
- Angels planting Paradise (4:7S)
- The Tree of Knowledge planted by Sammael/Satanael (4:7S; 4:8)
- Flood entering Paradise and destroying its plants (4:10)
- Cinnamon as excrement of worms excreted by the Sun Bird (Phoenix; 6:12)
- Daily separation of the light from the darkness (6:13)
- Moon's collaboration with Sammael in the seduction of the first men (9:7)
- Celestial lake of birds (10:2–7)
- The fifth heaven as the culmination of an ascent (11:1)
- Virtues (or prayers in S) as flowers (12:5)

There is also some unique terminology: "narration and revelation" (διήγησις καὶ ἀποκάλυψις) as a title of apocalypse (T:1G); "alien spirit" (ξένη πνοή; 2:1G; found once more in a late Byzantine text); "monster" (ἄπηνής) used as a noun and applied to Hades (4:4G); "Sarasael" (Σαρασαήλ / **САРАСАИЛЪ**) as an angelic name (4:15); "the guardian of the inhabited world" (ὁ φύλαξ τῆς οἰκουμένης / **ХРАНИТЕЛЬ ВЪСЕЛЕНЪИ**) as an epithet of the Sun Bird (6:3).

³⁴ This section is based on my article (Kulik, "Veritas").

subtract nor add a word” (1:7S) was not implemented by the editors (and was even itself omitted from a more reworked G).

The book has been preserved in two rescensions, Greek (G) and Slavonic (S). The lost *Vorlage* of S (R^S) differed significantly from the tradition presented by G, which is replete with Christian interpolations, on the one hand, and with omissions of important fragments, on the other. We thus presume that R^S is a better witness for the Greek proto-text underlying both rescensions (R^{GS}). Both rescensions share traces of the same reworking, enabling us to distinguish R^{GS} from an *Urtext* (whether Greek or Semitic) or the earliest reconstructable version of the composition (R^U).



Hence, in addition to the two preserved rescensions, there are three textual layers (R^S , R^{GS} , and R^U), the elements of which can be reconstructed.

2.1. Greek Version (G)

2.1.1. Christian Interpolations

Both G and S show indications of independent Christian reworking. The most blatant are those interpolations which are not shared by both versions. These passages can be categorized as follows:

(A) Passages with obvious Christian terminology (in italics):

- “... and that which is begotten from it [the vine] shall become the *blood of God*; and as the human race obtained condemnation through it, so again through *Jesus Christ the Emmanuel* [and] in him is the receipt of the future invocation, and the entry into Paradise” (4:15G).
- “For we do not see them ever entering into assembly [or “*church*;” Gk ἐκκλησία], either into *spiritual fathers* or into any good thing” (13:4G).

(B) New Testament wording without christological terms (which theoretically could have been shared with other Jewish texts):

- “Prizes” as heavenly rewards (12:1G; cf. 1 Cor 9:24; Phil 3:14; Clement of Rome, *1 Ep. Cor.* 5.6).
- “Bring a hundredfold reward to our friends and those who have diligently done good deeds. For those who have sowed well, reap well” (15:2G; cf. Matt 19:29 and 25:24, 26; Mark 10:30; Luke 15:8; 2 Cor 9:6; although a similar expression appears also in Hagg 1:6).
- “You are faithful over a little, he will set you over many things; enter into the joy of our Lord” (15:4G; cf. Matt 25:21, 23).

(C) Deuteronomic paraphrases (sometimes found also in NT) link the plagues for the sinners with the punishment promised to Israel, and thus identify the two. They are more likely to have been added than omitted in the process of Christian transmission of the text:

- “But since they [the sinners] angered me by their deeds, go and make them envious and angry and provoke against them No-Nation, a nation void of understanding” (16:2G; cf. LXX Deut 31:29; 32:21; cited in Rom 10:19).
- “[The plagues are sent to the sinners,] because they did not listen to my voice, nor observe my commandments, nor do them, but came to be despisers of my commandments and my assemblies, and offenders of the priests who announced my words to them” (16:4G; cf. LXX Deut 28:1; 1 Chr 16:22).

The latter verse mentions also “the priests, who announced my words to them,” which would refer to Christian rather than to Jewish priests, and is probably a development of the topic of “spiritual fathers” of 13:4G.

(D) There is also a passage that may reflect Christian historiography. The suggestion not to “care so much for the salvation of Jerusalem” (1:3S) is significantly different from the theodical “it came to Jerusalem to accept this” in G.

2.1.2. *Biblical Citations and Allusions*

In addition to the Deuteronomic paraphrases serving ideological editing, G has more citations and allusions to the Bible (especially to LXX), absent in S:

- “And why, Lord, did you not requite us with another punishment, but delivered us to such nations, so that they upbraid saying, ‘Where is their God?’” (1:2G; cf. Pss 79:10; 115:2; Joel 2:17; Mic 7:10).

- “calamity of wine” (πτώσεως τοῦ οἴνου; 4:17G; cf. “wine of calamity” in LXX Ps 60[59]:5[3]).
- “little by little” (πρὸς μικρὸν μικρόν; 7:3G; cf. LXX Deut 7:22).
- “all breath” (πᾶσα πνοή; 8:7G; cf. LXX Ps 150:6).
- “in order that the Enemy may not prevail for ever” (ὕνα μὴ εἰς τέλος κυριεύσῃ ὁ Ἐχθρός; 13:2G; cf. LXX Ps 73:10).

2.1.3. Explanatory Expansions

Often G functions as if it were an explanatory *targum* for the laconic text of R^{GS} (as it is witnessed by S):

- “And he showed me Hades, and its appearance was dark and impure. And I said, ‘Who is this dragon, and who is this monster around him?’ And the angel said, ‘The dragon is he who eats the bodies of those who pass through life wickedly, and he is nourished by them’” (4:3b–5G). The passage, absent in S, introduces the ideas of the “pairedness” and the “unity in two” of Serpent and Hades; Hades’ function as the eater of the wicked; and Hades’ darkness and impurity. Although these motifs are ancient and some of them may be deduced from 5:3, they are only made explicit by G.
- “That is why he did not permit Adam to touch it, and that is why the devil being envious deceived him through his vine” (4:8G). S confines itself to mention of the serpent, which is omitted in G and replaced by the expanded explanation. G provides biblical background, never given explicitly in S, and adds widely known motifs of the identification of the serpent of Eden with the devil, and their envy toward man.
- “It [Flood] removed the shoot of the vine completely” (4:10G). In S only one shoot is removed. G probably explains why Baruch does not see the requested Tree.
- “Know therefore, Baruch, that as Adam through this tree obtained condemnation, and was divested of the Glory of God, so also now the men drinking insatiably the wine which is begotten of it, make a transgression worse than Adam, and become far from the Glory of God, and commit themselves to the eternal fire. For [no] good comes through it” (4:16G). G verbalizes the connection between the first humans’ transgression and contemporary wine abuse, structurally implicit in S. The motif of the garment of Glory was widely known, including Christian traditions.
- “And I said, ‘And how is it that it [the moon] does not also shine always, but only at night?’ And the angel said, ‘Listen, as before a king his household cannot speak freely, so the moon and the stars cannot shine before

the sun. For the stars are suspended, but they are outshined by the sun, and the moon, [although] being intact, is exhausted by the heat of the sun” (9:8G). G complements the basic lesson on the moon, explaining not only its phases but also the absence of the moon and stars in daytime.

- “Listen, Baruch! The plain that has in it the lake and other wonders [is the place] where the souls of the righteous come, when they assemble, living together choir by choir” (10:5). Similarly to 4:3b–5G, the motif of soul-birds, very important and central in this apocalypse, is only implied in the unexplained image of the birds in S.
- “Dew,” treated twice in G (6:11G and 10:9G), is totally absent in S. In the first case it complements the information on the drinking habits of the Sun Bird, on which S reports only “what it eats” (as on the other Beasts above we learn as on eating, so also on drinking). In the second, it serves as a reminder that the dew, and not only the rain, is of celestial origin.
- “For unless its wings, *as we said before*, were screening the rays of the sun, no living creature would survive” (8:7) – inner explanatory reference to 6:6 absent in S.
- The men’s virtues are brought “before the heavenly God” (11:9G; in 14:2G again God is mentioned only in G; cf. 15:2S). This is implicit in 13:5.
- “And the angel told me, “These flowers are the virtues of the righteous” (12:5G). This identification in S may easily be deduced from 11:9 and 12:4.

2.1.4. *Other Textual Phenomena*

G also shows textual developments which are free from ideological or hermeneutic considerations, like parablepsis in 4:2G or duplication in 7:3–5aG. The latter verse appears to provide a variant of the account of the sun and Phoenix already given in 6:2–5a. The same data, which in ch. 6 is presented in a dramatic form, is presented in ch. 7 as a description of a vision.

2.2. *Slavonic Version (S) and Its Greek Vorlage (R^S)*

In most cases, it is impossible to distinguish between the development of the rescension before the translation (R^S) or after it (S).

Like G, R^S or its translation might have been subject independently to interpolation of Christian content. There are passages which employ termi-

nology that is likely to be Christian, although *interpertatio judaica* is still possible in some of these cases:

- “For their wives flee to the Temple [or “church” or “assembly;” CS **ЦРЬКВЬ**], and from there they bring them out to jealousy and to fornication and to envy, and they strive to many other things, which you, O Glorious One, know” (13:4S).
- “Be not idle, but prostrate yourself in prayer in the holy Temple [**СВАТЫНА ЦРЬКВИ**]” (15:3S).
- “They do not fear God and they do not come to the Temple [**ЦРЬКВЬ**] and to the place of prayers” (16:4S).

In distinction from G there is only one explanatory expansion – the “Slavonic Conclusion” (16:5–10S). This is best viewed as a later addition, as it stands in contrast with the rest of the narrative visuospatially and stylistically, and has an obvious harmonizing and conceptualizing agenda.

2.3. Common Proto-text of G and S (*R^{GS}*)

2.3.1. *R^{GS}* as Witnessed by G

Some readings witnessed by G were corrupted in S during its transmission:

- “God-made tower” (**СТАЛПЪ ВГОТВОРЪНЫ**) instead of “Tower of War against God” (**СТАЛПЪ ВГОВОРЪНЫ**) (2:7S).
- “And now show me all things for the Lord’s sake” (4:1G), omitted due to homoioteleuton in S.
- “187” (**ѣ: и ѣ: и ѣ::** 4:2S) instead of a hypothetical Glagolitic “185.”
- “On an armed chariot” (**НА ОРЖНИѢ КОЛЕСЬНИЦИ;** 9:3S) instead of “on a wheeled chariot” (**НА ОРЖНИИ КОЛЕСЬНОМЪ;** as ἐπὶ ἄρματος τροχοῦ in G).

Some readings were mistranslated in S:

- “With blindness” (3:8) mistranslated as “invisibly” by S.
- “Angels [who are] over the principalities [ἐπὶ τῶν ἐξουσιῶν]” (12:3G) mistranslated in S as “the angels who are in the power [**ВЪ ОБЛАСТИ**] of men.”

Explanatory readings:

- “Oil” (15:1G) substituted by homeophonic “mercy” in S.

Harmonized readings:

- “Virtues” (11:9G; 14:2G) and “good deed” (15:2G) interchanging with “prayers” (11:4G), are consistently unified to “prayers” in S.

Some passages in G, absent in S, but well integrated into early Jewish literature, might be original:

- “And where there was a river which no one can cross, nor any alien spirit of all those that God created” (2:1G); this may either be original or interpolated due to influence of late Christian apocalypses.
- “As if [borne] on wings” (2:2G).
- “Baskets” (12:1G) substituted by neutral “offerings” in S.

2.3.2. *R^{GS} as Witnessed by S*

Readings corrupted in G:

- “Fiery horses” (ΚΟΝΗ ΠΛΑΜΨΗΝΗ; * ἵππων πυρός; 6:2S) instead of “with a fire underneath” (ὁ ἦν ὑπόπυρον; both manuscripts have ο ην ὑποπυρος) of G.
- “How much [or “how” ποῦ] does the sun rest [ἀποσχολάζει]?” {And the angel told me,} ‘From when the roosters cry out until the light comes’” (7:1S; as a dialogue without an intermediate remark) misinterpreted as one repique “And where [ποῦ] does the sun begin its labors [ἀποσχολάειται] after the rooster cries?” in G.

Harmonized readings:

- S has “chamber” (3:3S) and “mountain” (10:2, 4S) instead of the unified “plain” in all the cases in G.

Some passages in S, absent in G, but well integrated into early Jewish literature, might be original. Among them entire fragments:

- the account on planting the Garden (4:7S) omitted in G due to homoeoarchon
- 6:14b omitted by G due to homoeoteleuton

There are also shorter passages which could be original:

- “You will neither add nor omit [anything] ... I will neither subtract nor add a word” (1:6–7S).
- “He showed me means of safety [σωτηρία]” (2:2S) retroverted from “he showed me salvation [ΣΩΠΑΣΕΝΙΕ].”
- “As [the distance] from east to west” (2:5S).
- “Pure birds” (10:5S).
- “And he showed me large gates, and names of men were written [on them]” (11:2S).

Some readings of *R^{GS}* difficult or incomprehensible to later Christian scribes, were replaced by more neutral readings in G:

- “Be silent” (1:3S), an order with ambiguous message replaced with “understand” in G.
- “Great mysteries” (1:6S), the term, well attested in apocalyptic parallels, was replaced by “mysteries” in G.
- “... stirring [the clay for bricks]” (3:5S), paralleled in an aggadic account, replaced with “making bricks” in G.

Some mss of S present angels' names in Semitic (rather than Slavic or even Greek) rather than Slavic or even Greek) forms. Thus S has "Paniel" (ΠΑΝΟΥΓΙΑΛ in T:1S; cf. Phanuel ΦΑΝΟΥΓΙΑΛ in 2:5), going back to Gk *Πανουηλ; Heb לְפָנִיָּאֵל, instead of Phamael (Φαμαηλ; 2:5) in G. In 4:7S mss S and Z have Sarazael (ΣΑΡΑΖΑΙΑΛ; Gk *Σαρ Ραζαιλ; Heb שַׂרְרִזְאֵל) and Rasael (ΡΑΣΑΙΑΛ; Gk * Ρασαιλ); cf. on Sarasael in both versions in 4:15 below).

There are three features of Serpent-Hades found in S but absent from G that are paralleled in the Bible – Serpent “eats earth like grass” (4:3S); God “kindled its heart” (4:7S); “Hades is insatiable” (5:3S). They could either be original or have been interpolated at any stage. Similarly, it is difficult to assess priority in 10:9 where S, holding to the ancient tradition, states that all rains originate from the celestial storage place, whereas G exhibits compromises with Hellenistic science.

The lists above show that although both rescensions were independently reworked, G has introduced more changes. These modifications reflect (1) ideological editing (Christianization); (2) intertextual sophistication which integrated authoritative textual traditions into the laconic report (by means of citations and allusions from the Bible and NT); and especially (3) explanatory (targumic) expansions. By contrast, S exhibits fewer signs of deliberate editorial activity. Although S contains certain distortions, mainly textual corruptions and mistranslations, it shows that R^S has been less reworked than G and is thus a better witness for R^{GS}.

2.4. *Urtext* (R^U)

Certain characteristics shared by both G and S, and thus belonging to R^{GS}, could nevertheless reflect editorial elaborations different from R^U. Among the most significant are:

- Duplication of the account of the Builders: sections 2:2–3, 7a and 3:1–5a as two variants of the same account (cf. duplication in 7:3–5G).
- The numbering of the heavens (2:2; 3:1; 7:2; 10:1; 11:1), inconsistent in both versions, must have been absent in R^U.

These two reworkings belong to the same editorial process. Fortunately, it was not consistent. The duplication hypothesis, which reduced one heaven from the total calculation, concords with the rudiments of the original numbering of heavens preserved in 7:2S and 10:1G. At the same time, the suggestion of the editorial origin of the numbering of the heavens helps to harmonize other indications of the intercelestial transfers – two or three

celestial journeys (2:2; [3:1;] 4:2) and two or three gates (three before the last in S and totally three in G; 2:2; [3:1;] 4:2; 11:2) – with the three heavens scheme (instead of five heavens of the extant text). Both the original scheme and its reworking to the models with additional multiple heavens, are well attested (for the detailed discussion see introductory comm. to ch. 11: *Ouranology*).

- The original model of two groups of angels representing two classes of men was supplemented with the intermediate group by a very delicate emendation. R^{GU} reads Gk ἀποκένους (15:3G) as “half empty” instead of “empty.” This interpretation is reflected in both the corresponding verse of S (only in family α) and in the next verse of G (15:4G, obviously Christian). In light of this reading, the word “other” in 13:1 may be interpreted as referring to the third group, and not to the second which is also defined as “other” in 12:6 (see introductory comm. to 12:6–13:5). Such reworking of a twofold model of human classes into a threefold scheme may be suggested also in the versions of *Apocalypse of Adam* (see introductory comm. to 12:6–13:5).
- An interesting evidence on R^U is preserved in the unique name of the angel who communicates with Noah – “Sarasael” (Σαρασαήλ / Сарасанил; 4:15). It must go back to *scripto continua* σαρρασαήλ – *שר רזאל” “Prince Rasael/Rasiel,” well known as Noah’s interlocutor in Hekhalot literature.

The accounts of the celestial dimensions (2:4–6) and the vine (4:8–17G; 4:6–17S) – these intrude into the coherent narratives of the Builders (chs. 2–3) and of the Beasts (chs. 4–5) respectively – are to be regarded more as excursus than as interpolations. The excursus on the celestial dimensions could be misplaced (rather than interpolated) during the course of the compilation of two variants of the Builders story. The vine account, however, although intervening into the description of the Beasts, is thematically connected to it and to other sections of the apocalypse.

There also are no strong arguments in favor of the suggestion that R^U could have had a longer text that included an ascent to higher heavens (see introductory comm. to ch. 11: *Ouranology: Seven heavens and abridged version*).

3. Implied Content

Even in comparison to other compositions of the same genre, *3 Baruch* strikes the modern reader as an extremely elliptic and fragmented narrative, and thus an enigmatic one. We may infer that the author(s) expected the tar-

get audience to be well-versed in the ancient lore that was requisite for filling the gaps between seemingly disconnected images. Relying on the knowledge base of the intended readers, the authors were free to concentrate on the visual and symbolic “highlights” of the revelation, leaving many implied connections unmentioned. In many cases, *3 Baruch* confines itself to apocalyptic *ekphrasis*, a description of the objects seen by the visionary which neither explains the meaning of each image nor makes clear the connections between them. This way of communication is characteristic of intentionally vague symbolic accounts that broaden the interpretation field and require on the part of the recipient a more active participation in building the narrative. This approach was only partly compensated for by a late version preserved in G, which gives explanations and expansions of the more laconic proto-text better reflected in S. The characteristics and possible reasons for applying such a form of expression are treated in *Method* below.

I have attempted to reconstruct these implied data on the basis of intertextual analysis. The overwhelming majority of reconstructions of the implied content below are introduced here for the first time. The sources and argumentation for the reconstructions may be found in the commentaries to relevant chapters. The summary of the account of *3 Baruch* as it was given in the section *Extant Account* above appears below in italics, while the reconstructed data complementing it are given in ordinary font:

Weeping at the gates of the destroyed Temple, Baruch seeks a theodicy of the Fall. In response, an angel sent to him by God promises to show him the “great mysteries.” The angel takes him to “where heaven was set,” and to the river, i.e., to the “ends of earth,” where the River Oceanus surrounding the flat earth meets the “ends” of the hemispheric heaven. It cannot be crossed by any “alien breath,” since the boarder between the two worlds cannot be crossed by terrestrial demonic “alien spirits.”

Having arrived to the entrance to the “first heaven” (the numbers of heaven hereafter must be interpolated), they enter the very large door, which is a celestial opening located on the line where earth and heaven meet, and after a month-length journey through the “door,” which is a tunnel-gate through the “thickness of heaven” measured below, they find a plain inhabited by strangely shaped creatures described as satyrs and cynocephali. These must be the demonic forces of the lower heaven. Identified below as the chief builders of the Tower of Babel, they could be the fallen angels’ gargantuan progeny, most of whom perished in the Flood (as below), but some of whom survived either physically or as demonic spirits.

Baruch's first question is about "the thickness of heaven in which we journeyed," i.e., through which they passed inside the tunnel-gate. He learns that it is equal to the height of the sky and the width of heaven (thus G; S equates it to the width of earth, while the width of heaven is as the height of the sky).

The angel takes Baruch to the "second heaven," where they find almost the same creatures, only dog-faced, who are also identified as the builders of the Tower of Babel. It is a duplication of the previous account (thus the number of the heaven has to be ignored). Then Baruch learns how they afflicted a woman in the throes of childbirth (demons are especially dangerous for women giving birth and to newborns), how they wanted to bore through the heaven, in order to study its composition (a reference to a motif of Tower accounts pertaining to fighting or transfixing heaven with "sharp things") and possibly to reach celestial water supply treated below; moreover, he learns how they were punished with blindness (as blind archons and Sammael as "the god of the blind"), and confusion of languages.

After further long journey through another long gate to the second heaven, Baruch sees another plain with the Serpent and Hades "around him" (in G; below the latter is also identified as a belly of the former). This is a chthonic dyad or a twofold monster intertwined as Leviathan and Behemoth or as snakes of caduceus. It shares many features with diverse cosmic, celestial, and sea serpents, on the one hand, and with the celestial or cosmic, sometimes also serpentine, Hell, on the other. The two Beasts must be part of a triad together with the Sun Bird appearing below, in correspondence with the Rabbinic triad of Leviathan, Behemoth, and Ziz. Baruch learns about the eating and drinking habits of the monster: "the dragon is he who eats the bodies of those who pass through life wickedly" (G, since the dead can enter Hell in body and be physically annihilated there; in S it eats earth instead, as the cursed serpent of Eden) and drinks every day a regular portion of water from the sea, which still does not sink, being filled with rivers, a list of which is given. The function is vital for preventing a new flood, since the terrestrial hydrosystem is not cyclic, being completed with celestial waters (as we learn below). This is also among the central functions of the Rabbinic Leviathan and Behemoth. By eating, the Beasts help to get rid of the sinners; by drinking, they help get rid of superfluous water.

The vision of Serpent-Hades is interrupted with Baruch's sudden request to see the Tree of Knowledge. The request about the Tree of Knowledge, the origin of sin, follows the description of the final destination of the sinners. There are more links between the Beasts and the subsequent account: serpents are known to guard cosmic trees; serpents are connected specifically to the vine and wine; the serpent of Eden and the celestial serpent may be

identified; although the eschatological banquet is not mentioned the Beasts and the “fruit of vine” are both its basic elements. *In the response to this request, he hears a story (instead of seeing a vision), which contains the following episodes:* (1) *On the Garden, where the five different fruit trees were planted by five named angels* (according to the number of the trees of Paradise known to Gnostics and Philo’s “Paradise of virtues;” cf. also four basic virtues and the number of trees without Satanael’s vine); *among them the olive tree was planted by Michael, while the vine was planted by Satanael (only in S).* This must be “Paradise of virtues,” the flowers of which, i.e., the virtues, appear below in the scenes of the angelic offering and retribution, along with the oil from the celestial olive. (2) *On the Tree of Knowledge that turns out to be the vine planted by Sammael (in G; Satanael in S), and thus is forbidden to Adam, who was divested of the Divine glory for his transgression.* (3) *On the Flood, which destroyed many giants, while the surviving giants initiated the construction of the Tower of Babel (above). It also entered Paradise, destroyed its flowers (“virtues”?) and either removed the vine completely (G; which explains thus, why Baruch is not shown the Tree) or brought a shoot from it outside (S). Noah, after severe hesitation, replanted the vine by the God’s order. However, he was warned that although “its bitterness shall be changed to sweetness,” through excessive drinking, major sins still come into the world,* reflecting the dual valence of wine throughout ancient Jewish literature, associated with both sacral use and profane abuse. *Here the account of the Beasts resumes with a question on the dimensions of Serpent’s belly, which turns out to be Hades (“insatiable” according to S), and is measured by the distance of a thrown lead.*

The angel and Baruch proceed to the east and observe the anthropomorphic figure of the crowned sun riding in its quadriga, a well known Greco-Roman image, probably also found in earlier Near Eastern contexts, and well attested in Jewish iconography. It is accompanied by the bird, defined as the “guardian of the world,” since it “goes before the sun, and stretching out its wings receives its fire-shaped rays. For if it did not receive them, the race of men would not survive, nor any other living creature.” The bird functions exactly as Ziz of the Rabbinic tradition (and protective cosmic birds of Near Eastern iconography or other means that moderate the sun’s heat known to Jewish lore), which is the third element of the triad of gigantic archetypal beasts together with Leviathan and Behemoth (corresponding to Serpent and Hades above). *This bird is gigantic, similarly to Ziz and differently from the Greek phoenix; it is called Phoenix and is born in fire and produces cinnamon* as the Greek phoenix – these are the only features of the Greek phoenix, probably not original in the text.

Here Baruch watches the sunrise from the celestial point of view: the 365 gates located on the circle of the horizon on the rotating sphere of heaven open with a great sound. The primordial light is being separated from the darkness, on a daily basis, probably presuming creatio aeterna. The Bird commands the sun to shine. The command, although inaudible to humans, wakes the roosters on earth, before the sunrise.

Baruch wonders about how long the sun can remain motionless and learns that it is a very short period of time “from when the roosters cry until the light comes” (thus in S; in G he asks about its route, but this is probably secondary), in contrast to the belief in a more prolonged rest of the sun, which at any case moves also at night either beneath the earth, or above the lower firmament. Here G repeats the description of the rising sun and the Sun Bird’s performances, which at this point is not only heard by Baruch, but is also witnessed by him firsthand (most probably a duplication).

Baruch then proceeds with the angel to the west to watch the sunset: the crown is taken from the sun’s head for the nightly renewal “up to heaven,” probably to be purified in the “lake,” a baptismal basin of celestial waters in the next heaven (see below); and the Bird looks exhausted. Baruch learns that the sun’s crown is defiled through its rays by human sins, and he learns that the Bird is exhausted by the sun’s radiation.

The moon is located in the same heaven, in contrast to Hellenistic views. It is shown in the morning, probably during its daytime motion, hidden from sight above the visible sky, in the likeness of a woman, as Selene and Luna distinct from the male Helios, Sol, and Phoebus, also moving in its chariot of oxen, in biga (of 20 in S) of oxen and not in quadriga of horses as the sun, according to Hellenistic imagery. Although initially having been created “beautiful” as the sun, now it waxes and wanes, since it did not hide itself during the first transgression of Adam and Eve, as luminaries are supposed to do when they witness a cosmic tragedy. G adds that the moon and the “suspended” stars fixed to the rotating sphere as distinct from the wandering planets, do not dare to shine in presence of the sun. The sun outshines the stars, and the moon, although “being intact,” is exhausted by its heat, as Israel whose symbol it is, is injured but survives in the destruction of the Temple.

In the next heaven, the “third” heaven (only in G; here the number may reflect the original order of ascent; according to S, Baruch is still in the same heaven) in the pure sphere beyond the moon separated from the sublunary impure heavens by the intermediate region of the luminaries, there is another plain (G; or “mountain” S) with a lake inhabited by diverse birds, and especially cranes (or birds similar to cranes in size in S). This is the place “where the souls of the righteous come, when they assemble, living together

choir by choir” (only G). *The “pure” (only S) birds unceasingly praise God (both G and S).* These ornithomorphic souls of the pious are similar to Egyptian *ba* and analogous images in Jewish belief; they remain on the lake on their way to their permanent resting places. Here they are baptized in the lake, which like the lake of Acherousia, is a purification and probably transformation basin, and await an anointing of eternal life that will be given to their angels in the next heaven (see below).

The angel then takes Baruch to the entrance to the “fifth” heaven (although the “fourth” has not been mentioned – probably interpolated as a result of the duplication of the account of the Builders). Baruch faces the closed gate, upon which the names of men are inscribed (S), who, in contrast to Baruch, are allowed to enter it (either alive or dead). This must be the inaccessible supercelestial heaven above the three or two heavens visited by Baruch. The gate opens only to admit the commander-in-chief Michael, the key-holder of the Kingdom, and the angelic high priest, descending from behind it with a great sound to receive the prayers of men. This must be the well known “gate of prayer,” behind which is the sacral realm accessible only to the high priest Michael. He holds a cosmically sized bowl, in which the “virtues” (G; from hereon S always has “prayers” instead of “virtues” in G) of men enter in order to be brought in it to God. They could literally “enter,” since “Virtues” (depicted as flowers below) was known also as an angelic title.

A procession of angels brings baskets filled with flowers, as Greek kanephoroi or as Jewish processions with first-fruits carried in baskets decorated with plants or as the wreaths of human prayers woven by angels and put on God’s head, and cast them into Michael’s bowl (a procedure with many liturgic connotations). The flowers represent human virtues, probably connected to the “Paradise of virtues” planted also by angels above (or “prayers” in S).

Then other angels, grieving, bring empty (or half-empty) baskets, the offerings from which “did not fill the bowl.” Other angels (either the same “other” or a third group) weep and fear, since the angels may be punished for the sins of their charges; they ask Michael twice to dismiss them from evil men, whose transgressions they enumerate.

Michael, as a high priest on the Day of Atonement, all alone and leaving other angels outside, goes behind the gate, which closes after him with a thunder, signifying that he brings the virtues of men to God. The gate opens again, and Michael distributes the oil of life from the celestial olive, the Tree of Life, that he himself planted (above). The oil must serve for an anointing of the eternal life and a protective chrismatic “seal.” The wicked who are deprived of it are attacked by the demonic locusts (below) and destitute

of eternal life; they are annihilated, “eaten,” by Hades (above). *He puts the ointment into the same baskets*, which means that they are not wreathed but rather cultic basket-shaped vessels called “baskets,” well attested in Jewish and pagan liturgic practices. *In S* the word “mercy” substitutes for “oil,” (these are homeophonic in Greek), as in the “Fast of Mercy,” an expression used to denote the Day of Atonement. *This reward is given “to our beloved and those who have diligently done good deeds,”* which may refer to two different groups, Israelites and righteous gentiles.

Michael sends those who brought full and half-empty baskets to bless their charges. This is an interpolation intended to replace a twofold division of mankind to the righteous and the wicked by a threefold one, including a middle group.

Angels that have not brought any offerings are not allowed to leave their men but are ordered to “provoke them against No-Nation” (only G; probably an interpolation intended to identify the sinners with Jews) and to send upon them demonic locusts with “hail and lightning and wrath and cut them in twain with the sword and with death and their children with demons,” while the righteous are defended from the plague by the “seal” of anointing.

S adds to this a brief notion, probably interpolated, that the guiding angel ordered Baruch to see the resting places of the righteous and the tortures of the impious. Baruch hears the lament of the latter and receives permission to weep on their behalf, in contrast to the order to cease his bewailing of Jerusalem before the vision (above).

Finally Baruch “comes to himself” (G), which means that this was a spiritual experience and not a bodily ascent, *or descends to earth (S) and glorifies God.*

VIII. Message*

1. Consolation

3 *Baruch* presents a celestial tour given in response to the destruction of the Temple. This raises the question of the connection between the two. On the one hand, the revelatory angel seems to dissociate the two topics in his initial words (1:3), either distracting Baruch from the theodicy of the destruction (thus probably Christianized G), or briefly explaining it as a just punishment (as in S). In any case, the issue is not raised again, nor is there any promise of restoration.³⁵

However, some kind of consolation must be implied. It may be simply a recognition of the magnificence of creation (as in Job). Possibly, Baruch should not “care so much” for Jerusalem (as in G), since despite the cessation of the terrestrial worship, the heavenly liturgy continues to be performed (as shown in 12–14) and the gate of prayer still opens in due time (11:4–5). Certain consolation may also be found in the fact that “it came to Jerusalem to accept this” (as in 1:3S) – the punishment only demonstrates the proper functioning of the celestial judgment, a mechanism of retribution with punitive elements (shown in ch. 16).³⁶

2. Retribution and Afterlife

At first glance, 3 *Baruch* seems to be preoccupied with cosmology. Charles Torrey even maintained that “the religious element, usually so prominent in this literature, is almost wholly wanting” from this apoca-

³⁵ For the attempts to read the vision as “an indirect, yet sustained and coherent response to the problem of Jerusalem’s fate” (Harlow, *Baruch*, 109), see Picard “Observations,” 92–98; idem, “Autre mystères,” 23–35; Harlow, *Baruch*, 29–31; 109–163; cf. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 302–303; Collins, “Genre Apocalypse,” 538–40.

³⁶ The topic of wine, so central in 3 *Baruch*, is connected to consolation in the following saying of R. Hanina: “Wine was created for the sole purpose of comforting mourners and rewarding the wicked, for it is said, ‘Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto the bitter in soul’ [Prov 31: 6]” (*b. Erub.* 65a).

* The following two sections are based on my article (Kulik, “Apocalyptic”).