

BARUCH AND THE LETTER OF JEREMIAH

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Athalya Brenner-Idan
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WISDOM COMMENTARY

Volume 31

Baruch and The Letter of Jeremiah

Marie-Theres Wacker

Carol J. Dempsey, OP

Volume Editor

Barbara E. Reid, OP

General Editor



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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
DCLS	Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies
<i>EBib</i>	<i>Études bibliques</i>
EJL	Early Judaism and Its Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monograph
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Periods</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
LXX	Septuagint

MT	Masoretic Text
NAB	New American Bible
NEchtB	Neue Echter Bibel
NETS	A New English Translation of the Septuagint
NIB	New Interpreter's Bible
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OTE	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
PAAJR	<i>Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research</i>
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
TH	Theodotion
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZABR	<i>Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte</i>
ZDMG	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>

Contributors

Klaus Mertes, SJ, is a Jesuit priest and, since 2011, director of the Jesuit-run secondary school/Gymnasium Kolleg St. Blasien in St. Blasien, Southern Germany. Previously, he was director of another Gymnasium, Canisius-Kolleg, in Berlin. During that time, in 2010, he initiated the debate in Germany on sexual violence against boys by Catholic priests and became one of the spokespersons calling for a thorough investigation that would break the silence.

Prof. emerita Dr. Kyung-Sook Lee is a Methodist and an Old Testament scholar from Ewha University in Seoul, South Korea. Her doctorate in theology is from Goettingen, Germany. She served as dean of the Graduate School of Theology at Ewha and as vice president of Ewha Woman's University. She is an important voice for the development of Christian feminist biblical perspectives in her context.

Prof. Dr. Tal Ilan has held the position of professor of Jewish studies at Freie Universität Berlin, Germany, since 2003. Israeli-born, she grew up in a kibbutz in southern Israel and received her PhD at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. She has written widely on women in the Second Temple period and is preparing a multivolume feminist commentary on the Talmud.

Dr. Antony John Baptist is a Catholic priest from Tamil Nadu, South India. He serves as secretary of the commission for Bible at Tamil Nadu

Bishops' Conference. In his research at the Asian Center for Cross-Cultural Studies in Madras, he reads the Bible from the context of Dalits and Dalit women.

Foreword

“Tell It on the Mountain”—or, “And You Shall Tell Your Daughter [as Well]”

Athalya Brenner-Idan

Universiteit van Amsterdam/Tel Aviv University

What can Wisdom Commentary do to help, and for whom?

The commentary genre has always been privileged in biblical studies. Traditionally acclaimed commentary series, such as the International Critical Commentary, Old Testament and New Testament Library, Hermeneia, Anchor Bible, Eerdmans, and Word—to name but several—enjoy nearly automatic prestige; and the number of women authors who participate in those is relatively small by comparison to their growing number in the scholarly guild. There certainly are some volumes written by women in them, especially in recent decades. At this time, however, this does not reflect the situation on the ground. Further, size matters. In that sense, the sheer size of the Wisdom Commentary is essential. This also represents a considerable investment and the possibility of reaching a wider audience than those already “converted.”

Expecting women scholars to deal especially or only with what is considered strictly “female” matters seems unwarranted. According to Audre Lorde, “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.”¹ But this maxim is not relevant to our case. The point of this commentary is not to destroy but to attain greater participation in the interpretive dialogue about biblical texts. Women scholars may bring additional questions to the readerly agenda as well as fresh angles to existing issues. To assume that their questions are designed only to topple a certain male hegemony is not convincing.

At first I did ask myself: is this commentary series an addition to calm raw nerves, an embellishment to make upholding the old hierarchy palatable? Or is it indeed about becoming the Master? On second and third thoughts, however, I understood that becoming the Master is not what this is about. Knowledge is power. Since Foucault at the very least, this cannot be in dispute. Writing commentaries for biblical texts by women for women and for men, of confessional as well as non-confessional convictions, will sabotage (hopefully) the established hierarchy but will not topple it. This is about an attempt to integrate more fully, to introduce another viewpoint, to become. What excites me about the Wisdom Commentary is that it is not offered as just an alternative supplanting or substituting for the dominant discourse.

These commentaries on biblical books will retain nonauthoritative, pluralistic viewpoints. And yes, once again, the weight of a dedicated series, to distinguish from collections of standalone volumes, will prove weightier.

That such an approach is especially important in the case of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament is beyond doubt. Women of Judaism, Christianity, and also Islam have struggled to make it their own for centuries, even more than they have fought for the New Testament and the Qur’an. Every Hebrew Bible/Old Testament volume in this project is evidence that the day has arrived: it is now possible to read *all* the Jewish canonical books as a collection, for a collection they are, with guidance conceived of with the needs of women readers (not only men) as an integral inspiration and part thereof.

In my Jewish tradition, the main motivation for reciting the Haggadah, the ritual text recited yearly on Passover, the festival of liberation from

1. Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 1984, 2007), 110–14. First delivered in the Second Sex Conference in New York, 1979.

bondage, is given as “And you shall tell your son” (from Exod 13:8). The knowledge and experience of past generations is thus transferred to the next, for constructing the present and the future. The ancient maxim is, literally, limited to a male audience. This series remolds the maxim into a new inclusive shape, which is of the utmost consequence: “And you shall tell your son” is extended to “And you shall tell your daughter [as well as your son].” Or, if you want, “Tell it on the mountain,” for all to hear.

This is what it’s all about.

Editor's Introduction to Wisdom Commentary

“She Is a Breath of the Power of God” (Wis 7:25)

Barbara E. Reid, OP

General Editor

Wisdom Commentary is the first series to offer detailed feminist interpretation of every book of the Bible. The fruit of collaborative work by an ecumenical and interreligious team of scholars, the volumes provide serious, scholarly engagement with the whole biblical text, not only those texts that explicitly mention women. The series is intended for clergy, teachers, ministers, and all serious students of the Bible. Designed to be both accessible and informed by the various approaches of biblical scholarship, it pays particular attention to the world in front of the text, that is, how the text is heard and appropriated. At the same time, this series aims to be faithful to the ancient text and its earliest audiences; thus the volumes also explicate the worlds behind the text and within it. While issues of gender are primary in this project, the volumes also address the intersecting issues of power, authority, ethnicity, race, class, and religious belief and practice. The fifty-eight volumes include the books regarded as canonical by Jews (i.e., the Tanakh); Protestants (the “Hebrew Bible” and the New Testament); and Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Eastern Orthodox Communion

(i.e., Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach/Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, including the Letter of Jeremiah, the additions to Esther, and Susanna and Bel and the Dragon in Daniel).

A Symphony of Diverse Voices

Included in the Wisdom Commentary series are voices from scholars of many different religious traditions, of diverse ages, differing sexual identities, and varying cultural, racial, ethnic, and social contexts. Some have been pioneers in feminist biblical interpretation; others are newer contributors from a younger generation. A further distinctive feature of this series is that each volume incorporates voices other than that of the lead author(s). These voices appear alongside the commentary of the lead author(s), in the grayscale inserts. At times, a contributor may offer an alternative interpretation or a critique of the position taken by the lead author(s). At other times, she or he may offer a complementary interpretation from a different cultural context or subject position. Occasionally, portions of previously published material bring in other views. The diverse voices are not intended to be contestants in a debate or a cacophony of discordant notes. The multiple voices reflect that there is no single definitive feminist interpretation of a text. In addition, they show the importance of subject position in the process of interpretation. In this regard, the Wisdom Commentary series takes inspiration from the Talmud and from *The Torah: A Women's Commentary* (ed. Tamara Cohn Eskenazi and Andrea L. Weiss; New York: Women of Reform Judaism, Federation of Temple Sisterhood, 2008), in which many voices, even conflicting ones, are included and not harmonized.

Contributors include biblical scholars, theologians, and readers of Scripture from outside the scholarly and religious guilds. At times, their comments pertain to a particular text. In some instances they address a theme or topic that arises from the text.

Another feature that highlights the collaborative nature of feminist biblical interpretation is that a number of the volumes have two lead authors who have worked in tandem from the inception of the project and whose voices interweave throughout the commentary.

Woman Wisdom

The title, *Wisdom Commentary*, reflects both the importance to feminists of the figure of Woman Wisdom in the Scriptures and the distinct

wisdom that feminist women and men bring to the interpretive process. In the Scriptures, Woman Wisdom appears as “a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty” (Wis 7:25), who was present and active in fashioning all that exists (Prov 8:22-31; Wis 8:6). She is a spirit who pervades and penetrates all things (Wis 7:22-23), and she provides guidance and nourishment at her all-inclusive table (Prov 9:1-5). In both postexilic biblical and nonbiblical Jewish sources, Woman Wisdom is often equated with Torah, e.g., Sir 24:23-34; Bar 3:9-4:4; 38:2; 46:4-5; 2 Bar 48:33, 36; 4 Ezra 5:9-10; 13:55; 14:40; 1 Enoch 42.

The New Testament frequently portrays Jesus as Wisdom incarnate. He invites his followers, “take my yoke upon you and learn from me” (Matt 11:29), just as Ben Sira advises, “put your neck under her [Wisdom’s] yoke and let your souls receive instruction” (Sir 51:26). Just as Wisdom experiences rejection (Prov 1:23-25; Sir 15:7-8; Wis 10:3; Bar 3:12), so too does Jesus (Mark 8:31; John 1:10-11). Only some accept his invitation to his all-inclusive banquet (Matt 22:1-14; Luke 14:15-24; compare Prov 1:20-21; 9:3-5). Yet, “wisdom is vindicated by her deeds” (Matt 11:19, speaking of Jesus and John the Baptist; in the Lucan parallel at 7:35 they are called “wisdom’s children”). There are numerous parallels between what is said of Wisdom and of the *Logos* in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel (John 1:1-18). These are only a few of many examples. This female embodiment of divine presence and power is an apt image to guide the work of this series.

Feminism

There are many different understandings of the term “feminism.” The various meanings, aims, and methods have developed exponentially in recent decades. Feminism is a perspective and a movement that springs from a recognition of inequities toward women, and it advocates for changes in whatever structures prevent full human flourishing. Three waves of feminism in the United States are commonly recognized. The first, arising in the mid-nineteenth century and lasting into the early twentieth, was sparked by women’s efforts to be involved in the public sphere and to win the right to vote. In the 1960s and 1970s, the second wave focused on civil rights and equality for women. With the third wave, from the 1980s forward, came global feminism and the emphasis on the contextual nature of interpretation. Now a fourth wave may be emerging, with a stronger emphasis on the intersectionality of women’s concerns with those of other marginalized groups and the increased use

of the internet as a platform for discussion and activism.¹ As feminism has matured, it has recognized that inequities based on gender are interwoven with power imbalances based on race, class, ethnicity, religion, sexual identity, physical ability, and a host of other social markers.

Feminist Women and Men

Men who choose to identify with and partner with feminist women in the work of deconstructing systems of domination and building structures of equality are rightly regarded as feminists. Some men readily identify with experiences of women who are discriminated against on the basis of sex/gender, having themselves had comparable experiences; others who may not have faced direct discrimination or stereotyping recognize that inequity and problematic characterization still occur, and they seek correction. This series is pleased to include feminist men both as lead authors and as contributing voices.

Feminist Biblical Interpretation

Women interpreting the Bible from the lenses of their own experience is nothing new. Throughout the ages women have recounted the biblical stories, teaching them to their children and others, all the while interpreting them afresh for their time and circumstances.² Following is a very brief sketch of select foremothers who laid the groundwork for contemporary feminist biblical interpretation.

One of the earliest known Christian women who challenged patriarchal interpretations of Scripture was a consecrated virgin named Helie, who lived in the second century CE. When she refused to marry, her

1. See Martha Rampton, "Four Waves of Feminism" (October 25, 2015), at <http://www.pacificu.edu/about-us/news-events/four-waves-feminism>; and Ealasaid Munro, "Feminism: A Fourth Wave?," <https://www.psa.ac.uk/insight-plus/feminism-fourth-wave>.

2. For fuller treatments of this history, see chap. 7, "One Thousand Years of Feminist Bible Criticism," in Gerda Lerner, *Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-Seventy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 138–66; Susanne Scholz, "From the 'Woman's Bible' to the 'Women's Bible,' The History of Feminist Approaches to the Hebrew Bible," in *Introducing the Women's Hebrew Bible*, IFT 13 (New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 12–32; Marion Ann Taylor and Agnes Choi, eds., *Handbook of Women Biblical Interpreters: A Historical and Biographical Guide* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012).

parents brought her before a judge, who quoted to her Paul's admonition, "It is better to marry than to be aflame with passion" (1 Cor 7:9). In response, Helie first acknowledges that this is what Scripture says, but then she retorts, "but not for everyone, that is, not for holy virgins."³ She is one of the first to question the notion that a text has one meaning that is applicable in all situations.

A Jewish woman who also lived in the second century CE, Beruriah, is said to have had "profound knowledge of biblical exegesis and outstanding intelligence."⁴ One story preserved in the Talmud (b. Berakot 10a) tells of how she challenged her husband, Rabbi Meir, when he prayed for the destruction of a sinner. Proffering an alternate interpretation, she argued that Psalm 104:35 advocated praying for the destruction of sin, not the sinner.

In medieval times the first written commentaries on Scripture from a critical feminist point of view emerge. While others may have been produced and passed on orally, they are for the most part lost to us now. Among the earliest preserved feminist writings are those of Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179), German writer, mystic, and abbess of a Benedictine monastery. She reinterpreted the Genesis narratives in a way that presented women and men as complementary and interdependent. She frequently wrote about feminine aspects of the Divine.⁵ Along with other women mystics of the time, such as Julian of Norwich (1342–ca. 1416), she spoke authoritatively from her personal experiences of God's revelation in prayer.

In this era, women were also among the scribes who copied biblical manuscripts. Notable among them is Paula Dei Mansi of Verona, from a distinguished family of Jewish scribes. In 1288, she translated from Hebrew into Italian a collection of Bible commentaries written by her father and added her own explanations.⁶

Another pioneer, Christine de Pizan (1365–ca. 1430), was a French court writer and prolific poet. She used allegory and common sense to

3. Madrid, Escorial MS, a II 9, f. 90 v., as cited in Lerner, *Feminist Consciousness*, 140.

4. See Judith R. Baskin, "Women and Post-Biblical Commentary," in *The Torah: A Women's Commentary*, ed. Tamara Cohn Eskenazi and Andrea L. Weiss (New York: Women of Reform Judaism, Federation of Temple Sisterhood, 2008), xlix–lv, at lii.

5. Hildegard of Bingen, *De Operatione Dei*, 1.4.100; PL 197:885bc, as cited in Lerner, *Feminist Consciousness*, 142–43. See also Barbara Newman, *Sister of Wisdom: St. Hildegard's Theology of the Feminine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

6. Emily Taitz, Sondra Henry, Cheryl Tallan, eds., *JPS Guide to Jewish Women 600 B.C.E.–1900 C.E.* (Philadelphia: JPS, 2003), 110–11.

subvert misogynist readings of Scripture and celebrated the accomplishments of female biblical figures to argue for women's active roles in building society.⁷

By the seventeenth century, there were women who asserted that the biblical text needs to be understood and interpreted in its historical context. For example, Rachel Speght (1597–ca. 1630), a Calvinist English poet, elaborates on the historical situation in first-century Corinth that prompted Paul to say, "It is well for a man not to touch a woman" (1 Cor 7:1). Her aim was to show that the biblical texts should not be applied in a literal fashion to all times and circumstances. Similarly, Margaret Fell (1614–1702), one of the founders of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, addressed the Pauline prohibitions against women speaking in church by insisting that they do not have universal validity. Rather, they need to be understood in their historical context, as addressed to a local church in particular time-bound circumstances.⁸

Along with analyzing the historical context of the biblical writings, women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries began to attend to misogynistic interpretations based on faulty translations. One of the first to do so was British feminist Mary Astell (1666–1731).⁹ In the United States, the Grimké sisters, Sarah (1792–1873) and Angelina (1805–1879), Quaker women from a slaveholding family in South Carolina, learned biblical Greek and Hebrew so that they could interpret the Bible for themselves. They were prompted to do so after men sought to silence them from speaking out against slavery and for women's rights by claiming that the Bible (e.g., 1 Cor 14:34) prevented women from speaking in public.¹⁰ Another prominent abolitionist, Sojourner Truth (ca. 1797–1883), a former slave, quoted the Bible liberally in her speeches¹¹ and in so doing challenged cultural assumptions and biblical interpretations that undergird gender inequities.

7. See further Taylor and Choi, *Handbook of Women Biblical Interpreters*, 127–32.

8. Her major work, *Women's Speaking Justified, Proved and Allowed by the Scriptures*, published in London in 1667, gave a systematic feminist reading of all biblical texts pertaining to women.

9. Mary Astell, *Some Reflections upon Marriage* (New York: Source Book Press, 1970, reprint of the 1730 edition; earliest edition of this work is 1700), 103–4.

10. See further Sarah Grimké, *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman* (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1838).

11. See, for example, her most famous speech, "Ain't I a Woman?," delivered in 1851 at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention in Akron, OH; <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/sojtruth-woman.asp>.

Another monumental work that emerged in nineteenth-century England was that of Jewish theologian Grace Aguilar (1816–1847), *The Women of Israel*,¹² published in 1845. Aguilar's approach was to make connections between the biblical women and contemporary Jewish women's concerns. She aimed to counter the widespread notion that women were degraded in Jewish law and that only in Christianity were women's dignity and value upheld. Her intent was to help Jewish women find strength and encouragement by seeing the evidence of God's compassionate love in the history of every woman in the Bible. While not a full commentary on the Bible, Aguilar's work stands out for its comprehensive treatment of every female biblical character, including even the most obscure references.¹³

The first person to produce a full-blown feminist commentary on the Bible was Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902). A leading proponent in the United States for women's right to vote, she found that whenever women tried to make inroads into politics, education, or the work world, the Bible was quoted against them. Along with a team of like-minded women, she produced her own commentary on every text of the Bible that concerned women. Her pioneering two-volume project, *The Woman's Bible*, published in 1895 and 1898, urges women to recognize that texts that degrade women come from the men who wrote the texts, not from God, and to use their common sense to rethink what has been presented to them as sacred.

Nearly a century later, *The Women's Bible Commentary*, edited by Sharon Ringe and Carol Newsom (Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), appeared. This one-volume commentary features North American feminist scholarship on each book of the Protestant canon. Like Cady Stanton's commentary, it does not contain comments on every section of the biblical text but only on those passages deemed relevant to women. It was revised and expanded in 1998 to include the Apocrypha/Deuterocanonical books, and the contributors to this new volume reflect the global face of contemporary feminist scholarship. The revisions made in the third edition, which appeared in 2012, represent the profound advances in feminist biblical scholarship and include newer voices. In both the second and third editions, *The* has been dropped from the title.

12. The full title is *The Women of Israel or Characters and Sketches from the Holy Scriptures and Jewish History Illustrative of the Past History, Present Duty, and Future Destiny of the Hebrew Females, as Based on the Word of God*.

13. See further Eskenazi and Weiss, *The Torah: A Women's Commentary*, xxxviii; Taylor and Choi, *Handbook of Women Biblical Interpreters*, 31–37.

Also appearing at the centennial of Cady Stanton's *The Woman's Bible* were two volumes edited by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza with the assistance of Shelly Matthews. The first, *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Introduction* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), charts a comprehensive approach to feminist interpretation from ecumenical, interreligious, and multicultural perspectives. The second volume, published in 1994, provides critical feminist commentary on each book of the New Testament as well as on three books of Jewish Pseudepigrapha and eleven other early Christian writings.

In Europe, similar endeavors have been undertaken, such as the one-volume *Kompendium Feministische Bibelauslegung*, edited by Luise Schottroff and Marie-Theres Wacker (Gütersloh, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1998; 3rd ed., 2007), featuring German feminist biblical interpretation of each book of the Bible, along with apocryphal books, and several extrabiblical writings. This work, now in its third edition, has recently been translated into English.¹⁴ A multivolume project, *The Bible and Women: An Encyclopaedia of Exegesis and Cultural History*, edited by Irmtraud Fischer, Adriana Valerio, Mercedes Navarro Puerto, and Christiana de Groot, is currently in production. This project presents a history of the reception of the Bible as embedded in Western cultural history and focuses particularly on gender-relevant biblical themes, biblical female characters, and women recipients of the Bible. The volumes are published in English, Spanish, Italian, and German.¹⁵

Another groundbreaking work is the collection *The Feminist Companion to the Bible Series*, edited by Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993–2015), which comprises twenty volumes of commentaries on the Old Testament. The parallel series, *Feminist Companion*

14. *Feminist Biblical Interpretation: A Compendium of Critical Commentary on the Books of the Bible and Related Literature*, trans. Lisa E. Dahill, Everett R. Kalin, Nancy Lukens, Linda M. Maloney, Barbara Rumscheidt, Martin Rumscheidt, and Tina Steiner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012). Another notable collection is the three volumes edited by Susanne Scholz, *Feminist Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Retrospect*, *Recent Research in Biblical Studies* 7, 8, 9 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013, 2014, 2016).

15. The first volume, on the Torah, appeared in Spanish in 2009, in German and Italian in 2010, and in English in 2011 (Atlanta, GA: SBL). Four more volumes are now available: *Feminist Biblical Studies in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (2014); *The Writings and Later Wisdom Books*, ed. Christl M. Maier and Nuria Calduch-Benages (2014); *Gospels: Narrative and History*, ed. Mercedes Navarro Puerto and Marinella Perroni (2015); and *The High Middle Ages*, ed. Kari Elisabeth Børresen and Adriana Valerio (2015). For further information, see <http://www.bibleandwomen.org>.

to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings, edited by Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff and Maria Mayo Robbins (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001–2009), contains thirteen volumes with one more planned. These two series are not full commentaries on the biblical books but comprise collected essays on discrete biblical texts.

Works by individual feminist biblical scholars in all parts of the world abound, and they are now too numerous to list in this introduction. Feminist biblical interpretation has reached a level of maturity that now makes possible a commentary series on every book of the Bible. In recent decades, women have had greater access to formal theological education, have been able to learn critical analytical tools, have put their own interpretations into writing, and have developed new methods of biblical interpretation. Until recent decades the work of feminist biblical interpreters was largely unknown, both to other women and to their brothers in the synagogue, church, and academy. Feminists now have taken their place in the professional world of biblical scholars, where they build on the work of their foremothers and connect with one another across the globe in ways not previously possible. In a few short decades, feminist biblical criticism has become an integral part of the academy.

Methodologies

Feminist biblical scholars use a variety of methods and often employ a number of them together.¹⁶ In the *Wisdom Commentary* series, the authors will explain their understanding of feminism and the feminist reading strategies used in their commentary. Each volume treats the biblical text in blocks of material, not an analysis verse by verse. The entire text is considered, not only those passages that feature female characters or that speak specifically about women. When women are not apparent in the narrative, feminist lenses are used to analyze the dynamics in the text between male characters, the models of power, binary ways of thinking, and dynamics of imperialism. Attention is given to how the whole text functions and how it was and is heard, both in its original context and today. Issues of particular concern to women—e.g., poverty, food, health, the environment, water—come to the fore.

16. See the seventeen essays in Caroline Vander Stichele and Todd Penner, eds., *Her Master's Tools? Feminist and Postcolonial Engagements of Historical-Critical Discourse* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2005), which show the complementarity of various approaches.

One of the approaches used by early feminists and still popular today is to lift up the overlooked and forgotten stories of women in the Bible. Studies of women in each of the Testaments have been done, and there are also studies on women in particular biblical books.¹⁷ Feminists recognize that the examples of biblical characters can be both empowering and problematic. The point of the feminist enterprise is not to serve as an apologetic for women; it is rather, in part, to recover women's history and literary roles in all their complexity and to learn from that recovery.

Retrieving the submerged history of biblical women is a crucial step for constructing the story of the past so as to lead to liberative possibilities for the present and future. There are, however, some pitfalls to this approach. Sometimes depictions of biblical women have been naïve and romantic. Some commentators exalt the virtues of both biblical and contemporary women and paint women as superior to men. Such reverse discrimination inhibits movement toward equality for all. In addition, some feminists challenge the idea that one can "pluck positive images out of an admittedly androcentric text, separating literary characterizations from the androcentric interests they were created to serve."¹⁸ Still other feminists find these images to have enormous value.

One other danger with seeking the submerged history of women is the tendency for Christian feminists to paint Jesus and even Paul as liberators of women in a way that demonizes Judaism.¹⁹ Wisdom Commentary aims

17. See, e.g., Alice Bach, ed., *Women in the Hebrew Bible: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1998); Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible* (New York: Schocken, 2002); Carol Meyers, Toni Craven, and Ross S. Kraemer, *Women in Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000); Irene Nowell, *Women in the Old Testament* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997); Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *Just Wives? Stories of Power and Survival in the Old Testament and Today* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003); Mary Ann Getty-Sullivan, *Women in the New Testament* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001); Bonnie Thurston, *Women in the New Testament* (New York: Crossroad, 1998).

18. Cheryl Exum, "Second Thoughts about Secondary Characters: Women in Exodus 1.8–2.10," in *A Feminist Companion to Exodus to Deuteronomy*, FCB 6 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 75–97, at 76.

19. See Judith Plaskow, "Anti-Judaism in Feminist Christian Interpretation," in *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Introduction* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 1:117–29; Amy-Jill Levine, "The New Testament and Anti-Judaism," in *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 87–117.

to enhance understanding of Jesus as well as Paul as Jews of their day and to forge solidarity among Jewish and Christian feminists.

Feminist scholars who use historical-critical methods analyze the world behind the text; they seek to understand the historical context from which the text emerged and the circumstances of the communities to whom it was addressed. In bringing feminist lenses to this approach, the aim is not to impose modern expectations on ancient cultures but to unmask the ways that ideologically problematic mind-sets that produced the ancient texts are still promulgated through the text. Feminist biblical scholars aim not only to deconstruct but also to reclaim and reconstruct biblical history as women's history, in which women were central and active agents in creating religious heritage.²⁰ A further step is to construct meaning for contemporary women and men in a liberative movement toward transformation of social, political, economic, and religious structures.²¹ In recent years, some feminists have embraced new historicism, which accents the creative role of the interpreter in any construction of history and exposes the power struggles to which the text witnesses.²²

Literary critics analyze the world of the text: its form, language patterns, and rhetorical function.²³ They do not attempt to separate layers of tradition and redaction but focus on the text holistically, as it is in its present

20. See, for example, Phyllis A. Bird, *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities: Women and Gender in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1984); Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo, eds., *Women and Christian Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

21. See, e.g., Sandra M. Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture*, rev. ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), whose aim is to engage in biblical interpretation not only for intellectual enlightenment but, even more important, for personal and communal transformation. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (*Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001]) envisions the work of feminist biblical interpretation as a dance of Wisdom that consists of seven steps that interweave in spiral movements toward liberation, the final one being transformative action for change.

22. See Gina Hens Piazza, *The New Historicism*, Guides to Biblical Scholarship, Old Testament Series (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002).

23. Phyllis Trible was among the first to employ this method with texts from Genesis and Ruth in her groundbreaking book *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, *Overtures to Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978). Another pioneer in feminist literary criticism is Mieke Bal (*Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987]). For surveys of recent developments in literary methods, see Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Janice Capel Anderson and

form. They examine how meaning is created in the interaction between the text and its reader in multiple contexts. Within the arena of literary approaches are reader-oriented approaches, narrative, rhetorical, structuralist, post-structuralist, deconstructive, ideological, autobiographical, and performance criticism.²⁴ Narrative critics study the interrelation among author, text, and audience through investigation of settings, both spatial and temporal; characters; plot; and narrative techniques (e.g., irony, parody, intertextual allusions). Reader-response critics attend to the impact that the text has on the reader or hearer. They recognize that when a text is detrimental toward women there is the choice either to affirm the text or to read against the grain toward a liberative end. Rhetorical criticism analyzes the style of argumentation and attends to how the author is attempting to shape the thinking or actions of the hearer. Structuralist critics analyze the complex patterns of binary oppositions in the text to derive its meaning.²⁵ Post-structuralist approaches challenge the notion that there are fixed meanings to any biblical text or that there is one universal truth. They engage in close readings of the text and often engage in intertextual analysis.²⁶ Within this approach is deconstructionist criticism, which views the text as a site of conflict, with competing narratives. The interpreter aims to expose the fault lines and overturn and reconfigure binaries by elevating the underling of a pair and foregrounding it.²⁷ Feminists also use other postmodern approaches, such as ideological and autobiographical criticism. The former analyzes the system

Stephen D. Moore, eds., *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008).

24. See, e.g., J. Cheryl Exum and David J. A. Clines, eds., *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993); Edgar V. McKnight and Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, eds., *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994).

25. See, e.g., David Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative: Three Structural Analyses in the Old Testament*, JSOTSup 7 (Sheffield: Sheffield University, 1978).

26. See, e.g., Stephen D. Moore, *Poststructuralism and the New Testament: Derrida and Foucault at the Foot of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994); *The Bible in Theory: Critical and Postcritical Essays* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2010); Yvonne Sherwood, *A Biblical Text and Its Afterlives: The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

27. David Penchansky, "Deconstruction," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Steven McKenzie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 196–205. See, for example, Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, *Gender, Power, and Promise: The Subject of the Bible's First Story* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1993); David Rutledge, *Reading Marginally: Feminism, Deconstruction and the Bible*, BibInt 21 (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

of ideas that underlies the power and values concealed in the text as well as that of the interpreter.²⁸ The latter involves deliberate self-disclosure while reading the text as a critical exegete.²⁹ Performance criticism attends to how the text was passed on orally, usually in communal settings, and to the verbal and nonverbal interactions between the performer and the audience.³⁰

From the beginning, feminists have understood that interpreting the Bible is an act of power. In recent decades, feminist biblical scholars have developed hermeneutical theories of the ethics and politics of biblical interpretation to challenge the claims to value neutrality of most academic biblical scholarship. Feminist biblical scholars have also turned their attention to how some biblical writings were shaped by the power of empire and how this still shapes readers' self-understandings today. They have developed hermeneutical approaches that reveal, critique, and evaluate the interactions depicted in the text against the context of empire, and they consider implications for contemporary contexts.³¹ Feminists also analyze the dynamics of colonization and the mentalities of colonized peoples in the exercise of biblical interpretation. As Kwok Pui-lan explains, "A post-colonial feminist interpretation of the Bible needs to investigate the deployment of gender in the narration of identity, the negotiation of power differentials between the colonizers and the colonized, and the reinforcement of patriarchal control over spheres where these elites could exercise control."³² Methods and models from sociology and cultural anthropology

28. See Tina Pippin, ed., *Ideological Criticism of Biblical Texts: Semeia* 59 (1992); Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 2007).

29. See, e.g., Ingrid Rose Kitzberger, ed., *Autobiographical Biblical Interpretation: Between Text and Self* (Leiden: Deo, 2002); P. J. W. Schutte, "When They, We, and the Passive Become I—Introducing Autobiographical Biblical Criticism," *HTS Theologisches Studien / Theological Studies* 61 (2005): 401–16.

30. See, e.g., Holly Hearon and Philip Ruge-Jones, eds., *The Bible in Ancient and Modern Media: Story and Performance* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009).

31. E.g., Gale Yee, ed., *Judges and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995); Warren Carter, *The Gospel of Matthew in Its Roman Imperial Context* (London: T & T Clark, 2005); *The Roman Empire and the New Testament: An Essential Guide* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2006); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word: Scripture and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007); Judith E. McKinlay, *Reframing Her: Biblical Women in Postcolonial Focus* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2004).

32. Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 9. See also Musa W. Dube, ed., *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000); Cristl M. Maier and

are used by feminists to investigate women's everyday lives, their experiences of marriage, childrearing, labor, money, illness, etc.³³

As feminists have examined the construction of gender from varying cultural perspectives, they have become ever more cognizant that the way gender roles are defined within differing cultures varies radically. As Mary Ann Tolbert observes, "Attempts to isolate some universal role that cross-culturally defines 'woman' have run into contradictory evidence at every turn."³⁴ Some women have coined new terms to highlight the particularities of their socio-cultural context. Many African American feminists, for example, call themselves *womanists* to draw attention to the double oppression of racism and sexism they experience.³⁵ Similarly, many US Hispanic feminists speak of themselves as *mujeristas* (*mujer* is Spanish for "woman").³⁶ Others prefer to be called "Latina feminists."³⁷ Both groups emphasize that the context for their theologizing is *mestizaje* and *mulatez* (racial and cultural mixture), done *en conjunto* (in community), with *lo cotidiano* (everyday lived experience) of Hispanic women as starting points for theological reflection and the encounter with the divine. Intercultural analysis has become an indispensable tool for working toward justice for women at the global level.³⁸

Carolyn J. Sharp, *Prophecy and Power: Jeremiah in Feminist and Postcolonial Perspective* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

33. See, for example, Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Luise Schottroff, *Lydia's Impatient Sisters: A Feminist Social History of Early Christianity*, trans. Barbara and Martin Rumscheidt (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1995); Susan Niditch, *"My Brother Esau Is a Hairy Man": Hair and Identity in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

34. Mary Ann Tolbert, "Social, Sociological, and Anthropological Methods," in *Searching the Scriptures*, 1:255–71, at 265.

35. Alice Walker coined the term (*In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* [New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1967, 1983]). See also Katie G. Cannon, "The Emergence of Black Feminist Consciousness," in *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Letty M. Russell (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 30–40; Renita Weems, *Just a Sister Away: A Womanist Vision of Women's Relationships in the Bible* (San Diego: Lura Media, 1988); Nyasha Junior, *An Introduction to Womanist Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2015).

36. Ada María Isasi-Díaz (*Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-first Century* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996]) is credited with coining the term.

37. E.g., María Pilar Aquino, Daisy L. Machado, and Jeanette Rodríguez, eds., *A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002).

38. See, e.g., María Pilar Aquino and María José Rosado-Nunes, eds., *Feminist Intercultural Theology: Latina Explorations for a Just World*, Studies in Latino/a Catholicism (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007).

Some feminists are among those who have developed lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) interpretation. This approach focuses on issues of sexual identity and uses various reading strategies. Some point out the ways in which categories that emerged in recent centuries are applied anachronistically to biblical texts to make modern-day judgments. Others show how the Bible is silent on contemporary issues about sexual identity. Still others examine same-sex relationships in the Bible by figures such as Ruth and Naomi or David and Jonathan. In recent years, queer theory has emerged; it emphasizes the blurriness of boundaries not just of sexual identity but also of gender roles. Queer critics often focus on texts in which figures transgress what is traditionally considered proper gender behavior.³⁹

Feminists also recognize that the struggle for women's equality and dignity is intimately connected with the struggle for respect for Earth and for the whole of the cosmos. Ecofeminists interpret Scripture in ways that highlight the link between human domination of nature and male subjugation of women. They show how anthropocentric ways of interpreting the Bible have overlooked or dismissed Earth and Earth community. They invite readers to identify not only with human characters in the biblical narrative but also with other Earth creatures and domains of nature, especially those that are the object of injustice. Some use creative imagination to retrieve the interests of Earth implicit in the narrative and enable Earth to speak.⁴⁰

Biblical Authority

By the late nineteenth century, some feminists, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, began to question openly whether the Bible could continue to be regarded as authoritative for women. They viewed the Bible itself as the source of women's oppression, and some rejected its sacred origin

39. See, e.g., Bernadette J. Brooten, *Love between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Women Partners in the New Testament," *JFSR* 6 (1990): 65–86; Deirdre J. Good, "Reading Strategies for Biblical Passages on Same-Sex Relations," *Theology and Sexuality* 7 (1997): 70–82; Deryn Guest, *When Deborah Met Jael: Lesbian Feminist Hermeneutics* (London: SCM Press, 2011); Teresa Hornsby and Ken Stone, eds., *Bible Trouble: Queer Readings at the Boundaries of Biblical Scholarship* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2011).

40. E.g., Norman C. Habel and Peter Trudinger, *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*, SBLSymS 46 (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2008); Mary Judith Ress, *Ecofeminism in Latin America*, *Women from the Margins* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006).

and saving claims. Some decided that the Bible and the religious traditions that enshrine it are too thoroughly saturated with androcentrism and patriarchy to be redeemable.⁴¹

In the Wisdom Commentary series, questions such as these may be raised, but the aim of this series is not to lead readers to reject the authority of the biblical text. Rather, the aim is to promote better understanding of the contexts from which the text arose and of the rhetorical effects it has on women and men in contemporary contexts. Such understanding can lead to a deepening of faith, with the Bible serving as an aid to bring flourishing of life.

Language for God

Because of the ways in which the term “God” has been used to symbolize the divine in predominantly male, patriarchal, and monarchical modes, feminists have designed new ways of speaking of the divine. Some have called attention to the inadequacy of the term *God* by trying to visually destabilize our ways of thinking and speaking of the divine. Rosemary Radford Ruether proposed *God/ess*, as an unpronounceable term pointing to the unnameable understanding of the divine that transcends patriarchal limitations.⁴² Some have followed traditional Jewish practice, writing *G-d*. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has adopted *G*d*.⁴³ Others draw on the biblical tradition to mine female and non-gender-specific metaphors and symbols.⁴⁴ In Wisdom Commentary, there is not one standard way of expressing the divine; each author will use her or his preferred ways. The one exception is that when the tetragrammaton, YHWH, the name revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14, is used, it will be without vowels, respecting the Jewish custom of avoiding pronouncing the divine name out of reverence.

41. E.g., Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: A Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1973).

42. Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon, 1983).

43. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet; Critical Issues in Feminist Christology* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 191 n. 3.

44. E.g., Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987); Catherine LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991); Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992). See further Elizabeth A. Johnson, “God,” in *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*, 128–30.

Nomenclature for the Two Testaments

In recent decades, some biblical scholars have begun to call the two Testaments of the Bible by names other than the traditional nomenclature: Old and New Testament. Some regard "Old" as derogatory, implying that it is no longer relevant or that it has been superseded. Consequently, terms like Hebrew Bible, First Testament, and Jewish Scriptures and, correspondingly, Christian Scriptures or Second Testament have come into use. There are a number of difficulties with these designations. The term "Hebrew Bible" does not take into account that parts of the Old Testament are written not in Hebrew but in Aramaic.⁴⁵ Moreover, for Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and Eastern Orthodox believers, the Old Testament includes books written in Greek—the Deuterocanonical books, considered Apocrypha by Protestants. The term "Jewish Scriptures" is inadequate because these books are also sacred to Christians. Conversely, "Christian Scriptures" is not an accurate designation for the New Testament, since the Old Testament is also part of the Christian Scriptures. Using "First and Second Testament" also has difficulties, in that it can imply a hierarchy and a value judgment.⁴⁶ Jews generally use the term Tanakh, an acronym for Torah (Pentateuch), Nevi'im (Prophets), and Ketuvim (Writings).

In Wisdom Commentary, if authors choose to use a designation other than Tanakh, Old Testament, and New Testament, they will explain how they mean the term.

Translation

Modern feminist scholars recognize the complexities connected with biblical translation, as they have delved into questions about philosophy of language, how meanings are produced, and how they are culturally situated. Today it is evident that simply translating into gender-neutral formulations cannot address all the challenges presented by androcentric texts. Efforts at feminist translation must also deal with issues around authority and canonicity.⁴⁷

45. Gen 31:47; Jer 10:11; Ezra 4:7–6:18; 7:12–26; Dan 2:4–7:28.

46. See Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew*, 193–99.

47. Elizabeth Castelli, "Les Belles Infidèles/Fidelity or Feminism? The Meanings of Feminist Biblical Translation," in *Searching the Scriptures*, 1:189–204, here 190.

Because of these complexities, the editors of Wisdom Commentary series have chosen to use an existing translation, the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is provided for easy reference at the top of each page of commentary. The NRSV was produced by a team of ecumenical and interreligious scholars, is a fairly literal translation, and uses inclusive language for human beings. Brief discussions about problematic translations appear in the inserts labeled “Translation Matters.” When more detailed discussions are available, these will be indicated in footnotes. In the commentary, wherever Hebrew or Greek words are used, English translation is provided. In cases where a wordplay is involved, transliteration is provided to enable understanding.

Art and Poetry

Artistic expression in poetry, music, sculpture, painting, and various other modes is very important to feminist interpretation. Where possible, art and poetry are included in the print volumes of the series. In a number of instances, these are original works created for this project. Regrettably, copyright and production costs prohibit the inclusion of color photographs and other artistic work. It is our hope that the web version will allow a greater collection of such resources.

Glossary

Because there are a number of excellent readily-available resources that provide definitions and concise explanations of terms used in feminist theological and biblical studies, this series will not include a glossary. We refer you to works such as *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*, edited by Letty M. Russell with J. Shannon Clarkson (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), and volume 1 of *Searching the Scriptures*, edited by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza with the assistance of Shelly Matthews (New York: Crossroad, 1992). Individual authors in the Wisdom Commentary series will define the way they are using terms that may be unfamiliar.

Bibliography

Because bibliographies are quickly outdated and because the space is limited, only a list of Works Cited is included in the print volumes. A comprehensive bibliography for each volume is posted on a dedicated website and is updated regularly.

The link for this volume can be found at wisdomcommentary.org.

A Concluding Word

In just a few short decades, feminist biblical studies has grown exponentially, both in the methods that have been developed and in the number of scholars who have embraced it. We realize that this series is limited and will soon need to be revised and updated. It is our hope that *Wisdom Commentary*, by making the best of current feminist biblical scholarship available in an accessible format to ministers, preachers, teachers, scholars, and students, will aid all readers in their advancement toward God's vision of dignity, equality, and justice for all.



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Author's Introduction

The book of Baruch (Bar) and the Epistle (or Letter) of Jeremiah (Ep Jer) are part of the larger corpus of Jewish Writings from the Second Temple period. Both transmitted in Greek, they do not belong to the Tanak but to the Septuagint tradition where they were regarded as two separate works. In the Latin tradition, the Epistle of Jeremiah was added to the book of Baruch as its sixth chapter. Catholic Bible editions like the New American Bible, the German *Einheitsübersetzung*, the French *Bible de Jérusalem*, the Italian *Bibbia CEI*, the Spanish *Biblia de la CEE*, but also the (Protestant) German revised *Luther-Bibel* or the Spanish Bible edition *Dios habla hoy* follow the Latin order, while ecumenical translations like the French *Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible* and the *Bible en français courant*, the German *Bibel in gerechter Sprache*, and the *Gute Nachricht-Bibel* (as well as its English counterpart, the *Good News Bible*) present the Letter of Jeremiah separate from the book of Baruch.

The Book of Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah as Part of a “Story” Told by the Septuagint

As the proper names indicate, the two booklets, Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah, connect with the biblical tradition through the prophet Jeremiah and his scribe and secretary Baruch. Both books introduce themselves as written texts, the one as “book” (Bar 1:1), the other as “epistle” (Ep Jer 1 = Bar 6:1). As such, they develop the motif of written messages or records already prominent in the book of Jeremiah: the prophet sent a letter to

those who were about to be deported to Babylon (Jer 29 MT/36 LXX); Baruch was told to write down Jeremiah's words in a scroll (Jer 36 MT/43 LXX). The "Epistle" would then be another letter of Jeremiah, and Baruch would again write down words in a new situation.¹ In a historical-critical perspective, both writings are considered pseudepigraphs, using the names of Jeremiah and Baruch in and for times historically different from those of the prophet and his scribe but perceived (or constructed) as similar or comparable in terms of challenges and hopes.

A tentative first approach to the two writings—to be expanded by other readings—might explain them in their literary context, the books of the Corpus Ieremianum (Jeremiah, Lamentations, Baruch, and Epistle of Jeremiah) in the Septuagint. The relevant observation to start with concerns the different order of chapters in the Masoretic (MT) and the Greek (LXX) book of Jeremiah. In the Hebrew version, the "oracles against the nations" (Jer 46–52) conclude Jeremiah's message. The last of these oracles is against the Babylonian Empire, visualized as the country of the Chaldeans with its king but also as a woman figure representing the city of Babylon (Jer 50–51). The final chapter of the book (Jer 52) reports the conquest of Jerusalem by Babylonian troops. Hence, Jeremiah's message ends the way it began in chapter 1: his message is verified by the events he announced; he is a true prophet according to Deut 18:22. Therefore, in the logic of Deut 18, his last words concerning Babylon, foreshadowed in Jer 25, are credible and convey a message of hope: indeed, Jerusalem's destruction has to be told, but the empire that destroyed her does not escape its own destruction. The opposition or polarization between Jerusalem and Babylon appears to be a central message at the end of Jeremiah's book in its Hebrew shape.

In the Septuagint, the oracles against the nations are placed behind (more precisely: within) Jer 25, after Jeremiah's words against Judah and Jerusalem (2–24). The Greek book of Jeremiah closes, as does the Hebrew, with the account of Jerusalem's fall, but the preceding chapter tells about the spectacular revolt of the people in Egypt, led by women, against the prophet's call to abstain from the worship of the Queen of Heaven, a

1. For a broader discussion of the Jeremian "diaspora letters" as "epistolary communication," see Lutz Doering, "Jeremiah and the 'Diaspora Letters' in Ancient Judaism: Epistolary Communication with the Golah as Medium for Dealing with the Present," in *Reading the Present in the Qumran Library: The Perception of the Contemporary by Means of Scriptural Interpretation*, ed. Kristin De Troyer and Armin Lange (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2005), 43–72.

goddess venerated since Judean times (Jer 44:1-30 MT/Jer 51:1-30 LXX).² The worship of the Queen of Heaven, thus, becomes the prototype of idolatry, Egypt the site of continuing apostasy, and women the spokespersons of revolt against the God of Israel. According to the narrative, Jerusalem's fall is interpreted as a consequence of Israel's blasphemy. Moreover, Jer 51 LXX has a final word addressed to Baruch, predicting that he would save just his life in these times of calamity (Jer 45 MT/51:31-35 LXX). Given the widely accepted hypothesis that most of the Septuagint originated in Hellenistic Alexandria, hence in Egypt, the composition of Jer LXX can be read as a critical voice against Jews in Alexandria who are fascinated by the goddess Isis, the Hellenistic "Great Goddess."³

This end of Jer LXX forms an apt platform for the book of Baruch with its opening scene in Babylonia and the message Baruch has to convey. At the river Sud, where the congregation listening to Baruch has gathered, there is no revolt but instead a mourning liturgy (Bar 1:5). The city is in ruins (Jer 52MT/LXX; Bar 1:2), and the joyful prophecy for Jerusalem (Bar 4:30-5:9) still concerns her future. The present is dominated by a prayer confessing transgression from God's commandments transmitted by Moses, and the only commandment spelled out is the one not to worship other gods (Bar 1:22).

According to the order in the two major Septuagint codices of Alexandrinus and Sinaiticus, the book of Lamentations follows Baruch and comes back to the present disaster. Lamentations is dominated by a female figure, the figure of Jerusalem and her moving laments, corresponding to the lament of mother Jerusalem in Bar 4:9-20. The last cry of the Jerusalemites is this: "Restore us to yourself, O YHWH, that we may be restored; renew our days as of old—unless you have utterly rejected us, and are angry with us beyond measure" (Lam 5:21-22).⁴ The following text, Jeremiah's letter to those who will soon be deported from Jerusalem

2. The NRSV follows the MT unless otherwise noted. Note that the Greek text has βασιλισσα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, "Queen of Heaven," clearly denoting a goddess, while the MT has מלכת השמים, vocalized as "work of heavens," an intentional distortion of the goddess.

3. A quite different voice is the Wisdom of Solomon, where the figure of wisdom beside God is central and seems to be shaped with a view toward the goddess Isis. See Silvia Schroer, "Wisdom: An Example of Jewish Intercultural Theology," in *Feminist Biblical Interpretation: A Compendium of Critical Commentary on the Books of the Bible and Related Literature*, ed. Luise Schottroff and Marie-Theres Wacker (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 555-65.

4. The NRSV translates the divine name, YHWH, as "Lord." In quotations from the Hebrew Bible, I prefer to transliterate rather than translate that name. See also n. 13 on p. 23 below.

to Babylonia, reads like an explanation, a consolation, and an obligation: their exile is imperative, but limited, and in the meantime they have to resist the worship of the gods of Babylonia—or, with a slightly different emphasis, they must not repeat the revolt of those in Egypt who defended the worship of the goddess. Egypt and Babylonia melt into one site, the site of danger and failure but also of challenge.

In other Greek manuscripts as well as in the Syriac and in the Latin tradition, the Letter of Jeremiah follows the book of Baruch or is counted as the last chapter of that book. In this case, the Letter seems to be an answer to the exiles who sent Baruch's book to Jerusalem; it is a message coming from Jerusalem, the recognized center of Jewish identity—in ruins, as the book of Lamentations reflects, but with the altar still in function (Bar 1:10)—to those who will live in the diaspora and have to arrange their lives there for a long time.

The Septuagint translation and compilation of Early Jewish writings came into being before the invention of codices where each book has its fixed place between others. Considered as single scrolls, the sequence of the texts can easily be varied, with the book of Jeremiah as a kind of lead voice and Baruch, Lamentations, and the Epistle of Jeremiah as responding voices that would not only react to Jeremiah but might also be in dialogue with one another.⁵ The central themes, however, are constant: Jerusalem and Babylon/Egypt; homeland and diaspora; God and other gods, with a certain emphasis on/against the worship of a/the goddess; acceptance of God's commandments or revolt/apostasy.

Textual Criticism and the Translational Character of the Texts

As there are, in both books, quite a number of difficulties or peculiarities in the Greek wording that can best be explained by assuming a Semitic *Vorlage*, it seems reasonable to admit a prior Hebrew (or Aramaic) edition of (at least parts of) the book of Baruch and of Jeremiah's letter. The NRSV translation at some points goes back to this hypothetical original in a

5. Only brief mention can be made of other voices inserting themselves into the tradition of Jeremiah and Baruch, including the (later) Syriac and Greek Apocalypses of Baruch or the *Paraleipomena Jeremiae* (also: 2, 3, 4 Bar), as well as 4QApocryphon Jeremiah. For more details, see Lutz Doering, "Jeremia in Babylonien und Ägypten: Mündliche und schriftliche Toraparänese für Exil und Diaspora nach 4QApocryphon of Jeremiah C," in *Frühjudentum und Neues Testament im Horizont Biblischer Theologie*, ed. Wolfgang Kraus and Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, WUNT 162 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 50–79, and relevant entries in John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow, eds., *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

Semitic language. Thus the NRSV does not consequently translate the Greek Septuagint text, but does use a Greek text with conjectures according to that hypothetical Semitic text. This is an accepted and well-founded text-critical procedure, but it is based heavily on the assumption that the translators into Greek had their linguistic limitations and sometimes missed the original meaning. An alternative approach would start from the assumption that the Greek translator(s) pondered over their *Vorlage* and in several instances decided against what was (seemingly) most evident in the original text. Instead, they probably chose the best reading according to their own logic. Therefore I will discuss the instances where NRSV decided against the Greek wording and show that there is meaning in the Greek text, not just mistake or corruption.

From the specifics of the textual tradition emerges another fundamental problem: as it is not possible to compare the Greek texts of Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah with their presumed *Vorlage*, it is difficult to know to what extent they were reworked. The translators might have rearranged their text and added or omitted phrases or paragraphs. They might rather have acted as editors. They might, as perhaps in the case of Jeremiah's letter, have created a new, smooth text, a translation oriented toward the target language, which means that a certain liberty to adapt meanings is *a priori* given. Therefore it remains extremely hypothetical to date translation or *Vorlage*, although neither could be dated to before the Hellenistic age. For the book of Baruch things are even more complex as it seems to be necessary to admit translation from a Semitic *Vorlage* as well as reference to the Septuagint of the book of Jeremiah.⁶ What is evident is again the close connection seen or constructed between the writings of Jeremiah and his secretary.

Stages of Former Research

Scholarly research on Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah is not abundant.⁷ In the context of Protestant historical-critical interest in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha through the nineteenth and beginning of the

6. See notes to Bar 1:9 and 2:25 below. To think of the same translator working on Jeremiah and Baruch appears too simple an explanation; Emanuel Tov, *The Septuagint Translation of Jeremiah and Baruch: A Discussion of an Early Revision of the LXX of Jeremiah 29–52 and Baruch 1:1–3:8*, HSM 8 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976) convincingly combines translation and revision according to the Greek text of Jeremiah.

7. For a history of scholarly research on Baruch, see the extensive monograph by Rüdiger Feuerstein, *Das Buch Baruch. Studien zur Textgestalt und Auslegungsgeschichte*, Europäische Hochschul-Schriften XXIII/614 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1997).

twentieth centuries, the two writings were treated in handbooks and collections⁸ with a strong emphasis on original language, source criticism, and questions of date. On Baruch, two extensive commentaries along these lines—one by a Catholic, the other by a Protestant theologian—were published in nineteenth-century Germany,⁹ on the Letter of Jeremiah, one monograph, the only one until now, appeared in 1913, interested mainly in knowledge of Babylonian culture expressed in the Letter.¹⁰ Since the 1950s with the Catholic Magisterium's gradual opening to historical methods of exegesis, a number of commentaries and scholarly contributions on specific questions came from Catholics all over Western Europe.¹¹ Special mention has to be made of the project *L'univers de la Bible* with its Jewish-Christian-Muslim approach to the Bible, Baruch and the Letter of

8. The two major collections were provided by Emil Kautzsch (German) and Robert Charles (in English): Johann W. Rothstein, "Das Buch Baruch," 213–25, and Johann W. Rothstein, "Der Brief des Jeremia," 226–29, in *Die Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen des Alten Testaments*, vol. 1, ed. Emil Kautzsch (Tübingen: Mohr, 1900 [repr. 1921]); Owen C. Whitehouse, "The Book of Baruch," 569–95, and C. J. Ball, "Epistle of Jeremy," 596–611, in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, ed. Robert Charles (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913).

9. Heinrich Reusch (Cath.), *Erklärung des Buchs Baruch* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1853); Johann Jacob Kneucker (Prot.), *Das Buch Baruch. Geschichte und Kritik, Übersetzung und Erklärung auf Grund des wiederhergestellten hebräischen Urtextes* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1879), both with breathtaking linguistic competences. Another extensive commentary came from the Jesuit Joseph Knabenbauer, "Commentarius in Baruch," in *Commentarius in Daniele prophetam, Lamentationes et Baruch. Cursus Scripturae Sacrae III/2* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1889), 433–520. He makes use already of publications about excavations in Mesopotamia.

10. Weigand Naumann, *Untersuchungen über den apokryphen Jeremiasbrief*, BZAW 25 (Gießen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1913). His aim is to show the knowledge of Babylonian cults, to plead for a Hebrew original, and to date Ep Jer in the period after Alexander the Great and his revitalization of Babylonian cults.

11. Mention can be made here only of some examples: Benjamin N. Wambacq, "Baruch," 365–84, and Benjamin N. Wambacq, "De Brief van Jeremias," 385–94, in *Jeremias – Klaagliederen – Baruch – Brief van Jeremias*, De Boeken van het Oude Testament (Roermond and Maaseik: J. J. Romen & Zonen, 1957); Luis Alonso Schökel, "Baruc," 123–65, and Luis Alonso Schökel, "Carta de Jeremias," 167–78, in *Daniel – Baruc – Carta de Jeremias – Lamentaciones*, Los Libros Sagrados 18 (Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad 1976); Josef Schreiner, "Baruch," in *Klagelieder/Baruch*, NEchtB Altes Testament 14, ed. Josef G. Plöger and others (Würzburg: Echter, 1986), 43–84. Of particular interest is Heinrich Schneider, *Das Buch Daniel. Das Buch der Klagelieder. Das Buch Baruch. Die Hl. Schrift für das Leben erklärt*, Herders Bibelkommentar 9, vol. 2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1954), 131–62, who tries to explain Bar 1–6 for postwar German Catholicism.

Jeremiah included.¹² A turning point in the perception of Baruch is represented in the important study by the Swiss Protestant Old Testament scholar Odil Hannes Steck, who, in 1993, was the first to read this book as a carefully constructed unit and to rethink its logic built on a specific reception of the Tanak along the lines of a rereading of Jeremiah and Deuteronomy in its Deuteronomistic shape.¹³ André Kabasele Mukenge, a Catholic Old Testament scholar from the Democratic Republic of Congo doing research in Belgium, pushed this approach further, combining it with fresh hypotheses on the redaction history of the book.¹⁴ Today, Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah are studied at the intersections of research fields on Second Temple Judaism, including new textual editions and translations,¹⁵ in North America, Israel, and Western Europe and by scholars from different Christian and Jewish denominations. Unfortunately, the commentary by Sean Adams on Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah, based on the text of Codex Vaticanus,¹⁶ could not be discussed

12. André Chouraqui, and others, "Lettre d'Irmeياهو/Lettre de Jérémie," in *L'univers de la Bible*, vol. 7 (Paris: Brepols, 1984), 453–64, richly illustrated and annotated from the perspective of the three monotheistic religions.

13. Odil Hannes Steck, *Das apokryphe Baruchbuch*, FRLANT 160 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993); Odil Hannes Steck, "Das Buch Baruch," in *ATD Apokryphen*, vol. 5, ed. Otto Kaiser and Lothar Peritt (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 9–68. Others before him tried to discover a certain unity—Schökel, *Baruc*, 126, e.g., saw already the conflux of four major literary traditions—but did not discover a similar coherent structure. Most commentators before Steck described the book of Baruch as a collection of pieces more or less well connected. A particular negative judgment comes from Carey A. Moore, "Epistle of Jeremiah," 317–32, and Carey A. Moore, "1 Baruch," 255–316, in *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah: The Additions*, AB 44 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1977), who sees in Baruch "no new or original religious idea" (259) and a thoroughgoing "theological and religious weakness" (261).

14. André Kabasele Mukenge, *L'unité littéraire du Livre de Baruch*, *EBib*, N.S. 38 (Louvain: Gabalda, 1998).

15. See in particular NETS (Tony S. L. Michael, "Barouch," and Benjamin G. Wright, "The Letter of Jeremiah," in *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, ed. Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, 2nd ed. [New York: Oxford University Press, 2009], 925–31 and 942–45); *Septuaginta deutsch* (Wolfgang Kraus and Georg Gäbel, "Baruch," and "Epistole Jeremiou," in *Septuaginta deutsch. Das griechische Alte Testament in deutscher Übersetzung*, ed. Wolfgang Kraus and Martin Karrer [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2009], 1343–48 and 1358–61); Bible d'Alexandrie (Isabelle Assan-Dhôte and Jacqueline Moatti-Fine, "Baruch," in *Baruch, Lamentations, Lettre de Jérémie*, La Bible d'Alexandrie 25.2 [Paris: Cerf, 2005]).

16. See Sean Adams, *Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah: A Commentary Based on the Texts in Codex Vaticanus*, *Septuagint Commentary Series* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

because it was published when my manuscript was already completed. Feminist or gender-sensitive studies on both books, though, are still rare¹⁷ so that the reflections in this commentary will break new ground.

A New Hermeneutical Frame for Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah: Feminism, Gender Sensitivity, and Empire or (Post)Colonial Criticism

From a closer look at women figures in biblical texts and reconstructions of women's daily life in biblical times, feminist biblical studies have moved to more complex perspectives and issues.¹⁸ With the concept of gender, social constructions of women (and men) can be described and the problem of essentialism be raised. Feminist scholars are aware of their own contextual biases and limitations but also their privileges when reading biblical texts. Feminist scholars tend to reflect on their roles as readers who transmit specific meaning to a text and opt for new, decisively partial, and/or political readings. In particular, the notion of women (or men) is called into question in favor of a double differentiation relevant for literary and historical studies of biblical texts. The first considers social and economic structures in and behind the texts that bring some men closer to women in terms of human rights or social possibilities than to other men. Masculinity studies refer to this fact with the distinction between hegemonic masculinities and marginal or subordinate forms. The second differentiation concerns a critique of sex/gender analyses that stick to a naturally given system of two genders/sexes only and treat heterosexuality as socially normative. Queer studies can help to detect facts or structures in biblical texts going beyond that matrix. The designation "wo/men" might be a possible way to point to such more complex perspectives.

17. See Patricia K. Tull, "Baruch," 418–22, and Patricia K. Tull, "Letter of Jeremiah," 423–25, in *Women's Bible Commentary*, 3rd ed., ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2012); Marie-Theres Wacker, "Baruch: Mail from Distant Shores," in Schotttroff and Wacker, *Feminist Biblical Interpretation*, 431–38, who, independent from one another, developed the first feminist approaches to both writings. Other relevant studies concern specific topics only, like wisdom or Jerusalem as feminine figures.

18. For more details, see Barbara Reid's general introduction to this volume. In addition: Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001); Lisa Sowle Cahill, Diego Irarrázaval, and Elaine M. Wainwright, eds., *Concilium: Gender in Theology, Spirituality, and Practice* 48 (London: SCM Press, 2012).

Moreover, for writings from the Second Temple era, the perspectives of empire and/or (post)colonial criticism appear specifically relevant.¹⁹ Historically, Jewish communities existed not only in Judaea but also in Egypt, Babylonia, and Western Asia, most of the time under the rule of large imperial powers (Ptolemies, Seleucids, Romans). Their arrangements with these political coordinates that shaped their daily life were manifold, including assimilation, submission, and resistance. The writings of that time reflect those struggles in the different ways they refer to tradition, the present, and their hopes but also in their styles of rhetoric between repetition of antagonistic structures and searching for new, often hybrid forms of thought and expression.

In a biblical commentary named *Wisdom Commentary*, the book of Baruch finds its due place not only as a biblical book for Christians from the Catholic or Orthodox traditions but also as a writing that has at its center a poem on wisdom (Bar 3:9–4:4). Baruch clearly relates intertextually to other biblical and early Jewish wisdom texts but hardly contributes to the feminine personification of wisdom so prominent in the books of Proverbs, Sirach, and *Wisdom of Solomon*. Instead, Baruch's strong feminine figure is Jerusalem, here again painted in well-known biblical—more precisely, prophetic—colors, but also with new traits (Bar 4:5–5:9). Baruch makes a discernible move from a community with all its enumerated male representatives, leaving women invisible or “included” in linguistic inferences (Bar 1–2), to a poem reflecting the hiddenness and accessibility of wisdom (Bar 3–4), and then finally to a view on the destiny of Jerusalem, the Woman-City (Bar 4–5). How, then, can this move be described?

The Letter of Jeremiah, on the contrary, has much to say about women. Interspersed with ironic mockeries of Babylonian idol worship, there are numerous side glances at women of different provenience and in diverse functions. The text is evidently rooted in the biblical traditions of idol mockery, but these do not include critical views on women. Therefore the Letter of Jeremiah's different interest may raise questions—and encourage the reader to examine the rhetoric and ideology of both writings. Both books feature fictitious locations: the Letter of Jeremiah in the

19. For a good introduction, see Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 2000); Hille Haker, Luiz Carlos Susin, and Éloi Messi Metogo, eds., *Concilium: Postcolonial Theology* 49 (London: SCM Press, 2013); Andreas Nehring, and Simon Tielech, eds., *Postkoloniale Theologie: Bibelhermeneutische und kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2013).

conquered city of Jerusalem, where her inhabitants await deportation to Babylonia; and Baruch in Babylonia not long after Jerusalem's fall. Both books evoke a moment of extreme political and religious crisis. In both books, the two geographic antipodes are symbolic: for those who write Jeremiah's Letter, Jerusalem symbolizes the center of their identity overcome by a mighty empire;²⁰ for those who write the book of Baruch, the river Sud is a symbol of space within the vast Babylonian Empire where the deported live and orient their minds back to Jerusalem. Both writings, in their specific ways, struggle with the reality that part of the Jewish community lives outside Jerusalem and Judah and has to accommodate to this situation for a long time.

An appropriate approach to both books, then, is to use literary methods of analysis (structural, narrative, rhetorical, ideological) and try to combine feminist and gender-sensitive perspectives with attentiveness to "the colonial" on a multiplicity of levels: as a textual construction of the given situation as colonization, as a set of structures which influences the perspectives of those who are behind the text, as a problem of scholarly research on these books, and as a problem of present reception.

Voices

According to the concept of Wisdom Commentary, several voices besides that of the primary author are included. For each of the large parts in Bar 1–6 one other voice contributes three to five continuous passages. For Bar 1–2, known as the penitential prayer, Klaus Mertes, SJ, writes on the "guilt of fathers and rulers." He is the Jesuit priest who in 2010 initiated the debate in Germany on sexual violence against boys by Catholic priests and became one of the spokespeople who called for a thorough investigation that would break the silence.²¹ In relation to Baruch's wisdom poem in Bar 3–4, Prof. Dr. Kyung-Sook Lee, a Methodist Old Testament feminist scholar from Ewha University in Seoul, South Korea, the largest women's university worldwide, contributes reflections on Christian and Buddhist/Confucian wisdom.²² The speech by and to Jerusalem in Bar 4–5 is treated by Prof. Dr. Tal Ilan, an Israeli scholar

20. On the notion of "empire," see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word: Scripture and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).

21. See Klaus Mertes, *Verlorenes Vertrauen. Katholisch sein in der Krise* (Freiburg: Herder, 2013).

22. See Kyung-Sook Lee, "1 & 2 Kings," in *Global Bible Commentary*, ed. Daniel Patte et al. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2005), 105–18, and Kyung-Sook Lee, "Books of Kings:

teaching Jewish studies at Freie Universität Berlin, Germany. Prof. Ilan is well known for her efforts to integrate Jewish women into Second Temple and Rabbinic history²³ and for her project of a feminist commentary on the Talmud.²⁴ The idol mockery in the Letter of Jeremiah (Bar 6) is taken up by Dr. Antony John Baptist, a Catholic priest from Tamil Nadu, South India, who in his research at the Asian Center for Cross Cultural Studies in Madras reads the Bible from the context of Dalits and Dalit women. Dalit people belong to one of the lowest casts in India and sometimes are even considered “outcasts.”²⁵ I am very grateful to P. Mertes, Dr. Lee, Dr. Ilan, and Dr. John Baptist for their willingness to be part of this enterprise!

Thanks

My involvement with Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah dates back to the time I prepared the short commentary on both books for the one-volume feminist commentary *Kompendium feministische Bibelauslegung*.²⁶ The opportunity to translate Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah for *Bibel in gerechter Sprache*,²⁷ an inclusive-language German translation of the Bible, and to revise these books for the official German Catholic *Einheitsübersetzung* helped to sharpen my sensibility for classical exegetical concerns related to these books as well as for gender-relevant questions. Thanks go to Sandra Schroer in Cologne, who helped to start the project with valuable bibliographical research, and to Dr. Johanna Erzberger and Leonie Leibold in Muenster, who provided countless books and articles and engaged in discussion with me on relevant topics. Verena Suchhart in Muenster provided competent assistance in formatting the

Images of Women without Women's Reality," in Schottroff and Wacker, *Feminist Biblical Interpretation*, 159–77.

23. See Tal Ilan, *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine: An Inquiry into Image and Status* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995); Tal Ilan, *Integrating Women into Second Temple History* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999).

24. Between the 2007 introductory volume—Tal Ilan et al., eds., *A Feminist Commentary on the Babylonian Talmud* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007)—and 2013, six volumes of the Feminist Commentary have appeared.

25. See Antony John Baptist, *Together as Sisters: Hagar and Dalit Women* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2012).

26. Wacker, “Baruch,” 431–38.

27. Marie-Theres Wacker, “Das Buch Baruch,” 1281–87; “Jeremiabrief,” 1287–90, in *Bibel in gerechter Sprache. Taschenausgabe*, ed. Ulrike Bail, Frank Crüsemann, et al., 4th rev. ed. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2011).

footnotes and, together with Simone Bomholt, helped to compile the indexes. Martha M. Matesich kindly translated the contributions by Klaus Mertes. My thanks are, last but not least, to the general editor of *Wisdom Commentary*, Barbara E. Reid, OP, and to Carol J. Dempsey, OP, volume editor, for inviting me to contribute and for answering my innumerable questions.

Baruch

Introduction

The book of Baruch in its present form is a complex, multi-referential, hybrid composition, to reformulate Odil Hannes Steck's valuable insights in terms of literary-structural analysis.¹ It starts, after its heading, with a narrative: Baruch reads his book to the community of exiles gathered at the shores of a river in Babylonia (Bar 1:3-4). The reaction of the people is to have the book sent to the priests in the city of Jerusalem and to ask for a liturgy to be celebrated there (Bar 1:5-13). In terms of narrative space, the exiles build a communicative bridge between Babylonia and Jerusalem; they recognize Jerusalem as their religious center and point of orientation. As part of the liturgy, they want the book they send to be read out loud (1:14). What follows is a long penitential prayer (1:15-3:8), a poem searching for the traces of wisdom, framed by the exhortation to understand that Israel departed from the ways of wisdom but is able to return (3:9-4:4), and a speech addressed to the personified city of Jerusalem whose lament is cited, followed by a prophetic oracle of hope for her (4:5-5:9). These are common themes

1. See Odil Hannes Steck, *Das apokryphe Baruchbuch*, FRLANT 160 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), and Odil Hannes Steck, "Das Buch Baruch," in *ATD Apokryphen*, vol. 5, ed. Otto Kaiser and Lothar Perlitt (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 9-68.

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in Second Temple Judaism and “have a protean quality that allows them to be applied to various situations.”²

The book has no narrative conclusion, though, no mention that the message actually was sent out or arrived at its destiny. This brings us back to the overall structure: the very first two verses identify it as the book of Baruch, written shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem (Bar 1:1-2); the following verses (Bar 1:3-7) describe the exiles listening to Baruch and deciding to send the book to Jerusalem. In its present form, this description of the book being read out loud and the communication between Babylonia and Jerusalem being initiated by listening to it is part of the book of Baruch. Thus, the actual book of Baruch is a book about a book, its use in Babylon, and its intended transmission to Jerusalem.³ This self-referential book evidently *was* transmitted, *was* read and listened to, and its open ending in Bar 5:9 might be understood as a hint to the auditors/readers to continue this transmission, to listen to it, to read it.⁴

There is, however, not only an open end but also an open beginning.⁵ Most commentators think that the book which Baruch read out loud

2. Anthony J. Saldarini, “The Book of Baruch. Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *Introduction to Prophetic Literature, the Book of Isaiah, the Book of Jeremiah, the Book of Baruch, the Letter of Jeremiah, the Book of Lamentations, the Book of Ezekiel*, ed. Leander E. Keck, NIB 6 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 929–82, at 933, gives this as a reason why the book’s dating remains open (between pre-Hasmonaean times until after 70 CE). Already Luis Alonso Schökel, “Baruc,” in *Daniel – Baruc – Carta de Jeremias – Lamentaciones*, Los Libros Sagrados 18 (Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad 1976), 126, saw the pre-supposed situation as general and repeatable.

3. In commentaries preceding Steck, like Schökel, “Baruc,” 128, or Benjamin N. Wambacq, “Baruch,” in *Jeremias – Klaagliederen – Baruch – Brief van Jeremias*, De Boeken van het Oude Testament (Roermond and Maaseik: J. J. Romen & Zonen, 1957), 368, this complexity was reason to consider Bar 1:2-14 or Bar 1:3-14 a secondary addition. André Kabasele Mukenge, *L’unité littéraire du Livre de Baruch*, EBib, N.S. 38 (Louvain: Gabalda, 1998), 413–15, uses a narratological approach when describing Bar 1:3-4 as “mise en abîme” (mirror text).

4. See Rüdiger Feuerstein, *Das Buch Baruch. Studien zur Textgestalt und Auslegungsgeschichte*, Europäische Hochschul-Schriften XXIII 614 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1997), 404.

5. In my short commentary on Baruch (Marie-Theres Wacker, “Baruch: Mail from Distant Shores,” in *Feminist Biblical Interpretation: A Compendium of Critical Commentary on the Books of the Bible and Related Literature*, ed. Luise Schottroff and Marie-Theres Wacker [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012], 431–38) I saw the necessity to decide on a clear beginning; now I agree with Egbert Ballhorn, “Baruch—pseudepigraphie Kommunikation,” in *Gesellschaft und Religion in der spätbiblischen und deuterokanonischen Literatur*, ed. Renate Egger-Wenzel, Thomas Elßner, and Vincent Reiterer, DCLS 20 (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), 229–52, who argues that the open beginning corresponds to the open ending.

according to Bar 1:3 is identical to the three parts that follow the narrative introduction: the prayer, the wisdom poem, and the speech on Jerusalem's past and future. As indeed there is no further metanarrative hint within the book, this is one possible option. Alternatively, the prayer recited in the "we form" could be seen as a separate message sent along with the book, which would then mean that "the book" comprises only the sapiential poem (3:9–4:4) and the Jerusalem part (4:5–5:9), both coming from the voice of an individual. In that case, the exiled community would ask the Jerusalemites to pray for them (1:13), suggesting the words of that prayer (1:15b–3:8), and, after having recited the prayer (1:14), to listen to the book (3:9–5:9).⁶

Consequently, what is meant to be "the book" has a multiplicity of referents in Bar 1–5. It might refer, on a first level, to the voice admonishing Israel to follow the paths of wisdom, as this is the precondition to put an end to Jerusalem's sorrow and to let her see the return of her children (3:9–5:9). Or "the book of Baruch" might refer to the three parts—the prayer, the sapiential admonition, and the Jerusalem part—as the presumed book Baruch read out (1:15–5:9). On a second level, it might refer to the book as it stands, including the narrative introduction.

There is a further level, a level zero: the wisdom poem ends up with a reference to the "book of the law" as wisdom given to Israel (4:1–4). Embedded in Baruch's book comprising the story of the transmission of that book, the wording of the book transmitted includes the mention of another book: the Torah of Moses. In addition to that, a closer look into the parts of the actual book of Baruch reveal all of them in rich intertextuality with the Torah in a twofold sense: more specifically as the *Chumash*/Pentateuch, and in a broader sense as referring to the three parts of the Jewish Scriptures, the Tanakh, consisting of the five Books of Moses (Torah); the Prophetical Books (Nevi'im); and the Writings (Ketuvim).

Although the structure of the whole book seems to follow a logic nourished by a rereading of Jeremiah,⁷ the penitential prayer is closest

6. Some older commentaries, reconstructing the textual growth of the book by using stylistic arguments, suggest that the original book of Baruch must be found in the prayer 1:15b–3:8 only.

7. "In Bar haben Einleitung, Bußgebet, Mahnrede, auch Bar *4f in Jer 36 eine Grundlage, alle vier Teile von Bar in Jer 29 und das Buch Baruchs mit seinen drei Teilen in Jer 32! Sie bilden die Leittexte aus Jer, an denen sich die Bar-Formulierung grundlegend orientiert" (Steck, *Das apokryphe Baruchbuch*, 88). English: The introduction, penitential prayer, admonition, also Bar *4 [an earlier version of Bar 4] in Bar have a basis in Jer 36; all four parts of Bar have a basis in Jer 29; and the book of Baruch with its three parts has a basis in Jer 32! They form the key texts of Jer to which Baruch's formulation is basically oriented."

to the Mosaic Torah, the wisdom poem closest to (wisdom) writings, and the Jerusalem part is imbued with allusions to prophetic books. This might point to different original sources for each part of the book.⁸ With its actual compositional form, the book of Baruch is—or claims to be—a Tanakh in its own right, and if the inversed sequence of the parts is taken into account, a *Takhan*. With a different vocalization, this term is equivalent to *Tikkun* (= mending; healing), a notion of some importance in the much later kabbalah and there related to the whole creation.

It therefore makes sense to read the claim of Baruch's book as offering a guide to "mend" or to "heal" a distorted community. A feminist and gender-sensitive reading of Baruch's book might start from this claim and take it seriously. Is this book a guide inclusive enough to heal the whole community? Whose healing is considered? Who is excluded? What are the "remedies"? And who is offered as the "healer"?

8. The older commentaries focus on the reconstruction of such sources. The actual book of Baruch is nevertheless a hybrid compositional unity as Steck (*Das apokryphe and Baruch*) and Mukenge (*L'unité littéraire*) have convincingly shown.

Baruch 1:1-15a

Connecting Babylon and Jerusalem

The Book's Heading and Introduction (1:1-2)

A “written document” (βιβλίον) and its “wording” (λόγοι) is at the center of Bar 1:1-2, in relation to two significant places: written in Babylon, with a view to Jerusalem, the conquered and destroyed city. Implicitly, one gets the notion that Babylon is a place of exile, with, for readers having in mind the book of Jeremiah, at least the two dimensions of a space of forced deportation but also of escape. The one who wrote down the words is named and identified by his genealogy but is grammatically subordinated. By contrast, particular attention is given to the date: a specific day connected to Jerusalem's capture and burning, so that one might think of a commemoration day¹—which is not restricted to the destruction of the temple but devoted to the city as a whole. From the outset, time and space of Baruch's writing are indissolubly tied to time and space of this key event.

According to the Greek book of Jeremiah, Baruch, the secretary-scribe of the prophet, receives the very last oracle of God that Jeremiah has to

1. See remark above concerning the text of 1:2.

Bar 1:1-2

¹These are the words of the book that Baruch son of Neriah son of Mahseiah son of Zedekiah son of Hasadiah son of Hilkiah wrote in Babylon, ²in the fifth year, on the seventh day of the month,^[2] at the time when the Chaldeans took Jerusalem and burned it with fire.

transmit before the fall of Jerusalem is told. It is an oracle of doom as it has to repeat the message of Jerusalem's end, but at the same time, for Baruch, it means survival "every place to which you may go" (Jer 45:5 MT/51:35 LXX). Baruch 1:1 develops this motif and finds Baruch in Babylonia, probably imagining that after he had been forced to go, together with Jeremiah, to Egypt (Jer 43:5-7 MT/50:5-7 LXX), he found his way to the Babylonian Golah. His genealogy verifies that he is Jeremiah's secretary, the son of Neriah. According to a vivid description in Jer 36 MT (43 LXX), Jeremiah used Baruch to write down his words and to read them out before a huge assembly in Jerusalem, thus trying to give more emphasis to his message.

Baruch appears as a "second-order prophet" who did not himself receive the word of God but is necessary for its transmission, and who uses a new medium, not immediate oral announcement, but oral delivery of a written message. The book of Baruch, in turn, makes use of this concept. Baruch's words neither have divine origin nor did he receive them prophetically. But from the very beginning, the first line being in close parallel to the beginning of Jeremiah's letter (Jer 29:1 MT/36:1 LXX), these words "walk" in the footsteps of Jeremiah. Readers familiar with Jeremiah's book could listen to Baruch or read his book as a prolongation of Jeremiah's prophecies, especially as the book of Jeremiah provides a telling story: when King Jehoiakim had burnt the scroll Baruch read out, the scribe rewrote the whole scroll at the prophet's dictation, so that none of Jeremiah's former words could be forgotten—"and many similar words were added to them" (Jer 36:32 MT/43:32 LXX). In Jeremiah's time, his scroll was updated, and, similarly, Baruch's writing could have been seen as another updating, its authority as derived from Jeremiah, God's prophet. On the other hand, the ability to write seems to add to someone's authority. In the book of

2. The month is not specified. Many commentators discuss text-critical issues here. Odil Hannes Steck, *Das apokryphe Baruchbuch*, FRLANT 160 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 17–19, tries to keep the text as it stands and relates the month to the "time when the Chaldeans took Jerusalem" (see 2 Kgs 25:8).

TRANSLATION MATTERS

1:1 *These are the words of the book*: The Greek text starts with *kai*, “and,” connecting Baruch’s writing to the preceding book of Jeremiah.

Baruch, the scribes are self-confident—able to write, learned in authoritative books—as they take up, rework, and actualize Jeremiah’s prophetic words. They imagine themselves in the context of Jerusalem in ruins, hence in a situation where new structures have to emerge, where traditions are threatened with loss if they are not written down and updated.

Baruch’s genealogy, indicated in Bar 1:1, does not limit itself to his father, as is the case in the book of Jeremiah, but is unusually long. Hellenistic-Jewish texts tend to have such complex genealogies³ so that Baruch’s genealogy becomes one of many other indications that his book was composed in Hellenistic times. From a gendered perspective, the genealogy’s androcentrism has to be pointed out, a mirror of a society where the rights of fathers and sons are superior to those of women and daughters. Much research on gender in the society of ancient Israel has been done, revealing that a simple notion of “patriarchy” runs short of more complex structures of female agency.⁴ Nevertheless, in law and public representation, women were seen and kept as inferior or dependent, and they did not have official access to the type of education necessary to become scribes.⁵ This is not unique to ancient Israel and can be explained historically. The problem is rather the seemingly “natural” givenness or even divine revelation of such constructions of asymmetry in a text that became normative for two religions, Judaism and Christianity. Christianity in particular has contributed to stabilizing laws and customs that subordinate women (and children) under the authority of men. Therefore women’s movements have had to go back over and over again to the Bible and read it on their own. It is interesting to see that, today, Muslim women start to reread their Holy Scripture in order to free it from interpretations discriminatory for women, and in some Western contexts questions are raised even concerning the Qur’an’s alleged homophobia.

3. See Mordechai in Esth 2:5 MT/LXX; Add Esth A, 1 or Judith in Jdt 9:1.

4. Carol L. Meyers, “Was Ancient Israel a Patriarchal Society?,” *JBL* 133 (2014): 8–27.

5. See especially Tal Ilan’s research from Hasmonaean to mishnaic periods: *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine: An Inquiry into Image and Status* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 190–204.

Liturgies in Exile and in Jerusalem (1:3-15a)

Baruch 1:1-2 can be understood as a superscription opening a book. Its closest parallel, Jer 29:1 MT/36:1 LXX, opens a letter Jeremiah sends from Jerusalem to those in Babylonia. What follows in Jeremiah is the wording of the Letter, while what follows in Bar 1:3-7 presupposes the superscription as part of the narrative. The book of Baruch starts with a report of its own reading. Right at the book's beginning the crucial importance of written (and oral) communication and tradition becomes already evident.

According to the narrative, starting with 1:3, Baruch reads out his book, and the community reacts with rites that could be understood as mourning rites or penitential rites (1:5). The people collect money and send it to Jerusalem (1:6-7). Before specifying its purpose, the information is given by means of a parenthesis (1:8-9) that the precious vessels of the temple taken by the Babylonians⁶ are brought back to their land of origin. Such restoration of temple property was probably considered a necessary precondition to the exiles asking the priests in Jerusalem along with the people there to prepare offerings (1:10).⁷ Again these rites seem to have a double meaning: the offerings accompany the prayers for the foreign rulers (1:11-12) and also the intercessory prayers for those who confess to have sinned (1:13-14). As a last element in this proposed liturgy comes the reading of the book the exiles are going to send to Jerusalem along with the money. They ask for a repeated reading at specific memorial or feast days; they want to give permanent dignity and authority to the book they themselves have listened to.

Baruch, who had written down (Bar 1:1-2) and is now reading out his text (1:3), performs two modes of communication that are both essential for the spirit of this biblical book: what is written down has to be made heard, and what has been heard can be transmitted to other audiences when written down. How Baruch himself received what he communicates is not explicitly revealed; in particular, the designation "prophet" is not used for him. The fact, however, that his book was transmitted as part of the Jeremian corpus and opens with the conjunction "and" allows for the implication that it was considered as drawing on Jeremiah's prophecy written down by Baruch his secretary (Jer 36:32 MT/43:32 LXX). And vice

6. See 2 Kgs 25:13-15/Jer 52:17-19.

7. See Anthony J. Saldarini, "The Book of Baruch: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *Introduction to Prophetic Literature, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Baruch, Letter of Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel*, ed. Leander E. Keck, NIB 6 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 929-82, at 944.

Bar 1:3-15a

³Baruch read the words of this book to Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and to all the people who came to hear the book, ⁴and to the nobles and the princes, and to the elders, and to all the people, small and great, all who lived in Babylon by the river Sud.

⁵Then they wept, and fasted, and prayed before the Lord; ⁶they collected as much money as each could give, ⁷and sent it to Jerusalem to the high priest Jehoiakim son of Hilkiah son of Shallum, and to the priests, and to all the people who were present with him in Jerusalem. ⁸At the same time, on the tenth day of Sivan, Baruch took the vessels of the house of the Lord, which had been carried away from the temple, to return them to the land of Judah—the silver vessels that Zedekiah son of Josiah, king of Judah, had made, ⁹after King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had carried away from Jerusalem Jeconiah and the princes and the prisoners^[8] and the nobles and the people of the land, and brought them to Babylon.

¹⁰They said: Here we send you money; so buy with the money burnt offerings and sin offerings and incense, and prepare a grain offering, and offer them on the altar of the Lord our God; ¹¹and pray for the life of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and for the life of his son Belshazzar, so that their days on earth may be like the days of heaven. ¹²The Lord will give us strength, and light to our eyes; we shall live under the protection of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and under the protection of his son Belshazzar, and we shall serve them many days and find favor in their sight. ¹³Pray also for us to the Lord our God, for we have sinned against the Lord our God, and to this day the anger of the Lord and his wrath have not turned away from us. ¹⁴And you shall read aloud this scroll that we are sending you, to make your confession in the house of the Lord on the days of the festivals and at appointed seasons.

^{15a}And you shall say:

versa: the secretary-scribe and his reading are part of a public ceremony that brings together those “who came to the book” as Bar 1:3 could more literally be rendered. “This book” (1:3; βιβλος) does not appear to refer to Baruch’s writing (1:1; βιβλιον) but rather refers to a text already authoritative for the community assembled, so that Baruch’s reading meets an audience gathered for a liturgy or catechesis or both—at least that might have been the idea of the Greek translator. In a supposed Hebrew original, however, the situation could have been more mundane, a simple public gathering to listen to a message received like Jeremiah’s letter sent from Jerusalem (Jer 29 MT/36 LXX).

8. Text-critical matter: The Greek word δεσμώτης, “prisoners,” is also found in Jer 24:1 MT=LXX and Jer 36:2 LXX/29:2 MT in a very similar list of deported persons

TRANSLATION MATTERS

1:3 *who came to hear the book*: τῶν ἐρχομένων πρὸς τὴν βίβλον, literally: “who came to the book/writing.”

1:3-4 *read . . . to: ἀνέγνω . . . ἐν ὠσὶ*, literally: “read into the ears of.”

1:7 *the high priest Jehoiakim*: Ἰωακείμ . . . τὸν ἱερέα, literally: “the priest Jehoiakim.”

1:8 *Baruch took the vessels*: The Greek text leaves open who transfers the vessels to Jerusalem. Syntactically the priest Jehoiakim mentioned in v. 7 is the best candidate.

1:14 *scroll*: The same Greek word, βιβλίον, is used here and in vv. 1, 2 (where NRSV translates “book”); the “book” was probably in the form of a “scroll.”

1:14 *to make your confession*: alternatively the Greek infinitive ἐξαγορεύσαι could refer to the book: “to make it known”; “to read it out.”

The community of exiles comes into view twice: first, the people as a whole headed by its king who is called by his name to give honor to him⁹ but also to refer, within the narrative, to the situation indicated in the book’s superscription (Bar 1:3); then, the people classified by age (or wealth), preceded by a hierarchy of nobles, close to the royal court, and authorities related to the ordinary people (1:4), hence a more differentiated social structure. All of them are involved in a similar way, by their ears, as the reading is in Greek literally “into the ears” of them (repeated five times in 1:3-4), appealing to their physical and mental attention, as Baruch already did when Jeremiah had told him to write down and then read out “into the ears” of everybody all the words of his prophecy (Jer 36 MT/43 LXX). All of them share a common living area in Babylonia connected to a river named Sud whose geography is unknown and whose name might serve a typological function indicating a place of assembly or council meeting (סוד, [*sud* or *sod*] = “assembly” or “council?”).¹⁰

and might have found its way from there into the book of Baruch. In Jeremiah, the Hebrew text reads מַסְגֵּר, “blacksmith,” an important group of professionals the Babylonians would have had reason to deport. The book of Baruch refers to the Greek, not the Hebrew, text of Jeremiah here.

9. On the concept of honor and shame in the book of Baruch, see below (on Bar 1:15b-2:10).

10. Some commentators, like Ivo Meyer, “Das Buch Baruch und der Brief des Jeremia,” in *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, ed. Erich Zenger and Christian Frevel,

In contrast to the rather complex picture of the social stratification, there is no gender differentiation, neither among those from the royal court, nor among the people. This is even more remarkable as the book of Jeremiah knows about the mother of the king who together with Jeconiah was deported to Babylonia (Jer 29:2 MT). The Greek translation (Jer 36:2 LXX) includes eunuchs along with other officials, the Second Book of Kings adds Jeconiah's wives (2 Kgs 24:15), and the first song of Lamentations mourns that "young women and young men have gone into captivity" (Lam 1:18). Baruch 1:3-4 has its focus on only the male members of the community. Indeed, among "all the people, small and great" (1:4) women and girls as well as persons who are seen as non-male may be included, but the text does not grant them visibility. The implicit authors of Baruch's book do not have a recognizable interest in non-male recipients of their message. Therefore, Bar 1:3-4 is open to an inclusive reading along the lines of Deut 31:12 or Josh 8:35, where a public reading of the Torah reaches men and women, little children and old people, and even the foreigners within Israel, but it is also open to tendencies of exclusion or hierarchization, as in Jer 29:1-32, where Jeremiah's letter goes to the (male) authorities who then have to ensure what has been suggested.

The community's reaction, after having listened to the reading, is twofold, one addressed to God, the other to Jerusalem. Before God, referred to as κύριος, "Lord,"¹¹ a frequent rendering of the divine name YHWH in the Septuagint, there is weeping, fasting, and praying, a ritual reaction in case of distress. If this reaction is seen in simple chronological sequence to the reading, it becomes part of the ceremony or liturgy the community is performing—at the commemoration day of the city's destruction (Bar 1:2). If the reaction is seen as caused by what the community heard, then the content of Baruch's book must have provoked it. Maybe both perspectives do not rule out each other: what follows explains the people's reaction and seems to be a writing appropriate for such a memorial day, be it the wisdom speech and the Jerusalem oracle only (3:9–5:9) or be it this part preceded by the prayer (1:15b–3:8 and 3:9–5:9). Read against the background of Jer 36 MT/43 LXX, Baruch's words now finally find the reaction Jeremiah's words read out by his scribe in Jerusalem did not find.

8th ed. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2012), 585–91, at 587, with reference to Jer 52:11 MT, suggest an emendation to Hebrew: סור ("departure").

11. κύριος is used in Bar 1:5–3:8 only. See comment in part 5.

For Jerusalem, there is a collection of silver money whose recipients are listed (Bar 1:7), thus characterizing the community of Jerusalem as an organization with a single priest as head (identified by name and genealogy but without the title “high priest”) and a body of priests differentiated from the rest of the people, hence a hierocratic structure. By way of keyword association with “silver,” a parenthetical note (1:8-9) recalls the silver vessels of the temple that had been brought back from Babylon to Jerusalem, and introduces an important detail: the Judeans in Babylon¹² were by force “carried away from their home” in Jerusalem. The Greek verb used here (ἀποικίζω; Bar 1:9; see also 2:14) may allude, for a Greek-speaking audience, to “living in a colony,” hence a foundation to expand into new soils, mostly with trading interests.¹³ The context in Bar 1, however, brings into the foreground the meaning of the underlying Hebrew verb גלה (here in its Hif’il form), which carries a strong connotation of violence, including rape of women. The community in Babylonia sees itself not as colonizers with ties to the metropolis but as deported people oriented toward their mother city.¹⁴

This community formulates a message to be sent to Jerusalem, quoted in direct speech (Bar 1:10-14).¹⁵ They explain the intended use of the money: to purchase material for appropriate sacrificial animals, grain, and incense offerings. They specify the type of offerings and combine it with their specific purpose: that related prayers be performed. After the dramatic remembrance of Jerusalem’s destruction, the first request of prayer comes as a surprise, as it entrusts the ruler of Babylon and his son, their lives, and the stability of their kingdom, to the protection of Israel’s God. The exiled community seems to resign itself to its fate; the people accept Jeremiah’s letter (Jer 29:4-7 MT/36:4-7 LXX) advising them to make the best of their situation, which is expected to last for a long

12. See text-critical matters related to Bar 1:9. See also Jer 29:2 MT/36:2 LXX.

13. For more information on colonization in antiquity, including Greek and Hellenistic colonies, see Walter Eder et al., “Colonization,” *Brill’s New Pauly*, ed. Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider (Brill Online, 2006), <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/brill-s-new-pauly/colonization-e618410>; for a more classical work, see Alexander John Graham, *Colony and Mother City in Ancient Greece*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Ares Publishers, 1983).

14. See also the comments on Bar 2:30, 32 (ἀποικισμός); 3:7-8 (ἀποικία) below.

15. By translating 1:10 “La carta decía así” (“The letter said the following”), Alonso Schökel underlines the written communication; the biblical text itself, however, does not specify this. Luis Alonso Schökel, “Baruc,” in *Daniel—Baruc—Carta de Jeremías—Lamentaciones*, Los Libros Sagrados 18 (Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad 1976), 133.

period of time. Jeremiah 29:10 MT predicts seventy years. In contrast, however, to Jeremiah's letter asking the people to pray for the peace of "the city" (Jer 29:7 MT) or "the land" (Jer 36:7 LXX), Bar 1:11 focuses on the king and his son, the same king who "carried away all of them" (1:9), and 1:12 underlines the will to be obedient slaves in the service of the court. The community's wish to pray for the oppressor¹⁶ might be an inevitable *captatio benevolentiae*¹⁷ but sounds like a second submission after the first, the forced one; it sounds like colonized language.¹⁸ A slight tone of resistance might be heard when the community asks God to give them "strength and light to our eyes" (1:12) to survive their exile.

The second request for prayer addressed to the Jerusalemites turns to the community of exiles itself. They need offerings and prayers because they recognize their situation as a consequence of their guilt. The enduring wrath of God reflects the enormous dimensions of the sins committed. Jerusalem's destruction and the deportation of her inhabitants is interpreted here in line with deuteronomistic theology—also attested by the book of Jeremiah—as a consequence of Israel's revolt against her God, a concept shaping the book of Baruch as a whole. The confession of sins turns the ceremony at the river Sud into a penitential liturgy, with weeping and fasting (Bar 1:5) as related elements. Likewise, what ought to be done in Jerusalem gets the shape of such a liturgy (1:14)¹⁹ in which reading Baruch's scroll aloud must take a central place. The altar of the temple as a site of God's former presence is still thought to be an appropriate site for sin offerings that are trying at least to mitigate God's wrath, as well as for prayers of supplication and for the public reading of a writing that

16. It is true that, according to Bar 1:2, the Chaldeans, not the Babylonians, burned the city of Jerusalem, and if Bar 1:8-9 is taken to be a secondary addition, as some commentators suggest, one could avoid such a reading. The text as it stands, though, reveals a perspective of colonized people adapting to the oppressor.

17. Steck, *Das apokryphe Baruchbuch*, 46, refers to Ezra 6:10 and 7:23 for the order of the Persian King Darius to pray for the king. Alonso Schökel, *Baruc*, 135, sees in the prayer an act of political prudence and at the same time a religious act, as the exiles accept the foreign ruler as their punishment and hope that the oppressor turns into a protector when the sinners had been forgiven. Schökel tries to reconstruct the logic of the text; at any rate, there is no political rebellion but submission to the actual fate.

18. Josef Schreiner, "Baruch," in *Klagelieder/Baruch*, NEchtB Altes Testament 14, ed. Josef G. Plöger and others (Würzburg: Echter, 1986), might have felt this problem when he refers to "the prayer for the oppressor" (56) and considers Bar 1:11-12 as a later addition.

19. See Translation Matters of 1:14 for a different explanation.

is meant to provoke similar reactions in Jerusalem as it did in Babylon. This again is a confirmation that Baruch's writing must be related to this concern of sin, wrath, resignation, suffering, and maybe hope.

If the last part of the community's exhortation to the Jerusalemites can be understood as part of a hendiadys "read aloud" (1:14) and "say" (1:15a), the following prayer may well be considered as the beginning of Baruch's words read aloud.²⁰ Another possibility is to see the prayer as part of the general message sent to Jerusalem, created by those at the river Sud as their reaction to the book and as their suggested introduction before the Jerusalemites listen to the book starting with 3:9. In Babylon, then, the prayer would have followed the book consisting of Bar 3:9–5:9 as an apt reaction to it; in Jerusalem, this prayer would become the first "text" of what is now the book of Baruch.²¹ In Jerusalem, the sequence of penitential prayer, exhortation and consolation/good news would correspond to a liturgical order to be repeated.

20. The verb ἐξαγορεύω in v. 14, meaning "to act out" and in the LXX sometimes "to confess," would underline this interpretation.

21. There is textual evidence that already in late antiquity/the Early Middle Ages the sequence of Bar 1:1-4 + 3:9-5:9 + 1:5-3:8 (hence the prayer including the decision to send the book to Jerusalem at the end of the present book of Baruch) was considered an apt one: three Latin codices from tenth-century Spain have this textual sequence (see Rüdiger Feuerstein, *Das Buch Baruch. Studien zur Textgestalt und Auslegungsgeschichte*, Europäische Hochschul-Schriften XXIII/614 [Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1997], 51-55). According to Feuerstein they are of no further textual-critical relevance, while Mukenge (André Kabasele Mukenge, *L'unité littéraire du Livre de Baruch, EBib*, N.S. 38 [Louvain: Gabalda, 1998], 398), without knowing Feuerstein's critical assessment, uses one of them, Codex Legionensis, to argue for a literary development of the book of Baruch with a first stage comprising 1:1-3 + 3:9-5:9 only, and for the insertion of 1:15b-3:8 and the narrative part 1:4-15a. Such a redactional critical hypothesis was already developed in the nineteenth-century by critics like Johann Jacob Kneucker (*Das Buch Baruch, Geschichte und Kritik, Übersetzung und Erklärung auf Grund des wiederhergestellten hebräischen Urtextes* [Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1879], 16-20) and followed, for example, by Owen C. Whitehouse ("The Book of Baruch," in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, ed. Robert Charles [Oxford: Clarendon, 1913], 571) without using textual criticism. It is interesting to see that from different methodological points of view a narrative sequence as suggested here was able to gain plausibility.