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There is Hope for the Scattered People
(Bar 1:15aβ-3:8)

Povzetek: Je upanje za razkropljeno ljudstvo (Bar 1,15aβ-3,8)

Spokorna molitev v Bar 1,15-3,8 je prvi izmed treh delov, ki sestavljajo devterokanonično Baruhovo knjigo. Uvod (1,1-14) predstavi namen tega, kar sledi. Izgnanci se zavedajo, zakaj so pregnani v tujo deželo. Zaradi njihovega greha sta nad njimi Božja jeza in njegov srd. Potem ko je skupnost izgnancev slišala besede Baruhove knjige, je sprejela spokorno držo. Njihovo vedenje je predstavljeno kot normativno za prihodnje rodove. Zato si v naslednjem koraku prizadevajo, da bi se jim skupnost v Jeruzalemu pridružila v istem zadržanju. Spokorna molitev predstavlja uvod. Jeruzaleščani naj bi izpovedali Božjo pravičnost in svojo krivdo v vsem, kar je prišlo nadnje. Molitev je sorodna z ostalima dvema deloma knjige, posebno s pesmijo v tretjem delu, kjer Jeruzalem tolaži svoje razkropljene otroke (4,5-5,9). Priporočilo v drugem delu, naj iščejo modrost v poslušnosti Božjim zapovedim (3,9-4,4), ima prav tako podobnosti s spokorno molitvijo. Celotna knjiga je očitno zakoreninjena v devteronomistični in jeremijanski literaturi pa tudi v drugih knjigah hebrejskega Svetega pisma.

Razprava se posveča pomenu krivde, kazni in odpuščanja v spokorni molitvi. Samo dotaknila se bo dejstva, da v knjigi ni omenjen odziv Jeruzaleščanov na to knjigo in da tudi ne obstaja noben primerek Baruhove knjige v hebrejščini. Morda njenega predloga niso sprejeli? Ali pa je bila sestavljena zato, da služi kot nekakšen povzetek naraščajočega svetopisemskega kanona? V vsakem primeru je njen namen očiten – da bi gradila edinstvo med ljudstvom v Judeji in razkropljenimi v tujini.

Ključne besede: Gospod, naš Bog, pravičnost, sramota, krivda, kazen, izpoved, trpljenje, prošnja, usmiljenje.

Abstract: The penitential prayer (Bar 1:15-3:8) is the first of the three parts that compose the deuterocanonical book of Baruch. The introduction (1:1-14) displays the aim of what follows. The exiles are aware why they are scattered in the foreign country. Because of their sin the Lord's wrath and anger are upon them. The community of the exiles, after having heard the words of the book of Baruch, takes on a penitential attitude. Their reaction is presented as normative for further generations. Therefore in their next step they endeavour to include the community of Jerusalem into the same behaviour. The penitential prayer is the introduction. The Jerusalemites should confess God's righteousness and their guilt in everything that came upon them. The prayer has affinities with the other two parts of the book, especially with the poem in which Jerusalem consoles her scattered children (4:5-5:9, the third part). The admonition to seek wisdom in obeying the commandments of the Lord (3:9-4:4, the second part) has connections with the penitential prayer as well. The whole book is evidently rooted in the Deuteronomistic and Jeremian literature and also in other books of the Hebrew Bible. The paper discusses the meaning of guilt, punishment and forgiveness in the penitential prayer. It only touches upon the issue that the book does not mention the reaction of the Jerusalemites nor does there exist any example of the book of Baruch in Hebrew. Was the proposal of the book not accepted? Or was the book composed to serve as a compendium of the growing canon? In any case, its intention is clear to build unity between the people in Judea and those scattered abroad.

Key words: Lord, our God, righteousness, shame, guilt, punishment, confession, suffering, petition, mercy.

1. Content and Aim of the Book of Baruch

The book of Baruch is one of the Deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament.¹ It encourages the people of Israel in exile by showing them the way out of misery. The book consists of five chapters only, yet it raises various questions regarding its literary unity. Following the introduction (1:1-15a α) there is a penitential prayer (1:15a β -3:8), written in prose. The other two parts are poetry. In 3:9-4:4 Baruch admonishes his compatriots to seek wisdom in obeying the commandments of the Lord. In 4:5-5:9 Jerusalem laments the sad destiny of her children, urging them to hope in the fulfilment of God's promises.² The introduction shows the whole nation of Israel in exile listening to the book and taking the words to their heart. They do their best to ensure that the community in Jerusalem will follow their example.³

The book claims its author is Jeremiah's companion and secretary, Baruch the son of Neriah (Bar 1:1), who also read the book before the exiles and started the activities that followed (cf. 1:3ff.). In the twentieth century a closer scrutiny showed that none of the constituent parts of the book could really have been written by Baruch in the 6th century B.C. It was rather compiled from different parts and ascribed to Baruch as a personality of renown.⁴ The compilers are considered to belong to the circle of professional theologians, the Hasidaeans, who looked for political peace (cf. 1 Macc 7:12ff.), were faithful to the high priest, who was named by the Seleucides, and kept their distance from the Maccabees and also the Hellenists. Yet they talked to all the different groups in Israel without polemics, in order to gain their unity, to make them accept conversion and leave it to God to save them at the proper time. They adhered to the radical unity of all Israelites as God's people, who had a chance to survive.⁵

¹ Called so by Roman Catholics and Pseudepigraphical or Apocryphal by Protestants and some Orthodox Christians.

² These parts are designated by commentators with the letters A,B,C,D.

³ In the Vulgate the letter of Jeremiah to the exiles in Babylon is added, which warns them not let themselves be seduced by the worthless Babylonian gods (chapter 6).

⁴ R. Feuerstein refutes Steck's proposition of the unity of the book from its beginning between 164 and 150 B.C., and written by one author, in *Das Apokryphe Baruchbuch: Studien zu Rezeption und Konzentration »kanonischer« Überlieferung*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993. R. Feuerstein claims the book comprised three major sections, which had originally been independent and distinct from one another. See the critical presentation of the history of use of Bar and its researches in *Das Buch Baruch: Studien zur Textgestalt und Auslegungsgeschichte*, Peter Lang Europäischer Verlag der Wissenschaften, XXIII Theologie, Frankfurt am Main / Berlin / Bern / New York / Paris / Wien, 1997, 5-367. See also D. G. Burke, *The Poetry of Baruch: A Reconstruction and Analysis of the Original Hebrew Text of Baruch 3:9-5:9*, SBL Septuagint and Cognate Studies 10, Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982.

⁵ Cf. O. H. Steck, *Das apokryphe Baruchbuch*, 306-311.

The Deuteronomistic (Dtr) teaching on God's historical dealings with Israel displays itself in the book clearly (cf. Deut 4:26ff.; 28:63ff.; 30:1ff.). The author of Bar follows the Dtr concept with its themes of guilt, punishment, conversion, forgiveness and salvation. In this he leans on Jer 29-33; 36; Neh 8-11, especially on Jeremiah's letter to the exiles (Jer 29).⁶

Some commentators have stated there is nothing original in this content - the authors leaned their teaching on the Canon that included Torah, Nebiim and Ketubim. They saw in them conformity with the contemporary situation in Israel. They took different texts from the biblical tradition and formed a small compendium of the Bible. It directs Israel in the Diaspora and in Jerusalem towards the hope in salvation. No person was more appropriate to function as the author of this book than Baruch, the witness of God's words to Jeremiah, and his scribe (cf. Jer 36; 45:1-5). So they constructed an introduction, in which Baruch performed an important role for the whole of Israel at the beginning of the exile. It was clear that the same attitude as in the past was also valid for the present and the future. Therefore the book of Baruch should be read in the synagogues on the days of fasting (cf. 1:3-5) as well as on the festival days and at appointed seasons (cf. 1:10-14).⁷

According to Jer 24; 29 and Dan 1-5, the exiles were the model for all Israel, so the book of Baruch came from the exile to Jerusalem to function there at the time of Israel's subjection to the Seleucides.⁸ The book

⁶ Cf. O. H. Steck, R. G. Kratz, I. Kottsieper, *Das Buch Baruch, Der Brief des Jeremia, Zusätze zu Ester und Daniel*, ATD 14, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998, 19-20.

⁷ It was therefore also quickly translated into Greek and Aramean/Syriac. The 2nd century seems appropriate as the date of the composition of Bar, concretely 164-162 B.C. This means after the dedication of the Temple and the death of Antiochus IV in 164, and before Demetrius took the throne in 162, i.e., during the reign of Antiochus V, who offered peace to the Jews and religious freedom (cf. 1 Macc 7). According to O. H. Steck, the book could have been written as a concept for the priest Alcimus, who was made high priest by the king Demetrius (cf. 1 Macc 7:12). Contrary to the programme of Antiochus IV to make his whole kingdom one people (cf. 1 Macc 1:41ff.), the book of Baruch sought the unity of all Israelites. It tried to win over all the different groups and sections in Israel to the idea of unity - the Torah pious, the Hellenistically oriented, the Maccabees and their followers - see O. H. Steck, op. cit., 22-23.

⁸ O. H. Steck, op. cit., 22-23, claims that the book was, however, composed in Jerusalem - by a group of Bible experts (cf. 1 Macc 7:12), the Torah pious, who adhered to the Dtr teaching, with its acknowledgment of Israel's guilt and the necessity of reconciliation. R. Feuerstein, on the grounds of his analysis, came to another conclusion: for the date of the penitential prayer in Bar 1:15-3:8 the *terminus a quo* is the 4th century B.C., a date that linguistic, literary and theological reasons can support. As for the *terminus ad quem*, the silence in Baruch's prayer about the desolation of the Temple, while in Daniel's prayer it is emphasized strongly (cf. Dan 9:16-18), suggests it must have been composed before Antioch's profanation of the temple in 167 B.C. - cf. C. A. Moore, »Toward the dating of the Book of Baruch«, in: *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 36 (1974), 316-317. R. Feuerstein

provided the biblically most central message that the people of God needed at a time in which it was hard to survive.⁹ During the time when Israel was subjected to the foreign power of the Seleucides, the authors of Bar reached at the beginning of the exile, when Israel was subjected to the Babylonian power. In continuity with this beginning, the listeners and readers in the Seleucide period could identify themselves as part of exilic Israel. What was valid for Israel at the beginning of the exile was valid also for them at this time. The authors constructed this example and placed it at the beginning of the exile, to show their contemporaries how to act and behave.¹⁰ So they offered their dispersed compatriots an acceptable explanation for their difficult situation. They included a proposal on how to find a way out, and an ardent appeal that they should follow it.

The aim of this paper is to research the meaning of guilt, punishment, conversion and forgiveness in the penitential prayer of the book of Baruch (1:15ab-3:8). It asks how the authors tried to make their compatriots - at a time of territorial and political dispersion - recognize God's plan for them, how they led Israel to confess the guilt of their ancestors and their own guilt, to abstain from the activities they did not consider appropriate, and in faithfulness to God to find his blessing again.

2. Commentary on the Penitential Prayer (1:15aβ-3:8)

2.1 Context

2.1.1 Historical Introduction (1:1-15aα)

The book of Baruch starts with a »historical« introduction. It explains the circumstances in which the book was written and read for the first time and for what aim. It speaks about the reaction of the book's first listeners in Babylon, and prepares the listeners in Jerusalem to react in the same way. The introduction is followed by a penitential prayer as the appropriate answer the people should give to the Lord.

These are the words of the book that Bar'uch the son of Nerī'ah, son of Mah'sēi'ah son of Zedekī'ah son of Hasadī'ah son of Hilkī'ah wrote in Babylon, in the fifth year, on the seventh day of the month, at the time when

dates the book between the 3rd and the 1st centuries B.C., precisely after the redaction of Chronicles and before the Maccabean and Qumran era - see *Das Buch Baruch*, 473.

⁹ Its aim of uniting all the Israelites did not succeed in Palestine. It survived in the Diaspora and especially in the Christian period.

¹⁰ Cf. O. H. Steck, *Das Buch Baruch*, 25-26.

the Chaldēans took Jerusalem and burned it with fire.

And Bar'uch read the words of this book to Jeconī'ah son of Jehoī'akim, king of Judah, and to all the people who came to hear the book, and 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.

Then they wept, and fasted, and prayed before the Lord; they collected as much money as each could give, and sent it to Jerusalem to the high priest Jehoī'akim son of Hilkā'ah son of Shal'lum, and to the priests, and to all the people who were present with him in Jerusalem. At the same time, on the tenth day of Sīv'an, Bar'uch 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 Zedekī'ah son of Jōsī'ah, king of Judah, had made, after King Nebūchadnezzar of Babylon had carried away from Jerusalem Jeconī'ah and the princes and the prisoners and the noble and the people of the land, and brought them to Babylon.

They 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; and pray for the life of King Nebūchadnezzar of Babylon, and for the life of his son Belshaz'zar, so that their days on earth may be like the days of heaven. The Lord will give us strength, and light to our eyes; we shall live under the protection of King Nebūchadnezzar of Babylon, and under the protection his son Belshaz'zar, and we shall serve them many days and find favor in their sight. Pray 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. And 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 (1:1-14).

This introduction has given rise to numerous interpretations of its origin and its aim. Its inaccuracies led scholars to the conclusion it could not have been composed by a writer of the 6th century B.C., as is stated in 1:2.¹¹ A scrutiny of its historical value showed the only serious mistake is that Belshazzar is taken to be the son of Nebuchadnezzar (v. 12).¹²

¹¹ A more pernicious conclusion, however, was that it has no historical value or reliability. The same view was held by older Protestant scholars. Roman Catholics, on the other hand, endeavoured to defend its historicity so much that they neglected the rest of the book of Baruch - cf. R. Feuerstein, *Das Buch Baruch*, 370-371.

¹² Nevertheless, even this fault presents no insoluble problem. The question is whether *ufoj* was meant in the narrow meaning of »son« or in its broader sense - cf. R. Feuerstein, *op. cit.*, 372. There is a further question: to which period the change of the names of Nebuchadnezzar and Nabonid (also seen in Dan 4 and 5) belonged, since the author of Baruch could have been misled by an already existing historical mistake. The biblical authors

At the opening event the people listen to the book of Baruch. Their reaction is appropriate. It is the king whose example is followed by all the people. They also sent the letter to Jerusalem so the same thing should happen there. The Jerusalemites are expected to appropriate the same attitude, the confession and the faithful keeping of the Lord's commandments. And the Lord will fulfil his promises. What is sketched in the introduction is displayed in the chapters that follow.

The introduction was written by writers in the Seleucid period to show how Israel reacted in similar circumstances in the distant past: the years 164-162 B.C. correspond to the period after 587 B.C. The renewed worship and the loyalty towards a foreign emperor correspond to the attitude that Israel at the time the book was compiled should accept as well. This scene was constructed according to the model of fasting, praying, collecting money and the Temple vessels under the leadership of Ezra at the river Ahava (cf. Ezra 8). Its features correspond to more passages from the time before and after the exile, including listening to the word of God, admonishing others, weeping, and praying for the foreign rulers (Dtn 31:9-13; Josh 8:30-35; 1 Kings 8; 2 Kings 22-23; Dan 9; Ezra 1-3; 6-10; Neh 1; 8-11).¹³

The form of the introduction follows a neat structure: the writing - the reading - confessing, and collecting money - sending it to Jerusalem - adding a letter - ordering it to be read.¹⁴ According to this, Baruch fulfilled his mission: he brought about the deep conversion of his compatriots in Babylon. The texts in the passage figure as a model of the attitude that the community should appropriate, both at the time of its composition and always. Events are set in Babylonian times to show that the return home, the rebuilding of the Temple, the worship with intercession for foreign sovereigns as well as the penitential prayer and the admonition to adhere to the Torah took place right at the beginning of the exile. Bar 1 functions as taking over the older scenes and opening the first stage of the later ones. So it includes a wide span of the history of salvation up to the time when Israel was still dispersed but hoped that God's action would bring it to an end.¹⁵

were, however, interested above all in the meaning of the events for the present and the future and were not very much concerned about presenting historical truth in itself - cf. H. D. Preuss, *Theologie des Alten Testaments I*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1991, 242. H. D. Preuss invented a suitable definition: »Die 'bruta facta' sind im 'Kerygma' aufgehoben.« - op. cit., 241, presented in R. Feuerstein, *Das Buch Baruch*, 377. In any case, R. Feuerstein refuses to understand the introduction as allegory, because it does not show such a tendency - see pp. 372-375.

¹³ Cf. O. H. Steck, *Das Buch Baruch*, 28-29.

¹⁴ Cf. R. Feuerstein, *Das Buch Baruch*, 398-400.

¹⁵ See O. H. Steck, *Das apokryphe Baruchbuch*, 27-32.

The event reported in Bar 1:1ff. took place in the fifth year after the taking of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, i.e., 582.¹⁶ The listeners (vv. 3-4) formed a varied company according to Jer 36; 2 Kings 23; Ezra 1:7ff.; Neh 8. They are king Jeconiah with the nobles, the princes and the elders of the first deportation in 598/97 as well as the people of 587. They are said to live by the river Sud, which is reminiscent of the river Chebar (Ezek 1:1.3; 3:15) or Ahava (Ezra 8:15.21), from where Ezra led the exiles to their homeland. What was fulfilled in Ezra's return began partly due to Baruch's enterprise.¹⁷

The listeners wept, fasted and prayed the penitential prayer (vv. 5-6). This scene is formed according to the reaction to Baruch's reading of Jeremiah's prophecy (cf. Jer 36:6-9) and as the model for the behaviour of Ezra (cf. Ezra 9:3,5; 10:1,11), Nehemiah (cf. Neh 1:2-4,5-11) and Daniel (cf. Dan 9:3-4). There is a difference regarding Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel: they prepared themselves for the prayer by weeping, fasting and putting on sackcloth, while in Bar 1:5 these gestures are not a preparation but a response to Baruch's reading of the prayer, admonition and lamentation (cf. Ezra 10:1). Collecting money for the worship and sending it to Jerusalem is also formed according to the model in Ezra 2:68ff.; 7:16; 8:25; Neh 7:70; 10:33ff.; 2 Chron 24:5.¹⁸

Verses 7-15aα talk about sending the Temple vessels, the money for the offerings and the book of Baruch to Jerusalem to be read there.¹⁹ The group of recipients, together with the group in Babylon, represent the whole nation of Israel. They should buy the offerings to be offered even before the rebuilding of the Temple. The community of Jerusalem is asked as well to pray for the Babylonian kings and the peaceful life of the exiles under their protection - similarly for the Seleucide kings at the time when Bar was composed. This prayer is an echo of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple (cf. 1 Kings 8:22-53). The exiles ask especially for prayer for themselves. They find themselves directly in the si-

¹⁶ See different explanations for the fifth year in O. H. Steck, *Das Buch Baruch*, 30, n.15.

¹⁷ The River Soud is mentioned nowhere else. The findings from Qumran with the name of the River *swr* (also found nowhere else) suggest a solution regarding its symbolical meaning. It should point to the place from where Ezra led the exiles to their homeland. This name should come from the call of Isa 52:11 who invited the exiles to depart (*sûrû sûrû*) clean from their exile, carrying the vessels of the Lord - see O. H. Steck, *Das apokryphe Baruchbuch*, 23-24.

¹⁸ Cf. O. H. Steck, op. cit., 32.

¹⁹ Verse 8 tells of the silver Temple vessels - mentioned nowhere else - that were made to replace the golden ones taken by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon (cf. 2 Kings 24:13; 25:14ff.; Jer 52:17ff.; 27-28). These were now returned to Jerusalem, as the sign of a partly fulfilled prediction of Jer 27:22 and of the sympathy of king Nebuchadnezzar, who thus represents later foreign kings that were favourable towards Israel's religion - cf. O. H. Steck, *Das Buch Baruch*, 30-31.

tuation in which the all Israel lives, according to the book of Baruch: they are sinners and struck by God's wrath (cf. Bar 2:13,20; 1 Kings 8:46). Finally, the community of Jerusalem is instructed to read the book sent on feast-days, most probably for the New Year and the Feast of Tabernacles.²⁰

2.2 The Prayer (1:15aβ-3:8)

By their reaction - presented as normative for future generations - the listeners in Babylon confirmed Jeremiah's prediction of catastrophe (cf. Jer 26-29). This is displayed in the rest of the book, first in the penitential prayer (1:15aβ-3:8),²¹ which is set between the historical introduction (1:1-14) and a wisdom poem (3:9-4:8). While the historical introduction aims to prepare the scene for the prayer, no bridge spans the gulf (not deep, however) between the prayer and the wisdom poem that follows. The penitential prayer comprises:

1. Confession of sins: 1:15aβ-2:10
2. Petition for the end of God's anger and for the return: 2:11-3:8

The prayer is also the first of the texts that consider all Israel, in whatever place they may live, as one people. It represents a unity in time, encompassing all the exiles from the beginning up to the present moment. According to the view of Bar, the whole of Israel, whether in the homeland or in the Diaspora, is in the state of exile. Yet there is a difference from the past - now Israel has turned away from the sins of their fathers (cf. 2:33; 3:4,5-7). This view of the penitential prayer also determines the rest of the book. It issues from the Dtr tradition that was expressed in Dtn 4:28-30 and 1 Kings 8:46-53, and gave its imprint to various penitential prayers, in Ezra 9; Neh 1; 9; Dan 9. Israel has to confess her sin, which consists of refusing to listen to God's commandments and admonitions. This confession will turn them to God and obtain from him an immediate restitution (cf. Bar 2:27-35).²²

The first part of the prayer (1:15aβ-2:10) contains Israel's confession and God's word in which he warned them.

And you shall say: The Lord our God is in the right, but there is open shame on us today, on the people of Judah, on the inhabitants of Jerusa-

²⁰ Cf. O. H. Steck, op. cit., 32-33.

²¹ Cf. R. Feuerstein, *Das Buch Baruch*, 400-402.

²² Cf. O. H. Steck, *Das Buch Baruch*, 38-39.

lem, and on our kings, our rulers, our priests, our prophets, and our ancestors, because we have sinned before the Lord We have disobeyed him, and have not heeded the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in the statutes of the Lord that he set before us. From the time when the Lord brought our ancestors out of the land of Egypt until today, we have been disobedient to the Lord our God, and we have been negligent, in not heeding his voice. So to this day there have clung to us the calamities and the curse that the Lord declared through his servant Moses at the time when he brought our ancestors out of the land of Egypt to give to us a land flowing with milk and honey. We did not listen the voice of the Lord our God in all the words of the prophets whom he sent to us, but all of us followed the intent of our own wicked hearts by serving other gods and doing what is evil in the sight of the Lord our God.

So the Lord carried out the threat he spoke against us: against our judges who ruled Israel, and against our kings and our rulers and the people of Israel and Judah. Under the whole heaven there has not been done the like of what he has done in Jerusalem, in accordance with the threats that were written in the law of Moses. Some of us ate the flesh of their sons and others the flesh of their daughters. He made them subject to all the kingdoms around us, to be an object of scorn and a desolation among all the surrounding peoples, where the Lord has scattered them. They were brought down and not raised up, because our nation sinned against the Lord our God, in not heeding his voice.

The Lord our God is in the right, but there is open shame on us and our ancestors this very day. All those calamities with which the Lord threatened us have come upon us. Yet we have not entreated the favor of the Lord by turning away, each of us, from the thoughts of his wicked hearts. And the Lord has kept the calamities ready, and the Lord has brought them upon us, for the Lord is just in all the works that he has commanded us to do. Yet we have not obeyed his voice, to walk in the statutes of the Lord that he set before us (1:15-2:10).

This self-accusing confession of Israel comprises the whole history of God's judgement from its beginning in the 6th century up to the present moment. It includes all the people of Israel from the kings through the princes, priests, prophets and fathers up to the ordinary people. The text bears evident testimony to its Dtr origin. The influence of Leviticus and Deuteronomy is evident, as is also its narrow link with the book of Jeremiah, especially with the passages concerning Israel's dispersion and submission to foreign rulers (Jer 24; 27; 29).²³ But the strongest similarity - or rather identity - is between Baruch's penitential prayer and Daniel's pe-

²³ See the more detailed comparison in O. H. Steck, *Das apokryphe Baruchbuch*, 81-88.

nitential prayer (Dan 9:4-19).²⁴ The prevailing conviction concerning the originality of Daniel's prayer has recently been refuted and the originality of Baruch's prayer has been shown.²⁵

²⁴ The similarity with Dan 9:4-19 goes as far as Bar 2:19. The similarity to and at times the identity with Daniel's prayer is obvious, on whatever grounds the comparison is made, whether on the Greek text of the Septuagint and other ancient versions, or on the reconstruction of the Hebrew »original«. The question arises concerning their relation or dependence on one another. Which prayer was original and supposed to be a model for the other, the prayer of Daniel or that of Baruch? Or were both of them modelled on a common source? Until recently by far the majority of scholars had supported the originality of Daniel's prayer, although the arguments for it were not altogether convincing - see, e.g., O. F. Fritzsche, *Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zu dem Apokryphen des Alten Testaments*, Leipzig: Weidmann'sche Buchhandlung, 1851, 173; J. A. Montgomery, *Daniel*, ICC, 255-256; B. N. Wambacq, »Les prières de Baruch (1,15-2,19) et de Daniel (9,5-19)«, in: *Bib* 40 (1959), 463-475; M. Baillet, »Un Recueil liturgique de Qumrân, Grotte 4: 'Les Paroles de Luminaires'«, in: *RB* 58 (1961), 195-250, esp. 247; M. Gilbert, »Le prière de Daniel, Dn 9,4-19«, in: *Revue Théologique de Louvain* 3 (1972), 284-310; O. H. Steck, *Das Apokryphe Baruchbuch*, esp. pp. 88-92. Some scholars considered Daniel and Baruch were independent adaptations of a common source, e.g., J. T. Marschall, *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible* I, New York: Scribner, 1902, 252; R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Daniel*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1929, 227; H. S. Thackeray, *The Septuagint and Jewish Worship*; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923, 81-111. Yet W. Stoderl, comparing Bar Greek to Dan Greek, came to the conclusion that, on the contrary, Dan Greek was dependent on Bar Greek - see *Zur Echtheitsfrage von Baruch 1-3,8*, MBTh 2, Münster i. W.: Aschendorffschen, 1922, 1-23. Up to the research of R. Feuerstein, Stoderl's argumentation and results were neither accepted nor discussed thoroughly, due to the conviction that the dependence of translations cannot prove the dependence of the original texts.

²⁵ In 1997 and 1998 two research studies refuted the dependence of the prayer of Baruch on the prayer of Daniel. A. K. Mukenge came to the conclusion that differences in the place, in the matter of the supplication, and in the endeavours to approach Jeremiah make it evident that the Greek text of Baruch did not depend directly on either of the two Greek forms of Daniel's prayer. The author considers the redactor of Bar could have known the shorter form of the prayer from a place other than the book of Daniel - see A. K. Mukenge, *L'Unité littéraire du livre de Baruch*, Études bibliques. Nouvelle série 38, Paris: Gabalda, 1998, 113-204. He established that Bar did not know what was special in Dan, hence the redactor of Baruch did not modify the prayer of Daniel. What makes the prayer in Bar different from the prayer in Dan results from another inner logic, conforming to its actual context - see pp. 203-204. R. Feuerstein from his side presented firm arguments for the dependence of Dan 9 on Bar 1-3. R. Feuerstein took the arguments of W. Stoderl seriously into consideration and confirmed their value - see *Das Buch Baruch*, 415-454. He scrutinized O. H. Steck's arguments for Baruch's taking over the prayer of Daniel, and found them groundless. He concludes: »Somit ergibt sich das eigenartige Bild, dass ein Verfasser, der seine ('spät')dtr. Theologie in engen inhaltlicher Anlehnung an Dtn und Jer entwirft, sich in das sprachliche Korsett von Dan 9 hineinzwängt, dieses Korsett aber in allen Ecken und Enden wieder springen muss, weil er mit der zentralen Konzeption von Dan 9 nichts gemeint hat!« - see pp. 417-418. He shows that Daniel took over Baruch - see pp. 415-454. We will present his argument shortly, after the commentary on the prayer.

A. K. Mukenge indicated the neat chiasmic structure of the text, with the refusal to listen to the prophets as its central point. Disobeying the Lord includes the section (1:18 // 2:10):

- vv. 1:15-19 the introductory confession (A)
- v. 1:20 the punishment which the Lord declared through Moses (B)
- v. 1:21 the refusal of the words of the prophets (C)
- vv. 2:1-5 the punishment which the Lord declared through Moses (B')
- vv. 2:6-10 the final confession (A').²⁶

The prayer opens with a declaration of the totally different positions of the two protagonists, the Lord and the people. They are presented precisely. The Lord is »our God« and »we« are the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, designated by their social status (vv. 15-16). The declaration states the innocence of the former and the culpability of the latter. Yet the antithesis does not put the righteousness (*dikaosu/nh*) of the Lord against the unrighteousness of the people, but against the shame (*alsxu/nh*) of their face: »The Lord our God is in the right, but there is open shame on us today, ...« (v. 15). It sounds like the situation at the conclusion of a juridical process: the person who was found culpable is ashamed. In this case, shame belongs to a person who was culpable of the catastrophe that had befallen Israel since 598 B.C. (1:20; 2:1-5,7,9).²⁷ The declaration states that it is Israel herself who is guilty and who suffers. Yet the link between her misdeeds and her misfortune passes through the Lord. It is not a mechanical transmission from action to reaction. In between, there is the Lord's personal decision (1:20; 2:1ff.). And this decision and its realization is evaluated as *dikaosu/nh*. It is left to Israel only to acknowledge that she is guilty, and thus put to shame.

There are reasons for such a situation. The relation between the Lord and Israel is very close - throughout the prayer he is called »the Lord« (*ku/rioj* - 1:17,18,19,20; 2:1,4,7,8, 9(3x), 10,14,16(2x),17(2x),18, 21,22, 33; 3:2,6), »the Lord our God« (*ku/rioj Ú Qeþj h(mw=n* - 1:15,18, 19,21(2x); 2:5,6,12,15,19,27; 3:6,8), »the Lord their God« (*ku/rioj Ú Qeþj au)tw=n* - 2:31; 3:4), »their God« (*(au)toi-þ ei)j Qeo/n* - 2:35), »the Lord God of Israel« (*ku/rie Ú Qeþj Israhl* - 2:11) and »Lord Almighty, God of Israel« (*ku/rie pantokra/tor Ú Qeþj Israhl* - 3:1,4). Now the relation between him and Israel has come into a situation that needs to be cleared up. What is troubling is the actual situation of Israel, i.e., her dispersion among the

²⁶ See A. K. Mukenge, *L'unité littéraire du livre de Baruch*, 119-126.

²⁷ The text reminds one of the juridical processes between the Lord and Israel that the prophets used frequently in their admonitions (cf. Isa 1:2ff.; 50:1ff.; Hos 2:4ff.; 4:1-3,4-10; 12; Am 1-2; Mic 6:1-8 etc).

nations. Having the Lord as her ruler, she is nevertheless subjected to foreign rulers. This situation fits very badly to the relation expressed by the titles of nearness that the prayer ascribes to the Lord, and Israel is authorized to use such titles. And the prayer in its first part, which is a confession, makes efforts to rectify this uneasy state. So it starts with a declaration of who is guilty and who is not guilty (vv. 15-16). This sentence is followed by proof for it (vv. 17-19, 21). Naturally, the proof starts with the guilty party. It consists of eleven statements of Israel's guilt towards the Lord her God. The statements express in verbal form the misdeeds that the people performed (we have sinned, disobeyed him, been disobedient, been negligent, each followed the intent of his own wicked heart, serving other gods, doing what is evil in the sight of the Lord our God), and the righteous acts they omitted to do (have not heeded his voice (3x), to walk in his statutes). Disobedience and not listening to the Lord's voice is repeatedly (7x) stressed. It represents the nucleus of Israel's sin.

It is important that the statement of guilt is pronounced by the culpable party herself - it is a confession. The confession involves the whole nation of Israel from the dawn of her history up to the present moment, »(F)from the time when the Lord brought our ancestors out of the land of Egypt until today« (v. 19). All Israel is represented - in all her social classes, presented in pairs: people of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, kings and rulers, priests and prophets, and ancestors including »us« (vv. 15-16). This historical inclusion (v. 19), together with the social classification (vv. 15-16), prevents anybody from esteeming himself / herself innocent. All are guilty before their Lord, who alone is righteous in this lawsuit with his people.

The confession of Israel's guilt - disobeying the Lord - is already an indirect declaration of the Lord's inculpability. This is expressed directly, too. In between the enumeration of Israel's misdeeds and omissions is placed a statement of the consequences of such behaviour: »So to this day there have clung to us the calamities and the curse that the Lord declared through his servant Moses at the time when he brought our ancestors out of the land of Egypt to give to us a land flowing with milk and honey « (v. 20). The innocence of the Lord and the guilt of the people could not be expressed more clearly. In the act of giving birth to his people by bringing them out of their servitude to freedom in a rich country, the Lord gave them statutes to follow.²⁸ The statement brings the object gradually into focus, pointing to its centre first: it is the Lord whom they have disobeyed, it is the voice of the Lord which they have not heeded to walk in the statutes the

²⁸ In antiquity such an act was considered as a highly appreciated gift of a deity, since by revealing statutes to the nation a deity showed them what pleased him / her and so they could avoid his / her wrath - see G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* 1, trans. D. M. G. Stalker, London: SCM 1982, 190-203.

Lord set before them (1:18). It is clear that it was a personal relationship with the Lord that was intended. And it was this personal relationship that was attacked, wounded and ruined by Israel's behaviour. The verse ends with the action of the Lord giving Israel his statutes. The next verse starts with the action of the Lord bringing their fathers out of Egypt (1:19). There is a parallelism between these two actions of the Lord and the people. That of bringing their fathers out of Egypt is juxtaposed to Israel's refusing to heed his voice. There is a parallelism, too, between the Lord's giving Israel his statutes and Israel's refusal to walk in them. Then there follows Israel's continued disobedience to the Lord, expressed by the same verbs as in v. 18. Verses 18-19 form a structure (ABCD DACB) with the Lord's salvific action in the centre, enclosed by Israel's disobedience:

- v. 18: we have disobeyed (h)peiqh/samen) him (A)
 have not heeded (h)kou/samen) the voice of the Lord our God (B)
 to walk (poreu/esqai) in the statutes of the Lord (C)
 he set (e)/doken) before us (D)
- v. 19: the Lord brought (e)ch/gagen) our ancestors out
 of the land of Egypt (D')
 we have been disobedient (a)peiqou/ntej) to the Lord our God (A')
 have been negligent (e)sxedia/zomen) (C')
 in not heeding (a)kou/ein) his voice (B').

Both sentences are headed by a simple statement: »... we have sinned (h)ma/rtomen) before the Lord« (v. 17). Sin consists in refusing to listen to the voice of the Lord, which means refusing to remain in a personal relationship with the Lord who delivered them. After this description, there follows a presentation of the consequences of the sin: calamities and a curse (v. 20). In this statement the innocence of the Lord is stressed directly. He predicted in advance that trespassing the commandments would bring upon them the calamities and the curse (cf. also Deut 28:15-30:20). So Israel was warned of the consequences of disobeying them - the calamities and the curse did not come upon Israel as a surprise.²⁹ It was the punishment they were warned of and were aware of, so they deserved it. The Lord is absolutely righteous in the disaster that came upon Israel, as is expressed in the opening declaration of the prayer (1:15).

At the centre of the confession, in v. 21, the refusal to heed the words of the prophets is pointed out. The sentence intensifies what has been

²⁹ There are texts in the Bible which stress that God's statutes are just and not difficult to fulfill (cf. Ps 119); they bring blessing to the community which lives according to them (cf. Lev 26:3-13; Deut 4:1-26:19; 28:1-14), while disobedience causes disorder and ruin (cf. Lev 26:14-39; Deut 28:15-29:1).

said so far, by stating precisely the way the Lord communicated and revealed his will to Israel. He did it in conformity with human beings: through the mediation of other human beings - the prophets that he sent. This is the principle of approaching, of a descent, of a *kenosis* that marks God's relation to humanity. The Lord is searching human beings, who »all of us followed the intent of our own wicked hearts by serving other gods and doing what is evil in the sight of the Lord our God« (v. 22).³⁰

Now there begins a description of the punishment (2:1-5). It is presented in its most dreadful objectivity, as the most severe plague the Lord ever sent. Its horror culminates in Jerusalemites eating the flesh of their own children, while their subjection to foreign kingdoms to be an object of scorn and desolation among the peoples means their deepest humiliation. Yet it is but a fulfilment of the predictions against both the responsible classes in Israel and the people (cf. Lev 26:29; Deut 28:53-57; Jer 19:9; 25:9; 29:17-18; 32:23-35; Deut 28:25,37,43-44). Verse 5b repeats the declaration from 1:17. This suffering is due to their sin. The acknowledgement of Israel's guilt before the Lord concludes the section.

The final confession (vv. 6-10) starts with the declaration of the Lord's righteousness and Israel's shame. This is the opening declaration of the prayer in 1:15aβ. The passage is a recapitulation of what has been said so far. The verses summarize: Israel is responsible for whatever has befallen her. There is an additional nuance in the declaration: during the Lord's fulfilling the punishment, Israel had a chance to entreat the favour of the Lord by turning away from the thoughts of their wicked hearts. Yet they forfeited the chance, since they did not turn away and did not obey the voice of the Lord to walk in his statutes.³¹ It is the mystery of evil, which holds its victim tight in a self-destructive action. Perseverance in evil made the Lord bring upon Israel the calamities he kept ready. The righteousness of the Lord is confirmed again, with an additional nuance - he is righteous in all the works he has commanded them, i.e., in his righteous statutes that could guard them against calamities (cf. Ps 19:10; 119:7, 62, 75, 137, 144, 160, 72; Neh 9:13).

So the first part of the penitential prayer in Bar 1:15aβ-3:8 confirms that God is righteous in all he has done in Israel and in all which has be-

³⁰ The expression is reminiscent of Jeremiah's language, the wicked heart (cf. Jer 7:24; 11:8; 16:12; 18:12), serving other gods (cf. Jer 7:6,9,17ff.; 11:10; 13:10; 16:11-13; 32:29,34ff.), doing what is evil in the sight of the Lord (cf. Jer 7:30; 18:10; 32:30).

³¹ See the comment on the same assertion in Dan 9:13b, with a question as to which time precisely does the statement *welō' hillinū 'et penē YHWH 'elōhēnū lāsūb mē'āwōnēnū ūlehaškil ba'amitekā* refer. As soon as they had sinned or when they had already experienced the bitter of punishment? The conclusion - the expression *hillinū 'et penē YHWH 'elōhēnū* - showing that Israel had already experienced the wrath of the Lord and knew she could avert it by conversion and adherence to his truth, yet she did not do it, is applicable here, too.

fallen Israel. This conclusion is close to that in other penitential prayers (Ezra 9:15; Neh 9:33; Dan 9:14; cf. also Ex 9:27; 2 Kings 10:9; Ezek 18:9, etc.). In the lawsuit of God against Israel, God won the case; he is righteous, in accordance with the redemptive meaning of the word.³²

As O. H. Steck points out, in this self-accusing part of the prayer Israel in her shame could only talk *about* God, not *to* God. Following Baruch's instruction in acknowledging and confessing her guilt, she starts her conversion and turns towards God. This is expressed in the second part of the prayer.³³

And now, O Lord God of Israel, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and with signs and wonders and with great power and outstretched arm, and made yourself a name that continues to this day, we have sinned, we have been ungodly, we have done wrong, O Lord our God, against all your ordinances. Let your anger turn away from us, for we are left, few in number, among the nations where you have scattered us. Hear, O Lord, our prayer and our supplication, and for your own sake deliver us, and grant us favor in the sight of those who have carried us into exile; so that all the earth may know that you are the Lord our God, for Israel and his descendants are called by your name.

O Lord, look down from your holy dwelling, and consider us. Incline your ear, O Lord, and hear; open your eyes, O Lord, and see, for the dead who are in Hades, whose spirit has been taken from their bodies, will not ascribe glory or justice to the Lord; but the person who is deeply grieved, who walks bowed and feeble, with failing eyes and famished soul, will declare your glory and righteousness, O Lord.

For it is not because of any righteous deeds of our ancestors or our kings that we bring before you our prayer for mercy, O Lord our God. For you have sent your anger and your wrath upon us, as you declared by your servants the prophets, saying: Thus says the Lord: Bend your shoulders and serve the king of Babylon, and you will remain in the land that I gave to your ancestors. But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord and will not serve the king of Babylon, I will make to cease from the towns of Judah and from the region around Jerusalem the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, and the whole land will be a desolation, without inhabitants.

But we did not obey your voice, to serve the king of Babylon; and you have carried out your threats, which you spoke by your servants the prophets, that the bones of our kings and the bones of our ancestors would be brought out of their resting place; and indeed they have been thrown

³² See the comment on Dan 9:14, especially n. 42.

³³ See O. H. Steck, *Das apokryphe Baruchbuch*, 100-101; *Das Buch Baruch*, 41.

out to the heat of day and the frost of night. They perished in great misery, by famine and sword and pestilence. And the house that is called by your name you have made as it is today, because of the wickedness of the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

Yet you have dealt with us, O Lord our God, in all your great compassion, as you spoke by your servant Moses on the day when you commanded him to write your law in the presence of the people of Israel, saying, »If you will not obey my voice, this very great multitude will surely turn into a small number among the nations, where I will scatter them. For I know that they will not obey me, for they are a stiff-necked people. But in the land of their exile they will come to themselves and know that I am the Lord their God. I will give them a heart that obeys and the ears that hear; they will praise me in the land of their exile, and will remember my name and turn from their stubbornness and their wicked deeds; for they will remember the ways of their ancestors, who sinned before the Lord. I will bring them again into the land that I swore to give to their ancestors, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and they will rule over it; and I will increase them, and they will not be diminished. I will make an everlasting covenant with them to be their God and they shall be my people; and I will never again remove my people Israel from the land that I have given them.«

O Lord Almighty, God of Israel, the soul in anguish and the wearied spirit cry out to you. Hear, O Lord, and have mercy, for we have sinned before you. For you are enthroned forever, and we are perishing forever. O Lord Almighty, God of Israel, hear now the prayer of the people of Israel, the children of those who sinned before you, who did not heed the voice of the Lord their God, so that calamities have clung to us. Do not remember the iniquities of our ancestors, but in this crisis remember your power and your name. For you are the Lord our God, and it is you, O Lord, whom we will praise. For you have put the fear of you in our hearts so that we would call upon your name; and we will praise you in our exile, for we have put away from our hearts all the iniquity of our ancestors who sinned against you. See, we are today in our exile where you have scattered us, to be reproached and cursed and punished for all the iniquities of our ancestors, who forsook the Lord our God (2:11-3:8).

With *kai\ nu/n* a decisive turn in the prayer is made (cf. *we'attāh* in Ezra 9:10; Neh 9:32; Dan 9:15). By confessing her sins, Israel does not cleave to them any more. She is able to make the next step - to ask for deliverance. And she starts to do it now, in the way a humble petitioner addresses the highest authority. She addresses God directly for the first time, calling him God, the Lord of Israel, and defines him by his most decisive act for Israel, delivering her out of Egypt. She presents this act by five expressions highlighting the Lord's majesty and power, which made him

the o)/noma. Then she confesses her sins once again, using three verbs (h(ma/rtomen, h)sebh/samen, h)dikh/samen). This is the famous three-ply expression (cf. 1 Kings 8:47; Dan 9:5) of a person's wicked mind and deed, the corruption of heart, and hatred against God and neighbour. The whole range of human evil is encompassed here.

Then the confession stops and the petitioners proceed by expressing their request (2:13-3:8).

A. K. Mukenge proposed discerning five sections in the supplication, making a neat chiasmic structure:

vv. 2:11-18	the introductory supplication (A)
vv. 2:19-23	a quotation from the prophets (B)
vv. 2:24-26	the fulfillment of the prophecies (C)
vv. 2:27-35	a quotation from Moses (B')
vv. 3:1-8	the final supplication (A').

Thus there are two supplications, which enclose two quotations, while the centre is occupied by the fulfillment of the prophecies.³⁴

After the introduction (vv. 11-12) the petitioners express their supplication, with the theme of their diminishing number (v. 13). It is presumed, if the Lord's anger continues with the same intensity, that they would disappear very soon.³⁵ The next petition is motivated by the Lord's prestige (vv. 14-15). With his engagement in the history of Israel he made himself an o)/noma (v. 11), the name that was called upon Israel (v. 15).³⁶ The status of Israel defines the reputation of the Lord on the world scene. He should, therefore, listen to Israel's petition for his own sake. What should he do? Nothing less than to make the masters of Israel - who are the actual masters of a world empire - favourable towards Israel. What this implies will be clear in vv. 34-35. By her petition Israel acknowledges the highest sovereignty of her God over the world. So in her petition as well Israel pays homage to the Lord.³⁷

The supplication continues in vv. 16-18. This passage is a mosaic of different biblical traditions (cf. Deut 26:15; 1 Kings 8:49; 2 Kings 19:16; Dan 9:19; Ps 6:6; 30:10; 88:11-13; Deut 28:65ff.; 1 Kings 8:47ff.). It seems

³⁴ See A. K. Mukenge, *L'unité littéraire du livre de Baruch*, 129-135. O. H. Steck, *Das apokryphe Baruchbuch*, 101ff.; *Das Buch Baruch*, 41ff., proposes a structure according to which the prayer consists of two parts: 2:11-35 and 3:1-8. They are composed of four petitions. He also tries to show the author of Bar took over Daniel's prayer.

³⁵ This concept often figures in the Bible, as a threat or as a motive for supplication (cf. Deut 4:27; 28:62-64; Jer 42:2; Dan-G 1:37).

³⁶ Cf. Dan 9:19.

³⁷ The petition leans on 1 Kings 8:46-61; cf. also Ps 106:46; Ezra 9:8-9; 2 Kings 19:19=Isa 3:17.

to ask the Lord only to rescue Israel from death in exile. Even the most stricken state of body and soul is better than death - in life with minimal resources Israel will nevertheless glorify the majesty and righteousness of the Lord.³⁸

It is remarkable that unlike Dan 9:9,19, the petition for forgiveness is not expressed in Bar 2:11-18. O. H. Steck comments that it is in conformity with the Dtr concept, according to which deliverance from the miserable exilic status of Israel will be realized not because of Israel's merits, but because of the convergence of God's renewed salvific will and the conversion of Israel opened up by God (cf. Deut 30; the prayer of Azariah in the Additions to Dan).³⁹

Now there follows the second part of the supplication (vv. 19-23), which contains the words of the prophets (vv. 21-23). Vv. 19-20 say the petitioners should abstain from any claim for mercy on the ground of the righteousness of their ancestors and kings. They consider themselves solidarily involved in guilt along with their ancestors, and God's sending his anger and wrath upon them proves it (cf. 1:15-16; 2:1-6). It is not that they have done any good in their life. What they acknowledge here is rather that all their good deeds are insufficient to merit God's grace.⁴⁰ The Lord's anger makes them aware that, on the contrary, they merited punishment. To prove it, God's words are quoted. They are said to be spoken by the Lord's »servants, the prophets« (v. 20). Yet only the words of the prophet Jeremiah are quoted, from different parts of his book (v. 21a // Jer 27:4,7f.,10f.,12f.; v. 21b // Jer 35:15; 25:5; v. 22 // Jer 26:4; 3:25; 7:24-28; 9:11-12; 11:4-5; 26:12-13; 32:23; 38:20; 42:13,21-22; 44:23; v. 23 // Jer 7:34; 16:9(-13); 25:10-11; 25:38; 26:9; 34:22; 33:10-11).

The words are focused solely on one precise subject, on Israel's serving the king of Babylon. Was this chosen because it was decisive for Israel's fate in 597-587 B.C.? Or was it also important for the community at the time the prayer was composed? The Hasmoneans' fighting and claiming leadership after they had recaptured the Temple in 164 B.C. was not approved by all the Jews. The author of Baruch considered Hasmonean policies as being contrary to God's plans for the Jewish community.⁴¹

³⁸ See the comment of O. H. Steck, *Das apokryphe Baruchbuch*, 104-105: not only the returned exiles would glorify the Lord, but the Israelites that are still alive in exile would also do it. Steck also points to an interesting feature: there is a correspondence in inverse order between the petitions of the exiled Israelites in 2:12-18 and the petitions addressed to the community of Jerusalem in 1:10-13 (2:16-18 // 1:10; 2:14-15 // 1:11-12; 2:12-13a // 1:13). It is the Jerusalem worship that is desired in the petitions of the exiled Israelites - see op. cit., 105.

³⁹ See O. H. Steck, op. cit., 105ff., *Das Buch Baruch*, 42.

⁴⁰ The insufficiency of human merits to deserve God's grace and the free bestowal of God's gifts is proclaimed by the entire Bible.

⁴¹ See the presentation of this opinion in O. H. Steck, op. cit., 285-303, esp.300; R. A. Wer-

He quoted the words of Jeremiah in which he threatened punishment for disobedience (vv. 22-23). Jeremiah's words served the author in stating that rebellion against the Seleucides held the Jewish community in a state of guilt. Thus the covenant curses clung to them.⁴² This recognition is the appropriate attitude in which the petitioners should stand before the pro/swpon of the Lord their God (v. 19).

The punishment threatened for disobedience is disastrous: mirth and gladness in the towns will be destroyed, love leading to marriage will be destroyed, the inhabitants and the land itself will be destroyed. Disobedience to the Lord leads to death (vv. 22-23).

And what did Israel do? The author summarizes her response to the word of the Lord and the Lord's response to it (vv. 24-26). This passage embodies the accomplishment of the prophecies and represents the centre of the supplication in 2:11-3:8. The accomplishment corresponds to the threats and develops them. Verse 24a states that the negative option from v. 22 was indeed chosen by Israel, thus the threat was also fulfilled by the Lord. Yet vv. 24b-26 do not describe the accomplishment of the threat from v. 23 but a further horror. Even death in great misery, by famine and sword and pestilence (v. 25b),⁴³ was not the ultimate punishment. A greater humiliation was executed on their kings and ancestors, the profanation of their bones and of their graves (cf. Am 2:1). Yet this ultimate punishment was foretold too (v. 24b // Jer 8:1-3; 36:30). Israel herself decided her fate. Then there follows a last punishment, which struck the Temple (v. 26). The vague description of its state, not mentioning its desolation - in contrast to Dan 9:16-19 - indicates that the Temple was again under the control of the Hasmoneans. Yet this was not a sign of God's pardoning his people. The state of the Temple was a proof, too, that Israel was remained in her guilt. According to the perception of the authors of Bar, the Hasmoneans' policy was sinful, hence Israel was still under punishment.

After the declaration of the fulfillment of the prophetic word, there follow words taken from Moses (vv. 27-35). The statement at the begin-

line, *Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism: The Development of a Religious Institution*, SBL 13, Atlanta, Ga: Scholars Press, 1998, 87-88. Both rely on J. Goldstein, »The Apocryphal Book of Baruch«, in: *PAAJR* 46-47 (1979-1980), 179-199. Considering different indications, they place the composition of Baruch in 163-162 B.C. It was composed after the Jews' success against the Seleucides, after they had recaptured the Temple in 164 B.C. and enjoyed some independence. Yet the Hasmoneans continued their fighting and aggression against the Seleucides.

⁴² J. Goldstein, op. cit., 195-196, considers that Baruch was written as a protest against Judas Maccabaeus' siege of the Akra and in support of the policy of the high priest Alcimus, who was loyal to the Seleucid government because he believed that the time of God's liberation of the Jews had not yet come. See also R. A. Werline, *The Penitential Prayers*, 87-88.

⁴³ This was a fatal trinity - see Jer 14:12; 16:4; 24:10; 27:8,13 etc.

ning is astonishing. The punishment described so far was in fact executed by all the kindness of the Lord and by all his compassion (v. 27). Such a declaration in the face of ultimate suffering, including cannibalism and the profanation of corpses, is possible only if a greater evil could be juxtaposed to it.⁴⁴ As Israel is aware, a greater evil is to be forsaken by the Lord (cf. 2 Macc 6:16). Baruch does not say this explicitly, but he quotes words mainly from Deuteronomy and Jeremiah that bear witness to the salvational endeavours of the Lord, while punishing his people (Bar 2:29-35). Punishment shows itself as the last means the Lord uses to regain his people. A loving relation with his people is the highest value he is pursuing. It is said indirectly that the Lord tried to win his people back by showing them his love through his gifts. Israel became a »very great multitude,« living in their own land. Yet disobedience to the Lord's voice robbed them of his precious gifts (v. 29). In fact, the gifts were the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham, who *was* loyal to the Lord (cf. Gen 12:2-3; 13:14-18; 15:5-6 etc.). Israel could have lived likewise, yet she did not. The text assembles different pronouncements of Israel's infidelity, her punishment by exile, her returning to the Lord and his returning her to the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. A splendid future is promised her within the eternal covenant, with a guarantee of permanent residence in their own land.⁴⁵

The text summarizes the Deuteronomic presentation of Israel's history, displaying deep understanding of human nature. Prosperity does not usually call forth the best in human beings. In prosperity I am tempted to consider myself the master of my destiny. Bar 1:15a β -35 testifies how easily Israel has forfeited her fortune. The hardness of life that followed reminded the people that the Lord was the source of their life. In misfortune I recognize that my life is after all not at my disposal. In misfortune a chance is given to the human heart to find God anew. Punishment, therefore, consists in losing one's goods to find the Creator. The mechanism

⁴⁴ A similar declaration is found in 2 Macc 6:12-17. A short reflection follows after the chapters describing the betrayals, persecutions and massacres of the Jews. Yet it is said they were treated with greater kindness and mercy than other nations. The latter are punished severely, after they have reached the full measure of their sins, while Israel is punished immediately, so she never experiences vengeance at the extreme moment of her culpability. The central statement is: despite punishing his people, the Lord does not forsake them. This declaration on the part of a member of the nation that was treated badly is proof of the highest loyalty towards the Lord.

⁴⁵ The text is a mosaic of quotations from: v. 29 // Deut 28:15; Jer 26:4; Deut 4:27; 28:62; Jer 42:2; v. 30 // Deut 31:27-29; Jer 7:26-27; 17:23; 30:10; 46:27; v. 31 // Deut 4:39; Jer 24:7; Deut 29:3; Jer 24:7; 32:39; v. 33 // Deut 31:27; 2 Kings 17:14; Jer 17:26; 4:4; 21:12; 23:2,22; 25:5; 26:3,13; 44:22; Deut 28:20; 1 Kings 8:47; Zech 1:4; Ps 79:8; v. 34 // Deut 30:1-10; Lev 26:42-45; Jer 32:37; 24:6; 30:3; 11:5; Deut 1:8; 6:10; Jer 32:23; Deut 30:5,16; Jer 3:16; 23:3; Zech 10:8; Jer 24:6; 42:10; v. 35 // Jer 50:5; 32:40,38; 31:31-34.

of punishment functions between possession and relationship. Possession should lead to relationship. Unfortunately we go astray, we miss the goal. Experiencing dispossession on different levels, we discover the value of relationship. And we rediscover that our goods are gifts. The unity between possession and relationship is gained at last.

This was what Israel experienced and what is displayed in the »speech of Moses« in Bar 2:29-35. After having come to herself in exile, Israel praises the Lord and remembers his name (vv. 31-32). The people are saved in their regained relation to the Lord. The first consequence of this renewed love is their conversion from evil. (Without conversion to God they would not be able to turn from evil!) Then the Lord will bring his people into the promised land and bestow on them all the goods that proceed from the everlasting covenant he will make with them (vv. 33-35). In the midst of the gifts sparkles the jewel: a renewed relationship between God and his people, who belong together (cf. Jer 31:33).

God is the absolute Author of this process of salvation. Punishment was not in the first plan of salvation. It was introduced as a means of regaining the uniquely necessary thing, a relationship with God which was not achieved by receiving gifts.

Finally a concluding supplication (3:1-8) is included with the initial supplication (2:11-18). God is invoked by a new title, *ku/rie pantokra/twro* (Qeo\j Israhel (again v. 4) - a translation of *yhwh sibā'ōt*. The same name is repeatedly applied to God in Jeremiah's prophecies of Israel's restoration (30:8; 31:23, 35; 32:14, 15, 18; 33:11, 12). Restoration is also the theme in the concluding part of Baruch's penitential prayer.

Verses 1-3 form the first part of a supplication. In its centre in v. 2 God is asked to hear and have mercy because of the sins of his people. This supplication and confession are enclosed by two statements based on the contrast between God and the petitioners. In v. 1 God Almighty is invoked by a suppliant in a miserable state, while v. 3 motivates a supplication on the contrast between the Lord's eternal reign and the danger of Israel's eternal perdition. In v. 2 we can see the contrast between God being asked to hear and have mercy, and the people who sinned before him. The whole part in 3:1-3 with Israel in anguish and perishing forever contrasts with what was promised to Israel in 2:34-35 about her increasing and not diminishing, within the everlasting covenant with the Lord.

In the second part of the supplication (vv. 4-8) the Lord is asked not to remember the iniquities of Israel's ancestors but his own power and his name. Hence he is asked to save them from the exile and its humiliation and suffering (cf. v. 8). This is the last implication of the petition in 2:14 asking for favour in the sight of their masters in exile. This is a petition for a total change in their fate. This is the vision of a new life. And Israel is already presented in a new light: the Israel of today is no longer

a sinner. They are the children of those who sinned before the Lord (v. 4), but they themselves have put away from their hearts all the iniquity of their ancestors (v. 7). Yet they still suffer for their sins. So this part forms the contrast between Israel's ancestors who sinned, and the Israel of today, who converted while in exile. In spite of this, they do not base their supplication on their actual state but on God alone, on his power and his name. This petition parallels the initial supplication, which addresses God as Lord, the God of Israel who saved them out of Egypt with his mighty hand, and with signs and wonders, and with great power and an outstretched arm, and so made himself a name up to this day (2:11). In 3:5 they ask him to remember his power and name on behalf of Israel in her present crisis. Just as God promised them a splendid future (2:34-35), so Israel in turn promises a splendid gift: she will praise her Lord, even in exile (vv. 6,7; 2:17). From Israel who was cleansed in the suffering of exile the Lord will accept her precious glorification. This praise offered by converted Israel is the victory the Lord will gain over the wickedness and stubbornness of his people. Will he? Their conversion is stated as a fact, the praise is only promised. It is based not on their deliverance from exile, but on their conversion (3:7). Yet exile hinders them from having a full experience of conversion. The Lord's response in fulfilling his promise (2:34-35) will give them the assurance that they are pardoned. Only pardon and a renewed covenant with the Lord will free their hearts indeed for to offer glory and praise. Therefore the last sentence of the prayer reminds the Lord of their actual state in exile, with all its humiliation, suffering and scandal (3:8). It is his turn now to liberate his people to enjoy the fullness of life. The prayer wants to say that Israel is ready for a renewed covenant - or invites her to make herself ready soon.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ In conclusion, the relation between the analogous prayers in Dan 9:4-19 and Bar 1:15-3:8 should be briefly considered. As was stated in n. 25, R. Feurestein, *Das Buch Baruch*, 415-454, refuted the presumed dependence of Bar 1:15-3:8 on Dan 9:4-19. Most of his arguments for the opposite dependence are summarized here:

- The prayer in Daniel contains the introduction in 9:1-6, which is lacking in the prayer of Baruch. The content of these verses can be explained from the nature of Daniel's prayer. Daniel asks God to forgive his sinful people. The vision of seventy weeks tells how they could be pardoned: after the desolation a new salvation will be given them. Here a Dtr vision of history passes into an apocalyptic one. The author of the book of Daniel needed this transition. On the basis of 9:7-19 he constructed a description of the people's state (9:1-6) that he did not find in the text he used. So these words are missing in Bar 1:15-3:8.

- The change of persons in Dan 9 and Bar 1:15-3:8 is remarkable. Apart from 9:7ff. Daniel manifests the same way of speaking as Bar 1:15-3:8. In Dan 9:15-19 and Bar 2:11-3:8 it is understandable that they use the 2nd person because both express their petitions to God. In the remaining text, Dan 9 has the 2nd person everywhere where it does not run parallel with Bar, and the 3rd person where it does. Meantime Bar remains consistent in using the 3rd person. It could be concluded that Daniel is dependent upon Baruch and not the opposite.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to research the meaning of guilt, punishment and reconciliation in the penitential prayer of Baruch. The prayer in Bar 1:15aβ-3:8 displays the same basic principles about the relationship between God and his people as do other penitential prayers. Similarly, it consists of two constituent parts, the confession and the petition.

The confession of sins in Baruch's prayer is thorough, regarding the extent of the period of time it encompasses, the number of persons that are culpable, and the extent of their guilt. The author of the prayer shows a ten-

- In the parallel passages of Dan 9:7-8 and Bar 1:15-16, Dan 9:7c (»all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away ...«) could be explained as Daniel's addition. So the prayer he got (without it) would suit the exilic period better. Baruch includes the priests and the prophets, who were among Jeremiah's opponents, in the group of those to be ashamed. In Daniel they are not included. Accordingly, they are named »his servants« in Dan 9:10b and are left out in Bar 1:18b.

- A comparison between Dan 9:11 and Bar 1:19-22 shows that the Bar text is overloaded. It twice mentions the fathers being led from Egypt. Has Bar lengthened the shorter Dan (on the basis of Jer 7:22-27; 11:4f.)? The Bar text is consistent and logical: from the time of coming out from Egypt the people have rebelled against the Lord, and neither curses nor the prophets' warnings could prevent them from rebelling (cf. Dtn 9:7,24). Dan 9:11 does not mention God's sending his prophets to the people and the people refusing to listen to them and going after the intentions of their wicked hearts. It does not correspond to the situation and the theology of the author of Daniel. Moreover, Bar 1:20 is a difficult passage, so Dan 9:11 could be a *lectio facilior et brevior*.

- Daniel's shorter text in 9:12 cannot be a recapitulation of the history of Israel's sin in Bar 2:1-5. It does not say what threat was carried out in Jerusalem. Meantime the Bar text displays good syntax and from the point of the content, it expresses the fulfilment of the most awful predictions in Dtn 28. On the other hand, Bar is not interested in the destruction of the city and the temple, as Dan is (9:16ff.).

- In comparing Dan 9:13-14 and Bar 2:6-10, the latter is most reasonably explained as a recapitulation of what has been said so far. It emphatically repeats the antithesis between God's and the people's behaviour. Daniel's shortened text does not lead to such a strong effect. So: Dan is a shortened version of Bar.

- In the case of Dan 9:15-16 and Bar 2:11-13, it seems that Bar depends on Dan, and was later extended. More importantly, they differ in their petitions: Bar asks for the survival of Israel, Dan for God's intervention for Jerusalem and the Temple. Bar's lack of petition for Jerusalem and the Temple is special, yet not very different from its »leittext« in Jer 34:2; 39; 52; also 1 Kings 8:46-51.

- Dan 9:17-19 and Bar 2:14-19 (20-3:1),2-6 (7-8). Both texts correspond to their authors' situation: desolated Jerusalem in Dan, suppliant Israel in Bar (cf. 1 Kings 8:52). It is possible the two-sided dependence and rearrangement took place here. It is clear, however, that the author of Bar stands consciously in the milieu of Jeremiah and Deuteronomy, while the author of Dan harmonizes his text with the context of Daniel.

The conclusion: The dependence of Bar on Dan may not be held unproved any longer. From the above examples it is possible to conclude that Dan reworked Bar 1:15-3:8. The closeness of Bar to Dtn and the closeness of Dan to Chr / Ezra-Neh is evident. It is also unlikely that because of their closeness, both Dan and Bar depend on the same older text.

dency to include within the confession Israel throughout her history, in all her social classes, and in all the types of her rebellion against God. The inclusion of the kings and other ruling classes in the group of sinners shows the impartiality with which the Bible treats human beings. To encompass the whole of human sinfulness, the formulaic expression is used: h(ma/rtomen, h)peiqh/samen, ou)k h)kou/samen th\j fwnh\j kuri/ou (we have sinned, disobeyed him, have not heeded the voice of the Lord our God - 1:17,18) and again h(ma/rtomen, h)sebh/samen, h)dikh/samen (we have sinned, we have been ungodly, we have done wrong - 2:12). So the essence of sin is the refusal to have a relationship with God. In describing the history of Israel's sin, this relationship appears to be the most intimate bond initiated by the Lord. Without using the expression itself (it will appear in the petition in 2:35), it was the covenant with the Lord within which Israel sinned, disobeyed and refused to heed his voice. The history of Israel's sin is at the same time the unfolding of the Lord's endless invitation to Israel to accept his covenantal love. The confession shows that Israel's basic sin is refusing this invitation.

Therefore, the punishment that comes on the scene very soon, in the confession and in the petition, appears as the most logical consequence. There is no theological problem in presenting the most dreadful scenes from Israel's history. They are a demonstration of what was happening between the Lord and his people. Since Israel tore apart the bond between herself and her God, all the bonds everywhere were torn, right to the most intimate one, turning parental love into cannibalism. The bond between Israel and her land was violently interrupted by the exile. The disappearance of bridegrooms and brides showed that the Lord was no longer Israel's bridegroom and that Israel was no longer his bride. Even the last embrace the graves offer to the dead was torn apart: the corpses of the kings and ancestors were profaned.

In this breaking of all the bonds, the people remember that the Lord is their God. And they know that he has brought these calamities on them. Yet he will never leave them. This recognition is the sign that Israel, too, has not entirely forgotten the covenant with God. They are able to recognize in their calamities the punishment they deserved, and to confess their sin.

After that they turn to the Lord with a supplication. It occupies the second part of the prayer. What does Israel ask the Lord? To change her situation completely. The petition starts with asking the Lord to turn (a)postrafh/tw) his anger away from Israel (2:13), and concludes with the statement that Israel has turned away (a)pestrh/yamen) from their hearts the iniquity of their ancestors (3:7). The punishment thus brought forth the fruit of conversion. The outer frame of this passage consists of praising the Lord's salvific acts for Israel in the past (2:11), and the statement of Israel's being brought down into exile now (3:8). The inclusion of the petition thus reminds the Lord of the act of salvation that he had

already performed, and presents him with the situation of Israel, who urgently needs the same action again. Israel's wrong reaction to the Lord's salvation in the past (2:12) contrasts with her actual conversion in exile (3:7). Israel's sinful behaviour followed the Lord's saving act in the past (2:11-12) and her conversion precedes his saving act they hope for now (3:7-8). The threats of the prophets were fulfilled (2:20-26). The moment of the Lord's fulfilling the promise (2:34-35) is at hand. The reason is urgent: Israel will disappear and the glory of the Lord will diminish (2:13-15). The condition is fulfilled: Israel is converted (3:7). The scene is thus ready for the Lord to bring Israel again into the land, to increase their number, to make an everlasting covenant with them and never again to remove them from the land he has given them (2:34-35). The text expresses the firmest possible hope in the fulfilment of Israel's dreams.

Why then was the book of Baruch not accepted by all the Jews? Was it due to its character of summarizing Jeremiah, being nothing but its appendix or resume? Was it due to its tendency to look upon Israel's foreign rulers benevolently? Or was it due to its idea of the unity of Israel as against partial groups? Or did its indications for prayer and offerings mean the reorganization of the institution of worship in the Jerusalem Temple, which was not desired by the ruling priesthood?⁴⁷

The open end functions as a lasting invitation and an unending promise.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ See the discussion on this still unsolved question in O. H. Steck, *Das apokryphe Baruchbuch*, 268-285.

⁴⁸ If with R. Feuerstein we focus only on Baruch's idea of building a community with God, and at the same time between the people that remained in Judah and the exiles who had begun to return home - we immediately meet with an obstacle. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah give us an insight into the problems of identifying the returned exiles and the people who remained in the land, into the hostility that existed between the people of the land and the people of Judah, etc. (cf. Ezr 4:1-5; 9:1-3; 10; Neh 4; 13:1-3,23ff.). The book of Baruch is now sent to Jerusalem with an introduction telling them to join the *golah* community which is abroad and that which is returning, in fasting, praying and interceding for them. That is to say, in this way the Jerusalemites that stayed at home would somehow undergo the process of exile and return from it as the realization of God's promise. In fact, the Jerusalemites held themselves to be the real descendants of the Babylonian *golah* and of the promises which were to some extent fulfilled (returning home, the rebuilding of the Temple, the growth of the community in more normalized circumstances). So Bar 1:1-3:8 could have been composed as an appendix to the Hebrew recension of Jeremiah. It was not accepted by the Jerusalemites - they were asked to pray the penitential prayer and so to co-live the same religious experience as the *golah* community. Yet they considered they had already experienced this religious event. The question arises: Did the compilers of Bar make their invitation to the regular praying of the penitential prayer in such a way that it would replace the decisive journey which was demanded in the *golah*? And - since it did not obtain their confidence, did they become guilty of the fact that the promised change to the decisive salvific event had been absent for so long? - see R. Feuerstein, *Das Buch Baruch*, 402-404.