

Expansions on the Book of Baruch

Introduction

Please note: this document is posted under the banner “New Testament” simply because there’s more room there.

This book is described as being deuterocanonical, that is, as “belonging to the second canon” and recognized by the Catholic Church and Eastern churches as part and parcel of the so-called Old Testament. Protestant denominations don’t consider it as such. As for the author, he was a companion and secretary to the prophet Jeremiah ¹¹ and wrote what we have here during the Babylonian captivity. It was intended to be sent to Jerusalem for public reading on feast days chiefly with the confession of sins being in mind. Behind this penitential tone was that Israel had been punished for disobeying the Lord and therefore suffered the consequences of invasion and deportation.

With those brief but necessary few words out of the way, I mention what all the other “expansion” texts posted on this website say, namely, that the goal of the document is to put the Book of Baruch at the disposal of *lectio divina*, no more, no less. Plenty of information...facts...about Baruch and the historical circumstances of his time can be obtained from reliable sources. Important as they are, such information is not the reason for what follows here. That is to say, the text is meant to be read s-l-o-w-l-y and with great care, the intent being to rest in God even after going through just a verse or two at one time, certainly not much more. Other than that, the series of notes are of little or no value.

As for the text at hand, the Book of Baruch was written originally in Hebrew, but only the Greek (Septuagint) survives. Usually material for the introductions of such “expansion” documents are written before getting into the text and modified later on. Such is the present case. For now a certain free-flowing approach will be adopted, looking at each chapter for what it is worth from the *lectio* point of view. If the notations here are of value in that regard, I could ask for nothing more.

The Book of Baruch consists of five chapters, making for a relatively short document. As we move through the text, similar words are bound to appear. When found again, each one is designated by the plus sign, +. Postings will be made on occasion until the text is complete.

Chapter One

This book starts off with the conjunctive *kai* translated as “and” which infers that something

¹¹For example, cf. Jer 36.4 where the prophet bids Baruch to write on a scroll “all the words of the Lord which he had spoken to him.”

had come before it, perhaps several customary forms of greetings to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. As for these inhabitants in Jerusalem and surrounding areas, it seems they were left pretty much as caretakers to mind the land and perhaps keep some semblance of order in various locations even if they had been pretty much wasted.²² Most likely we can refer to them as the so-called *hanawim* or poor ones. With this in mind, it'd be helpful to align ourselves with them as we read the text, this type of document most likely the only one of its kind in the Bible. As for what the conjunctive *kai* might be, it's not mentioned. In a way, it serves to situate this book in a larger context of other texts that were emerging from Babylon, the book at hand being one among many. Perhaps and just perhaps one day positive news will be forthcoming. Actually stirrings in this regard were already circulating.

If this position is correct, nevertheless we do not know their content nor realize if they were or lesser or great importance than the text at hand. And so we have to set aside such speculation and delve into the contents at hand. I mention this now because it makes for an unusual backdrop for reading the text. We as identifying with the *hanawim* can see if someone like Baruch has an accurate perception of our situation among the ruins of Jerusalem. As for Baruch himself, although we're in contact with him and he had been Jeremiah's amanuenses, he did have first hand experience of the fall of Jerusalem and thus cannot be discounted as someone with vague knowledge of our situation. Surely he was paying close attention to what Babylonian palace officials were saying. Would the current situation continue or would Israel be restored? That brought up the larger problem of those Israelites who had settled in Babylon and were far more comfortable than at home.

Although several instances of Israelites being left behind are found in the Bible, they're simply stated, not elaborated upon. There may be a tacit reason for this. Those deemed unworthy to go into exile are left pretty much on their own and seem to have thrived. Granted they weren't as well off as before but now are left to their own devices, not worth being invaded and taken prisoners. Most important of all, they were left alone to eke out a living.

Getting back to the conjunctive *kai*, we can say that for us-as-*hanawim* it represents a constant stream of news or information of interest which at the same time is secondary to our subsistence-like life style. That means what comes from Babylon, wonderful as the Book of Baruch may be, is of growing concern for us. Even if authorities there decided to restore Jerusalem, our life style would be threatened. So hearing from an authoritative figure as Baruch is a two-edged sword. Many of the *hanawim* would wish things would remain as they are (that is, post-Babylonian exile) and content with some half-hearted governance from Babylon.

Such is the background of the text including the unique way it begins. Note the noun *logos*

²²Actually many of those in Babylon found themselves quite well off, perhaps even better than at home. After all, living in Babylon was the center of civilization, like living in New York City or London.

in the very first verse which in a larger context opens up a whole world of meaning. Compare it with Jer 36.4 cited in the first footnote: “all the *davar* of the Lord which he had *davar* to him.” So to have both nouns right off the bat has a lot with setting the tone of the book just as we see with regard to the conjunctive *kai*. In other “expansion” texts *logos* has been defined as word-as-expression and derives from the verbal root *lego*, to pick, to choose. *Davar*, of course, has been pointed out a number of times as being its equivalent. This, of course, fits in nicely, *davar* being the same spelling for both verb and noun as the Jeremiah verse points out so clearly.

The first verse neatly combines the meaning of *logos* and *davar* (the verb being an added feature) designated as “of the book” or *biblios* which means a scroll. Such is the customary way documents were transmitted from Babylon to Jerusalem, the contents of Baruch perhaps being just one among a bundle of them. However, due to its essentially religious content, it may have been marked out for special treatment as by a seal. Speaking of seals, vs. 1 is careful to mention the descendants of Baruch which total five, these forebears giving greater credence with their names attached to the document.

Then we have an appendage of sorts, the date when Baruch had written it where the word *kairos* or time. As with *logos*, this is a well-known New Testament term which in the verse at hand consists of the year and day when Baruch composed his document. *Kairos* infers that Baruch was highly conscious of its content, that it stands out among all the other documents sent off to Jerusalem. Indeed, *kairos* dovetails with the anniversary when the Chaldeans took Jerusalem. The text, of course, says that but is careful mention that they had burned the city with fire which for all practical purposes means total destruction. Although it isn’t mentioned, we can be certain that the temple was utmost on everyone’s minds.

By reason of his association with the prophet Jeremiah, Baruch was keenly aware of recent history and the situation at hand. So before dispatching the document, wisely he decided to read the *logoi* of the book to Jeconiah, king of Judah in exile. Apparently the Babylonians kept him locked up which means that Baruch had to make his way to the prison. This, of course, is before Jeconiah’s release and Jeremiah’s curse, that none of his descendants would occupy the throne. All that lay in the future but for now doesn’t impinge upon Baruch’s decision. Not only that, he contacted five groups of fellow Israelites. As for the king’s response, we have no clue. It must have had a positive response because if it didn’t, Baruch wouldn’t have sent it. We can also assume that Baruch informed the others that King Jeconiah had given his tacit approval. As for these other five groups, the reading of such *logoi* was done literally “in the hearing,” this phrase being prefaced to each of the five in order to drive home the fact that they didn’t have a transitory effect but had registered within them..

The five groups consisted of all who came to hear the book: all the people, mighty men, princes, elders and all the people small and great. Together they had dwelt by the river Sud. Perhaps this is what Ps 137.1 means when it says, “By the waters of Babylon there we sat

down and wept when we remembered Zion.” This verse can be taken as more or less spontaneous gathering in one place, almost taking on the air of a liturgical celebration. We could assume the Sud had some rapids of some sort whose rushing sound resembled tears of weeping and thus formed the inspiration of the psalm quote. Judging by assembly of so many representative groups of Israelites, Baruch made it a point...for a mission...to first blow by them the contents of his document before sending it off. Obviously the Babylonian officials got wind of this and seemed to give their approval. Lack of any censorship was a sign that they may be getting closer to allowing full return. Nevertheless, that remained a hope and nothing more.

After the Israelites completed what amounts to a period of mourning, spontaneous or otherwise, they wept, fasted and prayed before (*enantion*, also as opposite and face to face) the Lord. Baruch isn't mentioned as being among them though we can presume he was present. Either he or someone else decided to spontaneously ask for a collection according to each person's means. Apparently some type of religious rituals continued to be performed in Jerusalem, for this money was sent to a priest there named Jehoiakim who had some other priests with him. Because those in Babylon lacked the temple, they figured that a monetary offering would substitute. How they continued their traditions in this place isn't recounted, but it must have resembled the synagogue format. So with the two going on more or less simultaneously—proper religious observance in Jerusalem and synagogue-type gatherings in Babylon—the Israelites managed to establish a fairly coherent system where one balanced the other.

If this weren't enough, Baruch managed to collect the vessels (*skeue*: also applies to clothing as well as equipment in general) of the house of the Lord which the Babylonians carried from the temple. Note the two words which apply to one reality, *oikos* and *naos*. The former has a more domestic, familial quality about it whereas the latter, a place of worship. These vessels are specified as having been crafted by Zedekiah, king of Judah, and carried off to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. Also note that vs. 9 adds princes, prisoners, mighty men and people being carried off from Jerusalem along with these vessels. The idea is that what was used for religious worship is synonymous with the people, hence the sameness of *oikos* + and *naos* as just described.

Obviously such booty cannot be returned on a whim. Yet this didn't stop a collection from being made to foster restoration of the Jerusalem temple's sacred vessels, it wouldn't have gone this far if there were no possibility of success. Most likely the general good behavior of the Israelites in Babylon plus the valuable service they offered had a lot to do with making this proposal a viable option. Also the Babylonians got more than they had bargained for. So many Israelites became highly successful and well off that they didn't want to return home. Better to make a compromise and allow the religious utensils to go back to where they came from, the Jerusalem temple. In this way it could turn out to be a win-win situation for everyone.

In vs. 10 the people—most likely all those described thus far—make plans to send the funds collected to Jerusalem. Apparently everyone did give according to his or her means if not beyond that, so in record time they got them ready along with the vessels for liturgical use. As for the money, the purpose is stated explicitly: burnt offerings, sin offerings, incense and cereal offerings. All are to be offered upon the altar in Jerusalem which seems to have escaped destruction or was repaired shortly after the Babylonian invasion. Although the Israelites in Babylon recognized the importance of the temple, we get an impression that its centrality is beginning to be questioned. After all, you have a lot of Israelites scattered throughout Babylon and most likely other nations. Most showed no sign of relinquishing their identity yet by reason of their situation drifted gradually away from the temple and what it signified. Indeed, this is a major shift that's beginning to take root and won't come into full effect until much later with the Roman destruction of the temple once and for all. So already as in Babylon we have shades of the future look of Judaism.

Those preparing the document at hand, vessels and money for the offering—certainly a valuable cargo by any stretch of the imagination—ask prayers for King Nebuchadnezzar and his son Belschazzar, the latter known for the handwriting on the wall incident. The common verb *proseuchomai* is used which also connotes to make petition³³. This may be taken as a way to win over the king and those in authority but seems to come from genuine appreciation of him allowing the Israelites to prosper in Babylon as well as to function back in Jerusalem. Implied is that the invasion, by no means a pleasant experience, turned out to be beneficial. As for the ruler and his son, the prayer is that their days on earth resemble those day of heaven. Certainly the Babylonians would appreciate this analogy, *ouranos* or heaven also as the firmament and home of the stars and planets, the study of which their astronomers were justly famous.

Vs. 12 continues this prayer/petition with the sure confidence that the Lord will give strength, *ischus* here involving power and might along with light to their eyes, the verb being *photizo* also as to shine. This will enable the Israelites to continue living in peace under both King Nebuchadnezzar and his son Belschazzar, the latter apparently having been designated as heir apparent. The noun *skia* or shadow is used for this protection. Not only that, the Israelites express a willingness to be of service to them, *douleuo* fundamentally to be a slave which may have been the case in some instances but apparently not all.

Vs. 13 begins with the conjunctive *kai* translated as “and” which adds a request for prayers (*proseuchomai* again) almost deliberately as an appendix. Here two prepositions are worth noting. First *peri* is used with the verb which also means to be around and can be taken as prayers surrounding...embracing...those who are making the request. Secondly, *pros* or “for” is with regard to the Lord, this preposition suggestive of directness and immediacy. The reason for such a request? Baruch is acknowledging that the people (first person plural)

³³This is reminiscent of 1 Tm 2.1: “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers (*proseuche* as from *proseuchomai*), intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all me, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way.”

have sinned, *hamartano* also as to do something wrong. Such wrong-doing is against the Lord (dative case) which persists “to (*heos*, until) this day.” That is to say, there’s a collective awareness of why the people have ended up in Babylon. It isn’t politically motivated but a result of not heeding the Lord.

As vs. 13 continues, the Israelites continue to feel the Lord’s anger and wrath, *thumos* and *orge*. The former is suggestive of intense expression of what’s inside oneself while the latter, strong displeasure with focus upon emotional expression. Ever since going into exile the Israelites felt both weighing over them, *apostrepho* being the verb to express this (*apo-* or *from*). Obviously they could not continue like this even if many managed to prosper in Babylon as has been noted earlier.

Now vs. 14 turns attention to a letter for those in Jerusalem asking them to read the book (*biblios* +, that is, a scroll) sent along for one purpose along. The intent is for them to make a confession in the Lord’s house (*oikos* +), *exagoreuo* or literally to tell from (*ex-*), that is, on special days which are feasts and appointed times. Note two uses of the preposition *en* or in: “in the house of the Lord” and “in the days.” As for these special days, they are ones of *heorte* and *kairos* +. The former as festival and the latter as special occasion.

Vs. 15 continues with further instruction from those in Babylon to those in Jerusalem. The way it’s presented is as though the two were present to each other physically. While not the case, they are remain as no distance was between them by reason of the sacred matters being conveyed through the items and letter. The instruction now given is a kind of confession, namely, that righteousness belongs to the Lord compared with confusion of faces (plural) as belonging to us or those in Jerusalem. Surely the first person plural includes the Israelites in Babylon as well. In other words, *dikaosune* vs. *aischune* with the latter expressed on the face so it’s visible to one and all. This belongs to seven categories: men of Judah, inhabitants of Jerusalem, kings, princes, priests, prophets and fathers.

Vs. 17 continues the extended sentence begun with vs. 15 and does so with *kai* translated as “because.” It points to the reason for this contrast between *dikaosune* and *aischune*, [both +] the result of the following three:

- having sinned or *hamartano* +
- having been disobedient, *apeitheo* also as to refuse compliance, this before the Lord or right in his face
- having not heeded the Lord’s voice, *akouo* or to hear

Of the three, the third seems the most important because such hearing is with regard to having failed to walk in the Lord’s statutes or *prostagma* where the preposition *pros-* is indicative of direction towards-which. This *pros-*ness, if you will, is heightened by the preposition *prosopon*, “before (us).”

Although vs. 19 begins a new verse, the way it's presented makes it seem as part of the very extended sentence going back to vs. 15. Reference has been made to the "theological reason" for Jerusalem's fall and exile of the population. However, in the verse at hand it's extended way back to when Israel left Egypt. Technically speaking, the first affront to the Lord takes place just three days after crossing the Red Sea or when the people complained about the bitter water (cf. Ex 15.23+). Not long afterwards they complained about a lack of food (cf. Ex 16.2+). Although the Hebrew scriptures are remarkable as to recording such embarrassing events, here it must have done the same for the people hearing such memories from the past.

Vs. 19 continues with Baruch and others asking those in Jerusalem to admit responsibility from the past, they being included as well. That is to say, the people in the homeland are guilty of the following three:

- having been disobedient or *apeitheo* + or not having complied to (*pros*, again direction towards-which) the Lord
- having been negligent, *skediazo* or to do something in an off-handed fashion
- having not heeded the Lord's voice, *akouo* + with *phone*

Vs. 19 begins with "From the day" whereas vs. 20 does so with "so to this day" where "so" is the conjunctive *kai* and *en* or in is the preposition "to." During this extended time span—from the waters of Meribah to the fall of Jerusalem and beyond, to the Babylonian captivity—all sorts of calamities and a curse had clung to the people, *kakos* + or the general adjective for evil and *ara*, also as a prayer to inflict evil. The first is plural whereas the second is singular, that being the cause of the first. Note that with respect to *kakos* + the preposition *eis* is used, literally "into us," the verb *kollao* fundamentally as to glue or to cement. Such had been given by the Lord through Moses his servant, *pais* as a child, the verb being *suntasso*, to put in order or in an array, *sun-* being the preposition "with." The reference to all this is found in Dt 28.15+ which begins with "But if you will not obey." Surely those in Babylon as well as in Jerusalem were fully aware of that text.

At the same time vs. 20 speaks of how the Lord promised a land flowing with milk and honey which has the added words not in the **RSV** as "this day," This being the second mention of "day" in the verse at hand. If this weren't bad enough, vs. 21 has a failure by the people to hear the Lord's voice, *akouo* and *phone* [both +]. Such *phone* was manifested through words (*logos* +) of the prophets sent by the Lord to (*pros*) us. The first person plural is used to include all Israelites no matter where they might be.

Vs. 2 continues as an extended sentence beginning with the conjunctive *kai* translated here as "but." This but-ness leads to "each of us" (again, including all Israelites) who had followed the intent of his own wicked heart. The verb here is *oichomai* usually as to go or to come with respect to *kardia* or heart described not as *kakos* + but as *poneros* which applies more to a sorry plight or something worthless and hence has a broader meaning. As for "intent,"

the noun is *dianoia* which also means intelligence, literally as “through the mind,” *dia-* + *noos*. As intimated from the beginning, this consists in serving other gods and doing evil in the Lord’s sight, *ergazomai* meaning to work in the sense of engaging in labor. If this weren’t bad enough, doing *kakos* or evil literally “down from (*kata* could be read as such) to the eyes” of the Lord.”

Chapter Two

This new chapter begins with the conjunctive *kai* translated as “so” which shows a seamless connection between what has been said by way of historical introduction and what flows from it. As a footnote in the **RSV** has it, we have here a confession of sin for the Jerusalem community as well as exiles.

The chapter starts off on rather harsh terms, the Lord having confirmed his word which he spoke “upon (*epi*) us”, the first person plural referring to both those Israelites in Babylon as well as in Jerusalem. At the same time there’s a trustful, joyous tone to the text that might not be evident at first glance but certainly is present. This tone will run through most if not all of Chapter Two and spill over into Chapter Three which admittedly can get repetitious and somewhat boring. Much of this has to do with the free and open acknowledgment of guilt and responsibility for Israel have provoked the Babylonian invasion, at least from the theological point of view.

Histemi or to stand is with *logos* + or word-as-expression, that the Lord is making his *logos* remain as long as he deems necessary. *Laleo* is the common verb to speak. Something similar is found in Dan 9.12” He has confirmed his words which he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled us by bringing upon us a great calamity.” The Hebrew uses the verb *qum* (to arise) for *histemi* + and *davar* for both word and to speak (i.e., the same spelling for both). In the verse at hand, the preposition *epi* (upon) is used six times, spilling into vs. 2: upon us, upon our judges, upon our kings, upon our princes, upon the men of Israel and Judah and in vs. 2, upon us which isn’t in the **RSV**.

As for the difference just noted concerning vs. 2, compare the **RSV** with the translation from **The Septuagint Version** (London, date not given) respectively. Notations are in accord with the latter:

- Under the whole heaven there has not been done the like of what he has done in Jerusalem, in accordance with what is written in the law of Moses,
- To bring upon us great plagues such as never happened under the whole heaven as it came to pass in Jerusalem according to the things that were written in the law of Moses.

Ago is the verb meaning to take or to carry off with respect to *kakos* + or the adjective evil for plague. The verb *poieo* or to make is used twice: with regard to making that which is

kakos + and that which is in Jerusalem (i.e., the same *kakos* + as there). All this is in accord with (*kata*, according to) what is written in the law (*nomos*, also as custom and the equivalent for *Torah*) of Moses. Reference is to cannibalism as in Dt 28.53: “And you shall eat the offspring of your own body, the flesh of your sons and daughters whom the Lord your God has given you in the siege and in the distress with which your enemies shall distress you.”

Vs. 4 begins with the conjunctive *kai* translated as “and” to show the connection between the Deuteronomy quote and the result of such an abomination. The only way to quit such an extreme situation is to banish the people from their own land, intimations of the Babylonian exile. Therefore the Lord gave them into subjection of the nations, *hupocheiros* as literally under the hand. Thus Israel will be a reproach and desolation, the preposition *eis* or into with regard to *oneidisma* and the adjective *abatos*, insult or blame and literally untrodden, impassible. If this weren’t bad enough, *kuklos* or circle is used, that is, the nations are surrounding the Israelites and slowly choking them to death. Such is what happens when the Lord has scattered them there or in (*en*) them, *diaspeiro* with the preposition *dia-* or through prefaced to the root. And so the prepositions *eis*, *en* and *dia* work together to show how relentless the Lord is when it comes to meting out such punishment.

Vs. 5 continues this somber theme beginning with the conjunctive *kai* which goes untranslated in the **RSV**. Here the Israelites are described as having been brought low and not raised up (*hupokato* and *epano*: *hupo-* and *epi-* or from under and upon). Note how freely they express this with the first person plural. Two factors are involved: having sinned (*hamartano* +) and having not heeded the Lord’s voice, *akouo* + with the preposition *pros*, indicative of direction towards-which.

This matter-of-fact, free admission of guilt continues in vs. 6 with an acknowledgment of divine righteousness versus confusion, *dikaiosune* and *aischune* [both +] of faces (plural) as in 1.15. Implied is a certain collective ability to gaze upon the Lord which hadn’t so much been lost but muddled over and has the possibility of being restored. In 1.15 reference is made not only “to us” but to the men of Judah, inhabitants of Jerusalem, kings, princes, priests, prophets and fathers whereas here it’s only to fathers. In the verse at hand it has a specific time as in 1.15, “as at this day.” One gets the impression that the capture of Jerusalem and exile to Babylon is printed indelibly on Israel’s memory. Indeed, at that very specific time all the evils (*kakos* +) mentioned in vs. 7 threatened by the Lord have come, the common verb *laleo* + or to speak being used. No elaboration here is necessary, just a plain speaking by the Lord.

Vs. 8 begins with the conjunctive *kai* translated as “yet,” indicative that essentially it’s a continuation of the previous verse, a collective admission that the Israelites hadn’t entreated the favor of the Lord, *deomai* with *prosopon* + or face of the Lord. This can be taken as another way of putting that confusion of face noted twice above. It’s a result of failing to

have turned away from thoughts present in each person's wicked heart. The verb is *apostrepho* + which is prefaced with the preposition *apo-* (from) and has the same preposition with regard to *noema*. This noun means thought or that which is perceived as present in the *kardia* +, heart described as being wicked, *poneros* + which as noted above, infers a sorry plight.

The conjunctive *kai* of vs. 9 is similar to that beginning vs. 9 and is translated as "and." All in all we're being hit in unrelenting fashion with one example after another of Israel's disobedience to the Lord. The verse at hand begins with the Lord having various calamities (*kakos* +) ready or at hand, *gregoreo* also as to be awake. Nevertheless, the disobedience of the Israelites forced the Lord to take action by bringing such *kakoi* upon them, the verb being *epago* with *epi-* (upon) prefaced to the verbal root together with *epi* as "upon us." And so the divine *gregoreo* is not unlike a lion waiting in ambush to pounce on its prey. However, he wasn't keeping score but was acting thus because he's righteous in what he does, *dikaios* and *ergon*, that which displays itself in activity, and here in reference to what he had commanded us to carry out, *entello*, also to enjoin.

Vs. 10 continues the conjunctive style, if you will, translated as "yet" and involves negligence with regard to the following two:

- lack of *akouo* or hearing the divine *phone* [both +] or voice
- not walking or *poreuo* in the Lord's statutes or *prostagma*. + Note the preposition *pros-* prefaced to the noun just as it is with *prosopon* + or face, the noun being used with the preposition *kata*, in accord with and *didomai* or to give as the verb which heightens the notion of presenting an option but one where for all practical purposes there are none.

Vs. 11 begins with the conjunctive *kai* translated as "and" where the Lord is addressed directly as having brought his people from Egypt. It echos the original, if you will, or Dt 6.22: "and the Lord brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household before our eyes." The customary words for such deliverance are used: mighty hand, signs, wonders, great power and outstretched arm. Note the difference between signs and wonders, *semeion* and *teras*; the former is a distinguishing mark by which something is known whereas the latter is something that causes astonishment by reason of transcendence. Then is added the fact that the Lord has made a name (*onoma*) for himself "on that day" which refers, of course, to the Exodus and what preceded it, the slaying of the first born and celebration of the Passover. Mention of this is meant to be extended into the present with no temporal distinction between the two.

Vs. 12 is a continuation of the previous verse, the two forming one extended sentence where we have a free acknowledgment of sin, having been ungodly and having done wrong. The verbs are *hamartano* +, *asebeo* (to be impious, act in a profane way as committing a sacrilege) and *adikeo* (to do wrong). All three were done against the ordinance of the Lord,

dikaïoma (also punishment) which has the preposition *epi* (upon) before it, “upon ordinances.”

In light of this collective admission, vs. 13 is a similarly collective gesture or request for the Lord to turn away his anger, *apostrepho* + (*apo-* or from) with regard to *thumos* + or as noted earlier, an intense expression of what’s inside oneself. Indeed, the people are left as few in number and among nations where they’ve been scattered. The two verbs are *kataleipo* and *diaspeiro* with respective prepositions of *kata-* and *dia-*, down and through. The last word of this verse is *ekei* or “there” which shows that the Lord means business.

Vs. 14 and the next verse form an extended sentence beginning with a heart-felt petition for the Lord not just to hear prayers and petitions offered but literally to hear-into them, the verb *eisakouo* (i.e., *eis-* prefaced to the verbal root). The object: prayers and petitions, *proseuche* + and *deesis*, the latter also as entreaty. In the same breath we have a clever petition, sneaked in, as it were, for the Lord to offer deliverance or *exaireo*, literally as to take from (*ex-*) for two reasons:

- not for the sake of the people but for Lord himself, *heniken sou*
- grant favor or *charis* (also as grace) literally “according to the face” (*prosopon* +) of those responsible for making the exile happen, the Babylonians. The verb is *apoikeo*, to live from (*apo-*) home.

Vs. 15 begins with the important small word *hina* or “in order that” which shows its connection with the previous verse. Despite Israel’s plight, what’s of special importance is for the earth to know (*gignosko*, also as to perceive) the Lord and that Israel and its descendants are called by his name. Not the three instances of the preposition *epi* or upon: *epikaleo*, *epi* Israel and *epi* descendants or *genos*, also as stock, family.

Vs. 16 and the next two verses form a single extended sentence beginning with a sixfold appeal to the Lord:

- to look down from where he lives, that described as a holy habitation, a house or *oikos* + which is holy, *hagios* or set apart. The verb is *kateidon* which also can mean to behold, to regard.
- to consider us, *ennoeo* or to have in one’s mind (*nous* with *en-*, in) and *eis*, “into us.”
- incline ear, *klino* meaning to bend down in order to listen more carefully
- hear or *akouo* +
- open eyes, *anoignumi*
- see or *eidon*

After having made these six appeals, in the second part of vs. 17 attention is drawn to those in Hades, the Greek equivalent to Sheol, a rather ill-defined and conceived place where the dead reside. Those whose spirit has been removed (*pneuma* and *lambano*, to take) from corporeal existence cannot give glory nor justice to the Lord. Note that *splagchnon* is the

noun for body and usually applies to any inward part as well as deep affection.

Vs. 18 signals a shift with *alla* or “but” in that four types of people (*psuche* + or soul is used) are exempt from what had just been described:

-greatly distressed or *lupeo* also to vex with the preposition *epi* (upon) *megathos* or great

-bent over or *kupto* with the verb *badizo*, to go slowly

-feeble or *asthenos* also as weak, similarly with *badizo*

-failing eyes: *ekleipo* or to leave out (*ek-*, from)

-hungers *peino* or to be famished with *psuche*, + soul

Despite these afflictions, such persons will ascribe glory and righteousness to the Lord, the verb *didomai* (to give) with regard to *doxa* and *dikaiosune* +.

Vs. 19 begins with *hoti*, “because” or “therefore.” Despite the above mentioned description of Israel’s condition, the people realize that their fathers lacked righteous deeds (*dikaionia* +). Nevertheless, they have the courage to bring forth their prayer for mercy, *kataballo* literally as to cast down and suggests laying down (*kata-*) something with the idea of making it permanent. That consists of *eleos*, this being in accord with (*kata*) the Lord’s face or *prosopon* +, to put it literally and somewhat awkwardly.

Vs. 20 is a straight-forward admission of guilt, that the Lord has sent his anger and wrath upon his people, the verb *eniemi* meaning to send it (*en-*) along with *eis* or into. *Thumos* and *orge* [both +] are the two involved This had been foretold by the prophets where the RSV includes a reference to Jer 27.11-15 (i.e., singular prophet) cited in the next verse and running through vs. 23. Although the actual text is quite long, still it’s worth given in full as follows: “But any nation which will bring its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I will leave on its own land, to till it and dwell there, says the Lord.” To Zedekiah king of Judah I spoke in like manner: ‘Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live. Why will you and your people die by the sword, by famine and by pestilence as the Lord has spoken concerning any nation which will not serve the king of Babylon? Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are saying to you, ‘You shall not serve the king of Babylon,’ for it is a lie which they are prophesying to you. I have not sent them, says the Lord, but they are prophesying falsely in my name, with the result that I will drive you out and you will perish, you and the prophets who are prophesying to you.”

Vs. 21 is part of the Jeremiah passage cited above where the Lord himself bids his people to bend their shoulders and serve the king of Babylon in reference to the yoke just mentioned. Also the Lord will bring to an end four types of voices (*phone* +): mirth, gladness, bridegroom and bride. The first two are *euphrosune* and *charmosune*, also as cheerfulness and delight. Once these four voices are silenced, the land will be left as a desolation and

lacking inhabitants. *Eis* or into with *abatos* + describing it is used.

Vs. 24 is a clear admission of the problem at hand, namely, that the people failed to listen to the Lord's voice which was a command to serve the king of Babylon, *ergazomai* + or more specifically, to engage in labor. This was confirmed by the prophets or literally "to stand words," *histemi* and *logos* (both +). As for the prophets, the noun *pais* + is used which often refers to a child. As for this prophet who is Jeremiah (i.e., a singular prophet), reference is to Jer 8.1-2 where the issue is worship of alien divinities. Despite its length, the passage is worth citing: "At that time, says the Lord, the bones of the kings of Judah, the bones of its princes, the bones of the priests, the bones of the prophets and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be brought out of their tombs; and they shall be spread before the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven which they have loved and served which they have gone after, and which they have sought and worshiped; and they shall not be gathered or buried; they shall be as dung on the surface of the ground."

Vss. 25-26 elaborate on this theme, adding that the house which the Lord himself had named has ended up in its present ruined state because of the wickedness the people had done, *poneria* connoting depravity.

Vs. 27, an extended sentence running through vs. 29, is a shift from the ruinous attitude described to one of hope which is pretty much what these two chapters and part of the next are about. This shift is indicated by the conjunctive *kai* translated as "yet" followed by what literally reads by the Lord as "you have made into us," *poieo* + and *eis*. Such making-in, if you will, is in accord with (*kata*) divine compassion or *oiktirmos* or a display of concern over misfortune modified by the adjective *pas* and *megas* or all and great, these being added for emphasis.

The greatness and all-ness of this *oiktirmos* is described in vs. 28 as having been spoken "in the hand" of Moses who is described as a *pais* +. The Lord is careful to designate this by the phrase "on that day," day being a kind of *kairos* event which transcends space and time and is applicable to Israel's current situation. That is to say, the day...*kairos*...when the Lord bade Moses to write his law or *nomos* + (i.e., *Torah*) literally before (*enantion* +) the people. One such reference is Ex 24.4: "And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. And he rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain."

As for the specific context of this writing, vs. 29, one such reference is Lev 26.39: "And those of you that are left shall pine away in your enemies' lands because of their iniquity; and also because of the iniquities of their fathers they shall pine away like them." In other words, the verse at hand concerns the Babylonian exile where Israel described as a very great multitude or *bombesis*, a vivid word connoting the buzzing which results from a swarm of insects. Nevertheless, it will end up as small scattered in the nations, *diaspeiro* +, the preposition *dia-* suggestive of thoroughness.

After all, as vs. 30 puts it so clearly and painfully, the Lord indeed knows (*gignosko* +) that the people won't obey him, *akouo* as to listen + by reason of their stubbornness, *sklerotrachelos* being an adjective which is suggestive of hardness. However, in this same verse another sentence which extends through vs. 33 in the place of exile (Babylon) or *apoikismos* (i.e., away from or *apo-* home, *oikos*) things will be different. That is to say, the people will literally "turn upon upon the heart of theirs." That is to say, the verb *epistrepho* with *epi-* or upon prefaced to it followed by *epi* with regard to the singular *kardia* + or heart. Thus Israel is viewed as one nation with one heart common to all.

Vs. 31 begins with the conjunctive *kai* translated as "and" to show the seamless connection between the previous verse and what we have at hand. The Lord says with some contentment in his voice that the people will know (*gignosko* +) that he is God. However, as the next sentence in this verse says, it's because the Lord will give them a heart that obeys and ears that will hear, *akouo* + being used for both. Vs. 32 continues this theme, that is, despite this exile (*apoikismos* +), the people will:

- praise the Lord (*aineo*, also to speak or recommend)
- remember his name there, *mimnesko*
- turn or *apostrepho* + from their wicked deeds, *poneros* + modifying *prostagma* +
- remember or the second use of *mimnesko* with regard to their fathers' ways who had sinned, *hamartano* +

Note that in vs. 34 the Lord will again bring the people back to the land he had promised, *apostrepho* + with *eis* or into. Emphasis is upon "again" as inferred in the preposition *apo-* (from) of the verb at hand. The Lord is careful to mention the three patriarchs of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the context of this, the exile in Babylon. Once at home, the people will rule it, *kurieuo* implying that they will have dominance there over other peoples in it. Not only that, the Israelites will increase and not suffer diminishment.

The last verse of Chapter Two ends on an encouraging note before Chapter Three launches into an impassioned admission of guilt and plea for mercy lasting through vs. 8. That is to say, the Lord will make a covenant or *diatheke* (the *dia-* suggests through-ness or thoroughness) which is everlasting . Never again will he remove his people (*kineo*, to set in motion) from the land he had given them.

Chapter Three

A poem with regard to wisdom starts with vs. 9 and runs through the end of the book. However, before getting to that section, we have to deal with a collective admission of guilt and a plea for mercy which continues through vs. 8. In a real way, it's a continuation of what had gone before.

Vs. 1 uses the address Lord Almighty, *Pantokrator* or literally, all powerful along with God of Israel. Note that the nation Israel whether in Jerusalem or in exile at Babylon has a singular soul or *psuche* and *pneuma* or spirit (both +). The first is in anguish, *stenos* being an adjective in the plural meaning narrow. The second is crying out, *krazo* being a strong verb which involves shrieking or screaming and is doing so *pros* or directly to the Lord. It's followed immediately in vs. 2 with a plea for him to hear and to have mercy, *akouo* + and *eleeo* for having sinned (*hamartano* +) before the Lord. This is in conjunction with a recognition that the Lord enthroned forever in contrast to we or those making the petition as perishing forever, *aion* being used in two different ways (*kathistemi* and *apollumi*, to sit and to destroy utterly) and fundamentally means a long span of time and more specifically, without reference to a beginning or to an end.

Vs. 4 contains the petition to hear the prayer (*proseuche* +) of the dead of Israel, a footnote in the **RSV** saying this refers to the exiles in Babylon. Note that they're designated as having sinned (*hamartano* +), the reason for being dead/in exile. Their sin has carried over to those left behind in Jerusalem with their calamities clinging to them. *Kakos* is the adjective which means evil and *kollao* to stick like glue (both +).

In vs. 5 we have two types of memory or *mimnesko* +. The first is a petition to the Lord that he do not remember the sins of the fathers which is similar to the sentiments expressed in 2.33. The second instance is positive, acknowledging that the people are in a crisis which is designated as a *kairos* + event. Hopefully within this *kairos* will be the Lord's power and name, "hand" being the first. Right afterwards in vs. 6 comes the acknowledgment that regardless of the outcome, the people are bound to praise (*aineo*, also to be content, to acquiesce) the Lord.

Vs. 7 attributes the reason for the worship of God just mentioned to the Lord having put (*didomai* or to give +) fear of him in their hearts, literally "upon the (singular) heart of us," *epi* and *kardia* +. Right after this come two conjunctives (*kai*):

the first is translated as "in order that" with regard calling upon the Lord's name, *epikaleo* (*epi* or upon) +

-the second is translated as "and" with regard to praising the Lord while in exile, *aineo* + and *apoikia*, the latter as literally away from home, *apo-* and *oikos* +.

Also in vs. 7 is another kind of exile, if you will, a favorable one which consists in putting away from the singular *kardia* + all the iniquity or *adikia* (unrighteousness) of our fathers for having sinned before the Lord. In other words, their sin or *hamartano* + transmits directly to the next generation which bears some responsibility for it.

Vs. 8 begins with *idou* or behold as the people continue to address the Lord, this being a way of retaining his attention. They acknowledge their place of exile, of being away from home as with the noun *apoikia* +, in which the Lord had scattered them, *diaspeiro* +. There

they are reproached, cursed and punished, again for what their fathers had done which consists in having forsaken the Lord. The verb is *aphistemi* which fundamentally means putting away, of putting the Lord out of sight. It captures well the reason for why Israel had been defeated by the Babylonians and carried off into exile. As for the three words (nouns, not verbs as in the **RSV**) signifying this punishment, they are: *oneidisma* +, *ara* + and *ophlesis* (also as penalty). Note that all three have the preposition *eis* (into) before them.

As noted at the beginning of the chapter, vs. 9 signals a major change in voice, that is, going from a lament over the current travails of those exiled in Babylon as well as those left in Jerusalem. Basically that part centers around the issue of proper worship of the Lord in the Jerusalem temple as well as an acknowledgment of disobedience from the Lord and its consequences. Now through the end of the book we have an extended poetic form, if you will, celebrating divine wisdom through the divine law or Torah followed by eloquent words of comfort and restoration.

Vs. 9 opens with the command to hear or *akouo* +, the tone of which is reminiscent to the famous “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord” of Dt 6.4. Here we have something which is threefold:

- not just commandments but those of life, *entole* also as a mandate or ordinance
- entotizomai* or the more specific giving of ear
- to know wisdom, *gignosko* + and *phronesis*, planning or the faculty of thought itself

Vss. 10-11 form an extended sentence or rhetorical question, the direct-ness of which might come as a surprise to those listening. The Lord is less interesting in knowing why Israel is in the land of her enemies or growing old in a foreign country than to wake up to this fact. Although it hasn't been explicit, many who've been taken captive in Babylon managed to settle down to a comfortable existence and now after some years are loathe to leave it for the relatively primitive conditions of the homeland. To shake them from this complacency the Lord adds the following two:

- that they are defiled with the dead, *sunmiaino* or literally stained-with (*sum-*) those who are content to remain in Babylon as a footnote in the **RSV** says with regard to vs. 4.
- that they are reckoned as being with those in (*eis*, into) Hades (translation = Babylon).

In vs. 12 the Lord tells his people that they had forsaken not just wisdom or *sophia* + but its fountain, also as the capacity to understand or better, its source. Immediately there follows in vs. 13 the fact that if Israel had walked in God's ways (*hodos* also meaning the journey itself), the people right now would be dwelling in peace, *katoikeo* also as to settle as in founding a colony.

Vs. 14 has the divine command to learn or *manthano*, to gain knowledge by skill or by

instruction with regard to the following four designated as “where” (*pou*):

- strength or *ischus*
- understanding or *sunesis*, literally a being or setting with (*sun-*)
- length of days and life, both being introduced by the verb *gignosko* +
- light for eyes and peace (*eirene*)

Vs. 15 is the first of three rhetorical questions reminiscent of the Lord speaking towards the end of the Book of Job, that is, starting with Chapter Thirty-Eight. The idea lying behind both is, to put it simply, the human condition before divine transcendence which here is *sophia*. Also one can't help but think of Chapter Eight of Proverbs with regard to wisdom who take the initiative of extending an invitation to mankind in order to partake of her riches.

Vss. 16 through 17 form an extended sentence, the third rhetorical question which the Lord puts forth to his people in exile. The Lord asks the whereabouts of the princes and rulers; the first over is nations and the second is over beasts. Both are marked by a desire to hoard treasures, *epipeitho*; the verbal root *peitho* meaning to persuade prefaced with the preposition *epi-* upon. As for the two, they have vanished and departed for Hades, the former verb being *aphanizo* (*apo-* or from & *phanos*, light or bright), to hide or to make unseen.

Vs. 20 speaks of young men who have failed in the following three:

- have not learned the way to knowledge, *gignosko* + and *episteme*, the latter literally a standing or being upon
- did not understand the paths of wisdom, *sunemi* or literally to be with (*sum-*) *tribos* meaning a well-worn path. NB: “her” here equals= wisdom
- have not laid hold of wisdom, *antilambano* or to receive in turn (*anti-*). NB: “her” also equals wisdom

It should be noted that the sons of these young men have followed closely in their footsteps. That is to say, vs. 21 says that they haven't strayed far from their way, *hodos* + being used compared with just mentioned *tribos*.

As for wisdom, she hasn't been heard in Canaan nor seen in Teman, the later being Edom which was reputed for wisdom. Jer 49.7: “Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Is wisdom no more in Teman? Has counsel perished from the prudent? Has their wisdom vanished?’” Similarly vs. 23 (it's an extended sentence from the previous verse) mentions the sons of Hagar, she being the maid of Abram and mother of Ishmael (cf. Chapter Sixteen of Genesis). These sons have sought for understanding, *sunesis* + but apparently in the wrong place, “on the earth.” In the same way story-tellers and seekers for understanding haven't learned the way to wisdom, *hodos* and *sophia* (both +) as well as not having remembered her paths

(*mimnesko* and *tribos*, both +).

Suddenly vs. 24 changes the tone of this extended poem by exclaiming to Israel how great is God's house and the vast expanse of his territory, *topos* being associated with *ktesis* or literally "place of possession." In it giants had lived, intimating Gn 6.4: "The Nephilim were on the earth in those days and also afterward when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. They were the mighty men that were of old, the men of renown." However, as vs. 27 says, God did not give them the way to knowledge (*hodos* and *episteme*, both +), causing them to perish for lack of wisdom and folly. *Apollumi* + or to perish means to be destroyed completely which is the effect of not having the two just mentioned *phronesis* +, preferring instead *aboulia*, literally lack of counsel.

Vss. 29 and 30 consist of two rhetorical questions, again along the lines of the Lord in the Book of Job. Both have in common the impossibility for anyone to travel either to heaven or across the sea to obtain wisdom. In other words, wisdom is completely inaccessible to humans. This is spelled out further in vs. 31 with the admission that no one knows both the way to wisdom, *gignosko* and *hodos* (both +) nor is concerned about the path to her, *enthumeomai* and *tribos* +. The verb fundamentally means to lay to heart (*thumos* + or that which is deep within oneself with *en-* or *in-*). Note the comparison between *hodos* and *tribos* where as noted earlier the former is the common noun for a road or way and the latter intimates the same but more familiar and hence well-trodden.

Vs. 32 is an extended sentence running all the way through vs. 34. It begins with *alla* or "but" to show the sharp distinction between what had been said about wisdom's inaccessibility and the Lord who is not mentioned explicitly but referred to in terms of the third person singular pronoun. Note the two words for knowing, *eidon* and *gignosko* (both +) while the former leans more toward seeing. And so the Lord is able to found wisdom by means of his understanding, *exeurisko* and *sunesis* +, the *ex-* as from suggestive of a keener ability to search by means of literally being with (*sum-*) or being present with wisdom.

The second sentence of vs. 32 through vs. 34 continues with the Lord's various aspects of creation for which he is directly responsible. Perhaps one of the most endearing verses in the Bible is vs. 34 quoted here in full: "the stars shone in their watches and were glad; he called them and they said, 'Here we are!' They shone with gladness for him who made them." The stars do the following two actually done simultaneously or even interchangeably at their posts or *phulake* which suggests being night watchmen high in the sky with a view of everything below them:

- they shine or *lampo* which conveys being very bright
- they rejoice or *euphraino*, adverbial *eu-* suggestive of that which is good

At once this shining/rejoicing gets the Lord's attention or when he calls them, they showing

no fear of slacking off or being negligent in their duty at their posts. As soon as he summons the stars or host of heaven they respond with one resounding voice, “Here we are” or *pareimi*, the verb to be prefaced with the preposition *para-* or beside which intimates closeness and readiness to spring into action should that be necessary.

In a joyous, even triumphant way, is the statement that our God acts in such a marvelous way. He can summon the stars or any heavenly being which responds at once. Indeed, no other divinity can be compared with (*pros*, indicative of direction towards-which) the Lord, *logisomai* meaning to reckon or to calculate.

After these wonderful two verses the last two of Chapter Three speak of how the Lord found not just the way to knowledge but the whole way, *exeurisko* with regard to *hodos* (both +). The Lord didn’t keep wisdom for himself but at once decided to share with Jacob and Israel. The former is designated as a servant (*pais* +) and the latter as loved (*agapao*). Vs. 37 continues on the heels of this by saying that wisdom both appeared on earth and lived with people, *horaio* and *sunanastrepho*. The first connotes taking heed and the second is the verbal root *strepho* (to turn) prefaced with two prepositions, *sun-* and *ana-*, with and on, upon. I.e., it connotes turning back together or at once. The preposition *en* is found here, literally as “in men.”