

***4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*: Literary Composition and Oral Performance in First-Century Apocalyptic Literature**

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Students of *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* have long noticed the numerous thematic, generic, and linguistic parallels that exist between them.¹ Both texts were written in the late first or possibly the early second century C.E., most likely in the land of Israel. The composition of both works was triggered by the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 C.E., as both texts are, in essence, elaborate responses to the host of challenges posed by the Roman aggression. Both stories are set fictitiously during the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in the sixth century B.C.E. *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* are Jewish apocalypses of the historical type, and both make extensive use of the same set of literary genres, such as prophetic dialogue, prayer, public speech, and the symbolic dream vision. Neither author reveals his identity but instead chooses to write pseudonymously in the voice of a biblical scribe of the exilic and early postexilic period: Ezra, who returned the Torah to Jerusalem, and Baruch, the scribe of Jeremiah. What drives the momentum forward is a continuous revelatory dialogue between the seer and God, or God's interpreting angel. By the end of each book both seers have undergone a remarkable transformation, from skeptic to consoler, ideal community leader, and latter-day Moses.

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¹ See George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction* (2nd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 283–85.

I. LITERARY COMPOSITION AND ORAL PERFORMANCE

Broadly speaking, scholars have used two different models to explain the compositional history of *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* and their relationship. The first model is the source-critical approach popular in the late nineteenth century. It assumes that the apocalypses gained their current form through a process of conglomeration, by which a redactor joined a number of smaller and originally independent text units together. In later years, the source-critical model went out of fashion, and the idea of independent sources stitched together was roundly dismissed. According to the new reigning model, *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* were each written by a single author. The learned writer made ample use of variant (and particularly eschatological) traditions, without being overly zealous about harmonizing them. The ancient authors were also redactors. With few exceptions, advocates of both models have assumed that the points of connection between *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* are the responses of one author to the other author's text more or less in the form in which we have received it.²

Here I wish to propose an alternative, more dynamic explanation. During the twentieth century we have seen a growing recognition among humanistic scholars that the cultures that produced texts—ranging from the Homeric epic to early Jewish and Christian writings—were predominantly oral. The literature we have inherited went through a series of complex written as well as oral processes of composition, revision, and transmission.³ Once we overcome the limitations artificially

² The two models have remarkably close analogies in the traditional two answers to the Homeric Question. The so-called Analysts searched *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* for smaller poems written by different authors and assumed that a master editor combined originally separate pieces and previously extant poems together into the epics that we have today. On the other side, the Unitarians believed in a single, gifted individual who was solely responsible for the creation of both poems. Students of the Homeric epic have come to embrace a third model, the thesis of a Homeric oral tradition famously introduced in the 1920s by Milman Parry and later developed by Albert Bates Lord. See Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry* (ed. Adam Parry; Oxford: Clarendon, 1971; repr. Oxford University Press, 1987); Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (2nd ed.; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); John Miles Foley, *The Theory of Oral Composition: History and Methodology* (Folkloristics; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 1–56; and idem, “Oral Tradition and Its Implications,” in *A New Companion to Homer* (ed. Ian Morris and Barry Powell; Mnemosyne 163; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 146–73.

³ John Miles Foley, *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); idem, *The Singer of Tales in Performance* (Voices in Performance and Text; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance, and Social Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); eadem, *Literacy and Orality: Studies in the Technology of Communication* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988); Walter J. Ong, *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology: Studies in the Interaction of Expression and Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1971); idem, *Orality and Literacy: The Tech-*

imposed by the source-critical and the single-author/redactor model and allow for the possibility that text composition and transmission were intertwined and literary composition and oral performance coexisted, we will be better equipped to explain the diverse processes by which 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch reached their current form and will make significant strides toward solving the riddle of their complex interrelationship.

More specifically, my argument falls into two parts. First, I argue that the parallels between 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch have their origin in the earliest phase of their composition.⁴ Rather than reading one text as a reaction to the other, I propose that the parallels between both apocalypses stem from a period in their composition that well precedes their final, redacted form. This also means that their interrelationship is inextricably bound up with the literary history of each work. Neither can be explained without taking account of the other, just as the failure to produce a satisfactory explanation of their consanguinity may well point to a larger problem with our hypotheses about how the two apocalypses came to be.

Second, the texts compel us to conclude that the diverse literary activities that led to their production involved both written and oral modes of composition. Our model proceeds from the premise that the growth of the early narrative traditions was a dynamic process in which orality and textuality were closely interrelated. Orality need not exclude the use of the written text, just as textuality does not preclude orality.⁵ The written text engendered new forms of oral performance, as the recorded words were orally reactivated, revised according to new situations, and recorded anew.⁶ When I refer to the early narrative traditions of 4 Ezra and

nologizing of the Word (London: Methuen, 1982; repr., Routledge, 2002); Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983; repr., Indiana University Press, 1997); *Jesus in Memory: Traditions in Oral and Scribal Perspective* (ed. Werner H. Kelber and Samuel Byrskog; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009); Martin S. Jaffee, "Writing and Rabbinic Oral Tradition: On Mishnaic Narrative, Lists and Mnemonics," *Journal of Jewish Philosophy and Thought* 4 (1994): 123–46; and idem, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 BCE–400 CE* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁴ Note the innovative study of the interpenetration of oral and textual formation in the creation of rabbinic literature by Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, 100–125. He argues that the Mishnah was shaped "in a continuous circuit of oral performance and written recension" (p. 101). Jaffee's examination of the multiple intertextual connections between tractate *Parah* in the Mishnah and the Tosefta lends itself as a theoretical frame of reference for our study of 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch. See also Elizabeth Shanks Alexander, *Transmitting Mishnah: The Shaping Influence of Oral Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 35–76.

⁵ Elizabeth Shanks Alexander, "The Orality of Rabbinic Writing," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature* (ed. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 55.

⁶ It has long been observed that the written word leads to new forms of orality. Already Walter Ong wrote of "secondary orality," by which he meant "essentially a more deliberate and

2 *Baruch*, I do not wish to suggest that this was a somehow primitive period during which the first parts of the texts were composed and transmitted exclusively by oral means. It is equally erroneous to assume that the advent of the written text made oral composition and transmission obsolete. Rather, oral and written modes of composition and transmission interfaced and were interdependent particularly during the early stages in the lives of 4 *Ezra* and 2 *Baruch*.

II. STATUS QUAESTIONIS

Numerous scholars have set out to explain the close relationship between 4 *Ezra* and 2 *Baruch*.⁷ The predominant mode of explication has been to assign literary priority to one of the two texts and to postulate that its author used the other text as a source.

Scholars in favor of 4 *Ezra* as the primary text are in the majority and include Joseph Langen, Rudolf Stähelin, Hermann Gunkel, Bruno Violet, Otto Eissfeldt, Bruce Metzger, John Collins, and George Nickelsburg.⁸ Scholars who have argued for the literary priority of 2 *Baruch* include Carl Clemen, Julius Wellhausen, Victor Ryssel, and Pierre Bogaert.⁹

A third group of scholars has shown more restraint in their judgment. Emil Schürer notes with characteristic acumen that it is impossible to determine precisely the interrelationship between the texts.¹⁰ Robert Henry Charles seeks to

self-conscious orality, based permanently on the use of writing and print" (*Orality and Literacy*, 136). Scholars of rabbinic literature who view the written text as a script speak of "re-oralization." See Jaffee, "Honi the Circler in Manuscript and Memory: An Experiment in 'Re-Oralizing' the Talmudic Text," in Kelber and Byrskog, *Jesus in Memory*, 87–111.

⁷ See the brief review of scholarship in Klaus Berger, with Gabriele Fassbeck and Heiner Reinhard, *Synopse des Vierten Buches Esra und der Syrischen Baruch-Apokalypse* (Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter 8; Tübingen/Basel: A. Francke, 1992), 1–3.

⁸ Langen, *De Apocalypsi Baruch anno superiori primum edita: Commentatio quam pro aditu muneris professoris ordinarii* (Freiburg: Herder, 1867), 8; Stähelin, "Zur paulinischen Eschatologie: 1 Thess. 4,13–17 im Zusammenhang mit der jüdischen Eschatologie," *JDT* 19 (1874): 211–12; Gunkel, "Das vierte Buch Esra," *APAT*, 351; Violet, *Die Apokalypsen des Esra und des Baruch in deutscher Gestalt* (GCS 32; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1924), lv; Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), 629; Metzger, "The Fourth Book of Ezra," *OTP* 1:522; Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 224; Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 283–85.

⁹ Clemen, "Die Zusammensetzung des Buches Henoch, der Apokalypse des Baruch und des vierten Buches Esra," *TSK* 11 (1898): 237; Wellhausen, *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten: 6. Heft, Zur apokalyptischen Literatur* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1899; repr., 1985), 249; Ryssel, "Die syrische Baruchapokalypse," *APAT*, 405–7; Bogaert, *L'Apocalypse Syriaque de Baruch: Introduction, traduction du syriaque et commentaire* (2 vols.; SC 144–45; Paris: Cerf, 1969), 1:26–27.

¹⁰ Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)* (rev. and ed. Geza Vermes and Fergus Millar; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973–87), 3.2:753; sim-

demonstrate that the points of connection between 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch originate at their compositional levels; hence he finds repeatedly at this stage already “a direct relation of dependence between them.”¹¹ As he explains, “Again, of many other common passages, the sources, it is true, are no longer found; yet that such did exist in certain cases we have ample grounds for believing. . . . Thus we must be on our guard against tracing relations of dependence where both books have been borrowing independently from the same lost source.”¹² Albertus Klijn comes to a similar conclusion. He argues that 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch used a common source, though he stops short of telling us what this source might have looked like.¹³ Michael Stone, finally, summarizes the current scholarly impasse as follows:

In fact, the existence of an intimate relationship is quite obvious, but the direction of dependence is very difficult to determine. If there were decisive arguments in one or the other direction, of course, the matter would not still be the subject of difference of opinion. We have not discovered any arguments in the course of our work that seem to be decisive in the one or the other direction.¹⁴

In the discussion of the relationship between 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, simple linearity has ruled the debate. Since both texts are related compositions and show some verbal agreement, interpreters have for the most part assumed that one author must have copied the other—an assumption that remains inconclusive and that has failed to produce a satisfactory hypothesis to explain exactly how the two texts are related. The impasse in the debate goes to show that the quest for, in Stone’s words, “the direction of dependence” is indeed misguided. The relationship between 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch and its diverse compositional units is far more complex and cannot be reduced to simple linearity.

The matter is not inconsequential, since the question of the relationship between the twin texts is closely bound up with the question of how we imagine the two books were written and reached their present form. Just as it is impossible to explain the points of correspondence between 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch without considering the history of their composition, so any hypothesis about their composition has to take account of their multiple affinities. In this respect Charles was right. His basic claim is that 4 Ezra’s and 2 Baruch’s common elements stem from a time when both texts were still under construction. If we want to understand their parallels, we need to understand how the two texts were composed and how they relate not just to each other but to their larger, intellectual environment.

ilarly Richard Kabisch, “Die Quellen der Apokalypse Baruchs,” *Jahrbuch für protestantische Theologie* 18 (1892): 103.

¹¹ Charles, *The Apocalypse of Baruch: Translated from the Syriac* (London: A. & C. Black, 1896), lxxiv.

¹² *Ibid.*, lxxii.

¹³ Klijn, “2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch,” *OTP* 1:620.

¹⁴ Stone, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 39.

III. FOUR EXAMPLES

We begin our investigation with a look at four text samples. The first two examples were chosen because of certain linguistic parallels. *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* are linked by a number of fixed phrases that cannot simply be derived from a common biblical base text but have to have a different explanation. The next two examples represent larger, conceptual concerns shared by *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*. They show that the apocalypses are closely related conceptually even when there is no verbatim agreement between them.¹⁵

Example 1. Times Will Hasten

4 Ezra 4:26

He answered me and said, "If you will be, you will see; and if you live long [enough], you will marvel. For *the world is hastening swiftly* so that it will pass on."

4 Ezra 4:34

He answered me and said, "You *do not hasten faster* than the Most High, for *your haste* is for yourself, but the Highest [hastens] on behalf of many."

2 Bar. 20:1–2

20:1 Therefore, see, the days are coming when *the times will hasten* more than the former and the seasons will be swifter than those that have passed. The years will pass on faster than the present ones. 20:2 Therefore, now have I taken away Zion, so that *I will hasten* [even] more to visit the world in its own time.

2 Bar. 83:1

For the Most High *is surely hastening his times*; he is surely bringing on his hours.

We begin with an aspect central to the apocalyptic worldview, the conceptualization of time. The excerpt from *4 Ezra* is taken from Ezra's first vision and the conversation with the angel Uriel that follows. *4 Ezra* 4:26 succinctly captures the eschatological urgency as well as the imminence of the end that pervades the book as a whole. If only the seer will live long enough, he might still be alive when the present age comes to an end!¹⁶ The idea of a quick progression of time comes up again a few verses later in 4:34. There Ezra inquires how much time is left until the end.¹⁷

Baruch, too, wants to know how much longer this present, corruptible age will remain in existence (*2 Bar.* 21:19; 24:4). The idea that the world is hastening swiftly

¹⁵ All translations of *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* are mine unless indicated otherwise.

¹⁶ Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 93; Michael A. Knibb, *The First and Second Books of Esdras* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 124–25.

¹⁷ Similarly *4 Ezra* 5:33 and 8:47.

to its end is expressed in *2 Baruch* in language identical to what we find in *4 Ezra*. God promises Baruch not only that this world is running toward its end but that God will, in fact, accelerate the progression of time in order to bring about the end as soon as possible. “The days are coming when the times will hasten *more than the former*.” Later, in the Epistle, Baruch reiterates the same idea, using the same language. “The Most High is surely hastening his times” (83:1). God is the Master over space and time who alters the pace of history at will.

The notion that God will hasten the moment of redemption has roots in the Jewish Bible (cf. Isa 60:21–22; Hab 2:3) and is well known from postbiblical Jewish as well as Christian texts. For example, we find the same sentiment blown to cosmic proportions in *L.A.B.* 19:13, where this world is compared to a fleeting cloud. God will shorten the years and accelerate the movement of the stars.¹⁸ Particularly important for our purposes is a text from Qumran known as *Pseudo-Ezekiel*. In his dialogue with God, Ezekiel pleads that God will expedite the completion of time to bring about the eschaton sooner than expected (4Q385 frg. 4.2–7).¹⁹

2 שמה את נפשי ויתבהלו הימים מהר עד אשר יאמר
3 האדם הלא ממהרים הימים למען יירשו בני ישראל.
4 ויאמר יהוה אלי לא אש[י]ב פניך יחזקאל הנ[ג]י גודד
5 את הימים ואת השני[ים] ל[--]
6 מצער כאשר אמרת ל[--]
7 [כי] פי יהוה דבר אלה [vacat]

2. make my soul rejoice and *let the days hasten quickly* that it be said
3. by men: “Indeed *the days are hastening on* so that the children of Israel will inherit.”
4. And the Lord said to me: “I will not re[fu]se you, O Ezekiel! I will cut
5. the days and the year[s]

¹⁸ “But this world will be in my eyes like a fleeting cloud and like yesterday that has passed. When I will draw near to visit the world, I will command the years and order the times and they will be shortened, and the stars will speed up [*Et erit cum appropinquaverit visitare orbem iubebo annis et precipiam temporibus et breviabuntur et accelerabuntur astra*], and the light of the sun will hurry to set and the light of the moon will not abide; for I will hasten to raise up you who are sleeping in order that all who will be restored to life will dwell in the place of sanctification that I showed you” (trans. Howard Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo’s Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum: With Latin Text and English Translation* [AGJU 31; Leiden: Brill, 1996], 122–23). See also *1 En.* 80:2; *Test. Mos.* 7:11–12; *Matt* 24:22; *Mark* 13:19–20; and *1 Cor* 7:31.

¹⁹ Devorah Dimant, *Qumran Cave 4. XXI: Parabiblical Texts, Part 4: Pseudo-Prophetic Texts* (DJD 30, Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), 38; eadem, “The Apocalyptic Interpretation of Ezekiel at Qumran,” in *Messiah and Christos: Studies in the Jewish Origins of Christianity Presented to David Flusser on the Occasion of His Seventy-fifth Birthday* (ed. Ithamar Gruenwald, Shaul Shaked, and Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa; TSAJ 32; Tübingen: Mohr, 1992), 31–51; and Monica Brady, “Biblical Interpretation in the ‘Pseudo-Ezekiel’ Fragments (4Q383–391) from Cave Four,” in *Biblical Interpretation at Qumran* (ed. Matthias Henze; *Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature*; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 88–109.

6. a little as you said []
 7. [for]the mouth of the Lord has spoken these things *v[acat]*

At Ezekiel's explicit request, God agrees "to cut the days and years" in order to accelerate the progression of time. When the days will unfold at a faster pace, everyone will notice that God is quickening time on behalf of Israel. The goal is for Israel to inherit—we are not told what Israel will inherit, though the reference may well be to the final restoration of Israel in her land.

4 Ezra and *2 Baruch* share the eschatological concept that God will hasten the passage of time in order to bring closer the moment of eschatological redemption. The concept is not particular to our twin texts but is found in a number of cognate writings from the turn of the era. The *Pseudo-Ezekiel* fragment from Qumran is particularly important in this regard, since it shows that the same idea is already attested in Jewish apocalyptic literature well before *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* were composed. We can draw two preliminary conclusions. First, *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* are compilations of preexisting materials that are incorporated and developed further in both works. And second, the question of how the two texts are related to each other is ultimately tied up with the question of how they relate to their larger intellectual environment.

Example 2. *The Treasuries of the Souls*

4 Ezra 4:35

4:35 Did not the souls of the righteous in their treasuries ask about these matters, saying, "How long are we to remain here? And when will come the harvest of our reward?"

4:41

And I said, "No, my Lord, it cannot."

And he answered and said to me, "Sheol and *the treasuries of the souls* are like the womb . . ."

2 Bar. 21:23

"Reprove, therefore, the angel of death. Let your glory appear, let the greatness of your beauty be known, let Sheol be sealed so that, from now on, it will no longer receive the dead, and let *the reservoirs of the souls* restore those who are enclosed in them."

2 Bar. 30:2

At that time, *those treasuries in which the number of the souls* of the righteous are kept will be opened, and they will go out. And the multitude of souls will appear together, in a single gathering, of one mind. The first ones will rejoice, and the last ones will not be grieved . . .

The second example touches on a concern that is central to both apocalypses, the question of what happens to the souls of the departed in the intermediate state

between the death of the faithful and the resurrection of the dead. Both 4 *Ezra* and 2 *Baruch* repeatedly refer to “the treasuries of the souls.”²⁰

The heavenly treasury of the souls is a prominent motif in 4 *Ezra*. In 4:33–43, a short discourse about the timing of the end, the revealing angel tells Ezra that the souls of the righteous, while still in their treasuries, had already inquired about when the new world would come. The treasuries are not only depositories for the time until the last judgment, they also provide rest and a safe haven for the righteous. This becomes clear from the second pericope in 7:75–115, an unusually detailed description of the fate of the souls of the wicked (vv. 79–87) and of the righteous (vv. 88–101) in the interim state between death and resurrection.²¹

In 2 *Baruch* the treasuries of the souls are mentioned twice. In his prayer in 21:23, Baruch asks God to bring an end to human mortality, to raise those who have died, and to bring about the final restoration of Israel. The close resemblance between Baruch’s plea and the eschatological discourse in 4 *Ezra* 7:75–115 makes it all the more noteworthy that Baruch does not further discriminate between the souls of the righteous and those of the wicked. He calls for the release of *all* souls currently kept in the treasuries. The second passage quoted above, 2 *Bar.* 30:2–4, is different; there we do find the distinction between the righteous and the wicked.²²

The idea that the souls of the dead descend into the netherworld, or Sheol, is already known from the Hebrew Bible.²³ The earliest detailed treatment of the fate of the dead and the first Jewish testimony to the belief in a postmortem judgment is found in the Enochic Book of the Watchers (1 *En.* 22:3–4).²⁴ The idea is attested also in *L.A.B.* 32:13: “Go, earth; go, heavens and lightnings; go, angels; go, you hosts; go and tell the fathers in the chambers of their souls [*in promptuariis animarum eorum*] and say, ‘The Lord has not forgotten the least of the promises’”

²⁰ Robert Henry Charles, “II Baruch: I. The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch,” *APOT*, 494; Michael E. Stone, *Features of the Eschatology of IV Ezra* (HSS 35; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 143–45; idem, *Fourth Ezra*, 96; Richard J. Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (NovTSup 93; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 281; Bogaert, *L’Apocalypse Syriaque*, 2:52–53; Geza Vermes, *The Resurrection* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 29–38.

²¹ Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 238: “The passage is unique in ancient Jewish literature for its detailed description of the intermediate state of the souls of the righteous and the wicked.”

²² Günter Stemberger, *Der Leib der Auferstehung: Studien zur Anthropologie und Eschatologie des palästinischen Judentums im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter (ca. 170 v. Chr.–100 n. Chr.)* (AnBib 56; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1972), 92–93. The text is ambiguous about the whereabouts of the souls of the wicked. 2 *Baruch* 30:2 suggests that the treasuries are reserved for the souls of the righteous only; 30:4–5 mention the souls of the wicked, but nothing is said about their location.

²³ See Jon D. Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 35–66.

²⁴ See George W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36; 81–108* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 300–305.

Similar to our first example, the motif of the treasuries of the souls shows how *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* are part of, and actively contribute to, a much broader discourse about the deceased righteous and the fate of their souls. The idea initially derives from the Jewish Bible and later resurfaces in rabbinic literature.²⁵ We cannot rule out the possibility that the author of *2 Baruch* borrowed the concept directly from *4 Ezra*, or vice versa, but this seems unnecessarily restrictive. Rather, this example corroborates our previous observation that *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* are texts that have absorbed a number of preexisting motifs.

Example 3. "O Adam, What Have You Done?"

4 Ezra 3:21–22

3:21 For the first *Adam*, burdened with an evil heart, *transgressed* and was overcome, as were also all who were descended from him. 3:22 Thus the disease became permanent; the Torah was in the people's heart along with the evil root, but what was good departed, and the evil remained.

4 Ezra 7:116–18

7:116 I answered and said, "This is my first and last word, that it would have been better if *the earth had not produced Adam*, or else, when it had produced him had taught him not to sin. 7:117 For what good is it to all that they live in sorrow now and expect punishment after death? 7:118 *O Adam, what have you done?* For though it was you who sinned, the misfortune was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants."

2 Bar. 48:42

I answered and said, "*O Adam, what have you done to all your descendants?* What will be said of the first Eve who obeyed the snake?"

2 Bar. 48:46

For you did formerly order *the dust to produce Adam*, and you also know the number of those born of him and how much they have sinned before you, those who have lived but have not acknowledged you as their creator.

2 Bar. 54:19

Adam is therefore not the cause, except only for himself.
But we all, each one, have become our own Adam.

We now turn to two of the central theological topoi in our texts. Our first example concerns one of the most fundamental anthropological problems, the question of

²⁵ E.g., *Sifre Deut.* on Deut 33:3, "*All His holy ones, they are in Thy hand.* This refers to the souls of the righteous, which are kept in His treasury, as it is said, *Yet the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God* (1 Sam. 25:29)" (trans. Reuven Hammer, *Sifre: A Tannaitic Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy* [Yale Judaica Series 24; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986], 357).

evil and the origin of human sin. Both 4 *Ezra* and 2 *Baruch* address the question in the context of Adam's sin.²⁶

In 4 *Ezra* two pericopes are especially relevant, 3:7, 21–22, 26–27 and 7:116–26.²⁷ In 3:7 we read that Adam transgressed the commandment, “and immediately you appointed death for him and for his descendants.” We do not know what caused Adam to sin, though a few verses later in 3:21 we learn that Adam was “burdened with an evil heart.” The consequences of Adam's sin are grave: death was decreed for Adam and for all human beings.²⁸ Another permanent effect of Adam's sin is the human inclination to do evil rather than good. 4 *Ezra* does not use here the rabbinic expression of the “evil inclination,” but in 3:22 Ezra refers to this inveterate human fault simply as “the disease” that “became permanent” as a result of Adam's transgression. The author leaves it at that and does not develop the notion further into a comprehensive theory about the origins of evil.

Adam's sin and its tragic consequences are again addressed in 4 *Ezra* 7:116–26, Ezra's powerful lament over the fate of the people. The seer begins with the striking statement that humanity would have been better off had Adam never been born—or, at least, had God “restrained him from sinning” (7:116). As things stand, humans are prone to sin and will be punished immediately after their death. All that remains for Ezra is to reiterate that the sin of Adam affected not only Adam but all of his descendants too (cf. 3:20–22). In the middle of his lament Ezra gives voice to his despair, “O Adam, what have you done?” (4 *Ezra* 7:118).

Many of these thoughts have a close parallel in 2 *Baruch*, though the author of 2 *Baruch* gives them his own interpretative twist.²⁹ According to 2 *Bar.* 4:3, the

²⁶ See John R. Levison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism: From Sirach to 2 Baruch* (JSPSup 1; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988); Michael E. Stone, *A History of the Literature of Adam and Eve* (SBLJL 3; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992); Robert Hayward, “The Figure of Adam in Pseudo-Philo's Biblical Antiquities,” *JSJ* 23 (1992): 1–20; Gary A. Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001); and *Literature on Adam and Eve: Collected Essays* (ed. Gary A. Anderson, Michael E. Stone, and Johannes Tromp; SVTP 15; Leiden: Brill, 2000).

²⁷ The pertinent texts in 4 *Ezra* are interpreted in detail by Egon Brandenburger, *Adam und Christus: Exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu Röm. 5,12–21 (1. Kor. 15)* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1962), 39–67; Wolfgang Harnisch, *Verhängnis und Verheißung der Geschichte: Untersuchungen zum Zeit- und Geschichtsverständnis im 4. Buch Esra und in der syr. Baruchapokalypse* (FRLANT 97; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), 142–78; Klaus Koch, “Adam, was hast Du getan?” Erkenntnis und Fall in der zwischentestamentlichen Literatur,” in *Glaube und Toleranz: Das theologische Erbe der Aufklärung* (ed. Trutz Rendtorff; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1982), 211–42; and Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 63–67, 258–59. See also Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 503–13.

²⁸ The idea is derived from Gen 3:21 and developed in several early Jewish and Christian texts, including Rom 5:12–14 and 1 Cor 15:21–22. See James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 90.

²⁹ On Adam in 2 *Baruch*, see Bogaert, *L'Apocalypse Syriaque*, 1:401–5; Harnisch, *Verhäng-*

first reference to Adam in the book, Adam was shown the heavenly temple while he was still in paradise, but after his transgression it was taken away from him, as was paradise. Much later in the book, the double loss of the temple and paradise is supplemented by a considerable list of physical and psychological ills that also originated when Adam transgressed the divine command (2 *Bar.* 56:5–6). The list comes from the angel Remiel as part of his interpretation of the first black waters pouring forth from the cloud (2 *Bar.* 56:5–6). First on the list is the divine ordinance of death for all human beings.

In several places the author of 2 *Baruch* underscores that, while every human is adversely affected by the sin of Adam, this does not entail that everything is lost and that the fate of the individual is already sealed. Each individual is still endowed with the ability to determine his or her own eschatological fate. Noticeable for its absence from Remiel's sad list of losses that were incurred when Adam sinned is human free will. Instead, Baruch ascribes the eschatological fate of the individual to a dual causality, Adam's initial sin *and* the sins committed by each individual born of Adam.

The agreement between the two apocalypses in their use of the Adam traditions is remarkable. Their kinship finds its most poignant expression in the memorable phrase that both Ezra and Baruch pronounce as if in unison, "O Adam, what have you done?" (4 *Ezra* 7:118; 2 *Bar.* 48:42). Even where there is no verbal agreement between the two books, their ideas are similar. In 4 *Ezra* 3:22, for example, the Torah in the hearts of the people is contrasted with "the evil root," a permanent stain that is the result of Adam's sin. In 2 *Baruch*, Adam is the counterpoise to Moses, just as "the darkness of Adam" (2 *Bar.* 18:2) is the opposite of the light that radiates from the Torah.³⁰ Like "the evil root" in 4 *Ezra*, Adam's darkness severely compromises the human ability to embrace the Torah fully, but it does not strip humans of their free will.

The role of Adam in 4 *Ezra*'s and 2 *Baruch*'s respective worldviews confirms much of what we have observed already. The authors show their awareness of the antecedent Adam traditions but are selective in their use. Again we find a situation in which the two texts are directly related to each other—in this case this is most explicit in the common phrase "O Adam, what have you done?" (4 *Ezra* 7:118; 2 *Bar.* 48:42)—while they also relate to their wider literary context. Moreover, similar concepts about Adam and the detrimental consequences of his sin are expressed in different terminology in the texts.

nis und Verheißung, 178–208; Koch, "Adam, was hast Du getan?" 211–42; and Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 131–35.

³⁰ On the metaphor of light and darkness, see also 4 *Ezra* 14:20.

Example 4. The Messiah*4 Ezra* 12:31–34

12:31 “And as for the lion whom you saw rousing up out of the forest and roaring and speaking to the eagle and reproving him for his unrighteousness, and as for all his words that you have heard, 12:32 this is the Messiah whom the Most High has kept until the end of days, who will arise from the posterity of David, and will come and speak to them; he will denounce them for their ungodliness and for their wickedness, and will cast up before them their contemptuous dealings. 12:33 For first he will set them living in judgment, and when he has reproved them, then he will destroy them. 12:34 But he will deliver in mercy the remnant of my people, those who have been saved throughout my borders, and he will make them joyful until the end comes, the day of judgment, of which I spoke to you at the beginning.”

2 Bar. 39:7–40:3

39:7 “And when the time of the end has drawn near and it falls, then the beginning of my Messiah will be revealed. . . . 40:1 the last ruler, who at that time will be left alive, while those around him will be destroyed, will be bound and be brought up on Mount Zion. My Messiah convicts him of all his wicked acts. He will gather and put before him all the [wicked] deeds committed by those gathered around him. 40:2 After this he will kill him and protect the rest of my people, those found in the place that I have chosen. 40:3 His dominion will endure forever, until the world of corruption will end and the aforementioned times will be fulfilled.”

4 Ezra and *2 Baruch* share the expectation that the Messiah will appear at the end of time.³¹ Although hardly the central figure in either text, the Messiah does play

³¹ The secondary literature on messianism in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple literature has recently grown exponentially. The two classic studies remain Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel: From Its Beginning to the Completion of the Mishnah* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 330–48; and Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh: The Messiah Concept in the Old Testament & Later Judaism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1956; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 356–79. More recently, see Ulrich B. Müller, *Messias und Menschensohn in jüdischen Apokalypsen und in der Offenbarung des Johannes* (SNT 6; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1972), 107–56; James H. Charlesworth, “The Concept of the Messiah in the Pseudepigrapha,” *ANRW* 19.1 (1979): 188–218; idem, “Messianology in the Biblical Pseudepigrapha,” in *Qumran-Messianism: Studies on the Messianic Expectations in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. James H. Charlesworth, Hermann Lichtenberger, and Gerbern S. Oegema; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 21–52; Michael E. Stone, “The Question of the Messiah in 4 Ezra,” in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (ed. Jacob Neusner, William S. Green, and Ernest S. Frerichs; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 209–24; idem, *Features of the Eschatology of IV Ezra*, 106–41; James C. VanderKam, “Righteous One, Messiah, Chosen One, and Son of Man in 1 Enoch 37–71,” in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity. The First Princeton Symposium on Judaism and Christian Origins* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 169–91; Klaus Koch, “Messias und Menschensohn: Die zweistufige Messianologie der jüngeren Apokalypstik,” in *Der*

a more prominent role in these apocalypses than in other early Jewish writings.³² There are several passages in each book that describe the activities of the Messiah in some detail.³³

Both pericopes quoted above entail judgment scenes that describe how the last wicked ruler is stripped of his authority and dominion is passed to the Messiah. In *4 Ezra* 12:31–35 the Messiah is represented by a roaring lion who appears from the forest. He confronts the remaining enemy, the last Roman emperor, who is represented by the eagle. The Messiah reproves him and his followers, recites all of their offenses, convicts them of their wickedness, and destroys them. The Messiah will then deliver “the remnant of my people” (12:34), those who live within the borders of Israel. The counterpart passage in *2 Bar.* 39:7–40:4 depicts the Messiah standing on Mount Zion at the end of time (also *4 Ezra* 13:35). The Messiah, symbolized by the vine, summons the last Roman ruler and his cohorts. He convicts them of their evil deeds and puts the ruler to death. The Messiah will then rule for the time that remains “until the world of corruption will end” (40:3).

The same concepts in the two passages are expressed in different language. First, both texts imply that the Messiah is preexistent. *4 Ezra* 12:32 states that “the Most High has kept [the Messiah] until the end of days,” an allusion to his preexistence,³⁴ whereas *2 Bar.* 39:7 uses revelatory language and speaks of the time when “my Messiah will be revealed.”³⁵ Second, both prophecies predict that the Messiah

Messias (ed. Ernst Dassmann and Günter Stemberger; Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie 8; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1993), 73–102; Michael A. Knibb, “Messianism in the Pseudepigrapha in the Light of the Scrolls,” *DSD* 2 (1995): 165–84; Johannes Tromp, “The Davidic Messiah in Jewish Eschatology of the First Century BCE,” in *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives* (ed. James M. Scott; JSJSup 72; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 179–201; Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “Messianic Ideas in the Apocalyptic and Related Literature of Early Judaism,” in *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; McMaster New Testament Studies; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 90–113; Andrew Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation: Jewish Messianic and Visionary Traditions and New Testament Christology* (WUNT 207; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007); Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

³² George W. E. Nickelsburg and Michael E. Stone, “The Agents of Divine Deliverance,” in *Early Judaism: Texts and Documents on Faith and Piety* (ed. George W. E. Nickelsburg and Michael E. Stone; rev. ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 159–99.

³³ The main passages in *4 Ezra* are 7:26–44; 11:36–12:2; 12:31–34; 13:1–13, 25–52; and 14:7–9. The main passages in *2 Baruch* are 29:2–30:5; 39:7–40:4; and 70:8–74:4.

³⁴ This becomes clearer when we compare the verse with the depiction of the Son of Man in the Similitudes. See *1 En.* 48:6; 62:7; Knibb, *First and Second Books of Esdras*, 252; Collins and Collins, *King and Messiah*, 147–48.

³⁵ The visitation of the Messiah is cast in revelatory language also in *4 Ezra* 7:28; 13:32; *2 Bar.* 29:3; 73:1; Luke 17:30; 1 Cor 1:7; and Col 3:3. See George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism and Early Christianity* (expanded ed.; HTS 56; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 294.

will protect the remnant community, as soon as he will have defeated the enemy, but the communities are identified in different terms. *4 Ezra* 12:34 speaks of “the remnant of my people,” an allusion to the theological category of the remnant in prophetic literature, and immediately adds for clarification the geographical specification, “those who have been saved throughout my borders.” The implication here is that those who live on Israel’s ground will enjoy special protection during the messianic age. In *2 Bar.* 40:2 the Messiah protects “the rest of my people,” to which the author adds, “those found in the place that I have chosen,” a Deuteronomic formula referring more specifically to Jerusalem.³⁶ Third, both apocalypses make clear that the messianic kingdom marks the last installment of history. It will last, according to *4 Ezra* 12:34, “until the end comes,” and according to *2 Bar.* 40:3, “until the world of corruption will end.” The messianic kingdom belongs to this eon and, like everything else in it, is finite.

IV. THE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE: A BRIEF SUMMARY

The points of connection between *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* vary substantially in nature and scope. They can loosely be divided into three categories: (a) the books’ fictional setting and narratives; (b) a number of fixed phrases, common expressions, and shared motifs (our first two examples); and (c) several conceptual, mostly theological concerns (our last two examples).

A. The Fictional Setting and Narratives

4 Ezra and *2 Baruch* are linked by their setting and similar narratives. Both are pseudonymous apocalypses attributed to a biblical scribe with similar narrative lines. Initially in a state of shock, Ezra and Baruch enter into a disputation with God and challenge the justice and morality of God’s actions. As their stories unfold, Ezra and Baruch undergo a remarkable change from comforted to comforter. The proposed solution to the current problems revolves around the apocalyptic promise of imminent salvation from the present age. This is communicated through a mixture of *Gattungen*, also shared by both works.

These affinities become even more salient when we compare *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* with three other, roughly contemporary compositions.³⁷ The *Apocalypse*

³⁶ See 2 Chr 7:12; Neh 1:9. The formula appears often in Deuteronomy to connote God’s act of choosing a place, mainly in the context of the centralization of worship: Deut 12:5, 11, 14; 14:23; 15:20; etc. Jerusalem as the chosen city is a common topos in the Pseudepigrapha; *4 Bar.* 1:5 (“your chosen city,” τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἐκλεκτὴν); *T. Lev.* 10:5 (“For the house which the Lord shall choose shall be called Jerusalem”); *T. Zeb.* 9:8; *Pss. Sol.* 9:9; 3 Macc 2:9.

³⁷ The point was made by Nickelsburg in his response to my paper at the 2008 annual meeting of the SBL in Boston.

of *Abraham* and the Revelation to John are also post-70 apocalypses, but their authors are not pseudonymous scribes, and they do not use the year 587 B.C.E. as their fictitious setting. Their authors do not travel from grief to consolation. In addition, many of the prominent topoi that are common in *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* are not attested in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* or in the book of Revelation. The third text to mention in this context is Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, a work that displays some of the closest and most compelling parallels to *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*.³⁸ But *L.A.B.* is a narrative account of the events from Adam to the death of King Saul, not a pseudonymous composition. It is also not set in the year 587 B.C.E., and, while it has some eschatological elements, it is not an apocalypse. The cluster of parallel rhetorical techniques in *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* are so striking that it is difficult to imagine how the two texts could have been formed independently of each other. At the same time, the many formal and thematic parallels between the two books nowhere suggest that one book depends on the other. In other words, the use of the same narrative techniques in one book never presupposes their use in the other.

B. Fixed Phrases, Common Expressions, and Shared Motifs

4 Ezra and *2 Baruch* are furthermore connected by a significant number of fixed phrases, common expressions, and shared motifs. In some cases *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* appear to be directly related. Their use of the Adam traditions, for example, is strikingly similar: Ezra and Baruch bewail Adam's sin with the same phrase, "O Adam, what have you done?" (*4 Ezra* 7:118; *2 Bar.* 48:42). The Behemoth/Leviathan tradition is also nearly identical in the two works.³⁹ The agreements between *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* are so close that we need to presuppose some contact between them. At the same time, virtually none of the phrases or expressions we have examined are original to the two works but derive from antecedent traditions attested in earlier (often apocalyptic) literature.

It is furthermore noteworthy that shared phrases, expressions, and motifs appear in different contexts in *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*, depending on the narrative needs of either work. These elements are never irrevocably tied to their present literary context in one book which is then presupposed in the other. We are not aware of a case in which we can make sense of a certain phrase or expression in one book

³⁸ M. R. James, *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo* (Translations of Early Documents: Series 1, Palestinian Jewish Texts [Pre-rabbinic] 12; London: SPCK, 1917; repr., New York: Ktav, 1971), 46–58; Violet, *Die Apokalypsen*, xlvi–xlix; Bogaert, *L'Apocalypse Syriaque*, 1:242–58; Jacobson, *Commentary on Pseudo-Philo*, 201.

³⁹ Cf. Job 40:15–24; 40:34–41:26 (Eng. 41:1–34); Ps 74:14; Isa 25:6. See Knibb, *First and Second Books of Esdras*, 157–58; K. William Whitney, Jr., *Two Strange Beasts: Leviathan and Behemoth in Second Temple and Early Rabbinic Judaism* (HSM 63; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 32–44.

only if we assume that its author knew of its use in the other book. Finally, phrases and motifs shared by both works tend to appear several times in each apocalypse and thus create an inner-textual network of references.

C. *Conceptual Concerns*

The most salient parallels are also the most difficult to assess, the shared conceptual concerns. *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* often express the same (or a related) idea in different language. The human impulse not to follow the Torah, for example, is called “the evil root” in *4 Ezra* 3:22 (and 8:53) and “the darkness of Adam” in *2 Bar.* 18:2. In the messianic passages, the ideas that the Messiah is preexistent, that he will protect the remnant community, and that his kingdom will be an interim kingdom are shared by both texts, yet these concepts are articulated in different words. We find here a persistent pattern: what links the two apocalypses are clusters of common concerns mostly having to do with the eschaton. These are developed in a similar fashion in *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*, but they are not always expressed in the same language.

V. TOWARD A COMPOSITIONAL HISTORY OF *4 EZRA AND 2 BARUCH*

With few exceptions, previous studies that have compared *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* have focused on both texts in their final form. Yet it has become evident that the parallels between the two works are considerably more complex. In order to overcome the current impasse and to arrive at a more plausible interpretation of the texts’ multiple parallels, we need to assume that (a) neither *4 Ezra* nor *2 Baruch* was composed ad hoc by an individual author, but they were both produced over a period of time, during which they went through the typical stages involved in the production of a text, such as composition, revision, and transmission; and (b) the parallels between *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* are not the result of one author responding to the other text in its redacted form, but the parallels originated during the pre-redactional phase.

In their current form, *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* are redacted documents, compilations that have absorbed a significant amount of preexisting materials. In several cases, these materials are immediately relevant for the ways in which they relate to one another. This is particularly evident in those cases in which the same word or expression that links *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* is attested also in other, anterior writings. In other words, the connections between the apocalypses cannot be understood apart from the larger, ongoing religious discourse of which these texts are a part, as their resemblances are components of a larger literary web that connects them to one another and, at the same time, to their wider literary context.

The most plausible explanation for this is to assume that their parallels originally stem from the earliest period in their formation, the time when their narrative traditions began to form. This early stage also saw the compilation of divergent materials, including some preexisting materials we now recognize from other early Jewish writings. These two processes, the early formation of the narrative traditions and the absorption of preexisting materials, appear to be interrelated. As a result, *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* became amalgams of diverse traditions, a particular characteristic of our texts that was already noted by the literary critics over a century ago.⁴⁰

According to this compositional model, the literary processes that produced *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* ran parallel to each other and remained independent. There were occasional points of contact between them, particularly during the early phase in their composition. Several observations lead us to this conclusion. First, in a limited number of instances one text appears to have been written with the other text in mind, as if trying to respond to it, whereas a chapter later the direction of influence seems reversed. This is no longer a conundrum if we allow for some points of contact between the texts as they gained shape. Second, both texts employ a similar set of narrative techniques yet develop them independently and to different ends. This, too, can be best explained if we allow for some contact to have taken place early in the formation of the texts but do not force ourselves into a situation in which we have to argue for the literary dependence of one redacted book on the other. Third, the literary compositions of *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*, too, are analogues to, but independent of, each other. The compositions of both books resemble each other thematically, particularly in their setting and the way in which they develop the character of the protagonist, but ultimately the redactional decisions that shaped both books took rather different directions. This, too, can be most plausibly explained if we assume that both narrative traditions, while related at an early stage, developed independently. Divergences between *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* are the result of a series of parallel, albeit independent, redactional activities on both sides, not the response of one author to the finished book of the other.⁴¹

Writing clearly played a central role in the formation and transmission of *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*. Should we therefore assume that writing was the only mode of the texts' composition and transmission? There are compelling reasons to believe that during the early periods in the production of *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*, oral media of composition played a major role, and, more specifically, that oral performance and literary composition were intertwined.⁴² Our model of the compositional his-

⁴⁰ See George W. E. Nickelsburg, "Eschatology (Early Jewish)," *ABD* 2:579–94.

⁴¹ Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, 123.

⁴² Here I follow the pioneering work of a number of scholars. See Ruth Finnegan, "Literacy vs. Non-Literacy: The Great Divide?" in *Modes of Thought: Essays on Thinking in Western and Non-Western Societies* (ed. Robin Horton and Ruth Finnegan; London: Faber & Faber, 1973), 112–

tory of *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* begins with the recognition that both apocalypses come from a scribal culture that was essentially oral. Even in their final form our texts reflect the oral aesthetics of their original environment—by emphasizing the aural nature of revelation, privileging the dialogical exchange, and relating how the protagonists committed what they have learned from their divine interlocutor to memory (*2 Bar.* 20:3; 50:1). Various “repetitions” in *2 Baruch* of the same theme or motif may well stem from what Jaffee aptly calls “a retrieval of a different performative version of a narrative tradition.”⁴³ In other words, what appears to be a redundancy in the text may have its origin in variant oral renditions of the same or related narrative tradition. Oral tradition, recitation, and the oral transmission of the godly lore all have their place in the apocalypses.

It is this lively process of performance, revision, and recording that best explains not only certain narrative features in *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* but also their points of contact. The interaction of these diverse performances, and particularly the interplay of fixity and fluidity associated with the recording and oral conveyance of these narrative traditions, led to a constant circulation and reactivation of the texts. Related traditions were transmitted, interpreted, and revised. As a result, *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* show numerous points of connection, including some verbal parallels, and were shaped by redactional processes to become independent compositions.

EPILOGUE

The phenomenon we seek to explain—the relationship between two (or more) related, roughly contemporary texts that are connected by a number of formal and verbal parallels—is by no means unique to *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*. Several analogous cases can be found. First, the *Genesis Apocryphon* (1QapGen; 1Q20) shows partial,

44. Steven D. Fraade uses the metaphor of the “circulatory”: “What emerges, then, is a more ‘circulatory’ understanding of the interrelation of Rabbinic texts and their oral performative enactments: an orality that is grounded in a textuality that remains orally fluid” (“Literary Composition and Oral Performance in Early Midrashim,” *Oral Tradition* 14 [1999]: 36). See also idem, *From Tradition to Commentary: Torah and Its Interpretation in the Midrash Sifre to Deuteronomy* (SUNY Series in Judaica; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 19 (“oral circulatory system of study and teaching”). More recently, Jaffee has developed a model that emphasizes the interpenetration or interdependence of oral and written composition in the creation of rabbinic literature. See his *Torah in the Mouth*, 101: “The notion of interpenetration, in my view, is crucial for any reflection upon the relation of the rabbinic writings to the oral-performative literary culture presumed to lie behind them. . . . ‘Oral traditions,’ therefore, need not necessarily be ancient or independent of written transmission, nor need written material be recent or represent a ‘secondary’ stage of a putatively ‘oral’ stage.”

⁴³ Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, 124.

albeit significant, agreement with the book of *Jubilees* as well as with *1 Enoch*. Soon after its discovery, the *Genesis Apocryphon* was thought to have served as a source for some of the stories that are also preserved in *Jubilees* and *1 Enoch*. More recently, however, scholars have called for a reexamination of these intertextual connections, and the question of the textual affiliations of the three documents now needs to be reconsidered altogether.⁴⁴ Second, another parallel case is the so-called Synoptic Problem, the assumption that Matthew, Mark, and Luke stand in some kind of relationship with one another.⁴⁵ The analogy between the Synoptic Gospels and the case of *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* gains additional poignancy because all of these texts were composed within approximately three decades. Third, we can include the *Didache* and its relationship with the Synoptic Gospels, especially the Gospel of Matthew.⁴⁶ Fourth, from the early rabbinic literature there is the case of the Mishnah and the Tosefta. The Tosefta is commonly regarded as a secondary collection of tannaitic traditions to the Mishnah, as suggested already by its very name, “Supplements.” The implied ranking captures well the order in which the works have been received, but their actual intertextual connections tell a different story altogether that is considerably more complex.⁴⁷

These four examples are different and need to be considered individually. Yet they demonstrate that the case of *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* is far from isolated and that the challenges it poses to the modern interpreter who seeks to understand the history of their composition and their dynamic interrelationship are not unusual.

⁴⁴ Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 172–77; Daniel K. Falk, *The Parabiblical Texts: Strategies for Extending the Scriptures in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Library of Second Temple Studies 63; Companion to the Qumran Scrolls 8; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 96–100; Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *1 Enoch 91–108* (Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2007), 612–21; Daniel A. Machiela, *The Dead Sea Genesis Apocryphon: A New Text and Translation with Introduction and Special Treatment of Columns 13–17* (STDJ 79; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 16–17.

⁴⁵ See R. A. Derenbacker, Jr., *Ancient Compositional Practices and the Synoptic Problem* (BETL 186; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005).

⁴⁶ See *Matthew and the Didache: Two Documents from the Same Jewish-Christian Milieu?* (ed. Huub van de Sandt; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2005); *Matthew, James, and Didache: Three Related Documents in Their Jewish and Christian Settings* (ed. Huub van de Sandt and Jürgen Zangenberg; SBLSymS 45; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008).

⁴⁷ Martin S. Jaffee, “Writing and Rabbinic Oral Tradition: On Mishnaic Narrative, Lists and Mnemonics,” *Journal of Jewish Philosophy and Thought* 4 (1994): 123–46; idem, *Torah in the Mouth*, 100–125; Alexander, *Transmitting Mishnah*, 35–76.