



The Chosenness of Israel in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

MATTHIAS HENZE

The chosenness of Israel, God's inscrutable and mysterious election of Israel as the chosen people with whom God entered into a covenant, is a recurring theme in the work of Jon D. Levenson. In a number of publications Levenson has probed this central and seemingly obvious topic of biblical theology to uncover its complexities and to argue for its continuing relevance today. He has shown that the origins of the idea of chosenness reach back all the way to the book of Genesis.¹ He has followed the topic throughout the Hebrew Bible and into the New Testament to discuss its implications for Jewish-Christian relations.² And he has written eloquently against the modern detractors of this ancient biblical doctrine.³

This essay is intended as a supplement to this discussion. Rather than turning my attention to the biblical or rabbinic literature, as Leven-

son has already done with characteristic acumen, my task will be to trace the idea of chosenness through the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha—those Jewish texts that were composed as the biblical period was coming to an end and before rabbinic authority became widely accepted.⁴ The texts I have selected cover a period of about three centuries, from the Apocalypse of Weeks of the second century B.C.E. to *2 Baruch* of the late first century C.E. Our brief survey shows that the election of Israel continued to be a topic of considerable interest at the time. It also shows that the idea of chosenness is a complex one and that it could be employed in a variety of contexts and used to different ends. In the midst of this variety of understandings we can detect three general interrelated themes, all linked to the chosenness of Israel, that tend to recur in the apocryphal and pseudepigraphic writings. First, several authors trace the election of Israel back to Abraham: God chose the patriarch out of love and entered into a covenant with him. Abraham's faithfulness, in return, is seen as a merit to which his descendants are eager to lay claim. Second, God freely determined that Israel should be the chosen people, the people whom God loves. We are frequently reminded that the initiative to elect Israel was God's. Over time, dissident groups claimed the title "the chosen" as a self-designation and assumed a new identity as God's chosen Israel. And third, chosenness does not imply that Israel has been blameless. Israel's unlawful acts, which in some texts are compared to those of her oppressors, are the reason why God delivered Israel into the hands of the enemy in the first place. Several authors express their longing for the eschatological reversal of fortunes, when Israel will be elevated and her enemies condemned.

1 ENOCH

The first text to be considered, the Apocalypse of Weeks, is part of the *Epistle of Enoch* (*1 En.* 91–105), the last of the five works included in the Ethiopic *Apocalypse of Enoch*, or *1 Enoch*. The Apocalypse of Weeks (*1 En.* 93:1–10; 91:11–17) offers a good point of entry into our discussion because of its early date of composition, the second century B.C.E., and because of its conspicuous use of language of chosenness.⁵

Following a brief introduction (*1 En.* 93:1–2), Enoch, the seventh antediluvian patriarch, gives his sons an overview of Israel’s history from his own time to the *eschaton* (*1 En.* 93:3–91:17). The overview takes the form of a “prophecy,” in which Israel’s history is structured in ten weeks.

Chosenness is mentioned no fewer than four times and at crucial junctures in the Apocalypse: first in the introduction (*1 En.* 93:2), and then in week three (*1 En.* 93:5, the time of Abraham), week six (*1 En.* 93:8, the preexilic period), and week seven (*1 En.* 93:10, from the exile to the second century B.C.E.). Enoch opens with a brief preview of what he is about to announce. He will speak

concerning the sons of righteousness,
and concerning the chosen of eternity,
and concerning the plant of truth. (*1 En.* 93:2)⁶

The three parallel expressions all designate a distinctive group within Israel, whose election by God stands at the center of the Apocalypse in week 7. The first expression, “the sons of righteousness,” makes clear that God has set the members of this group apart because of their righteousness, a sentiment further emphasized in verse 10. Next they are called “the eternally chosen ones” (Eth. *xeruyāna ‘alām*). This expression, which is not found in the Hebrew Bible or elsewhere in *1 Enoch*, entails two more of the group’s attributes: they are the *chosen ones*,⁷ and they are chosen *for eternity*, they will last forever.⁸

The third expression, finally, “concerning the plant of truth,” anticipates the use of the same motif of the plant in week three (*1 En.* 93:5). There we read of Abraham: “A man will be chosen as the plant of righteous judgment.” Abraham was chosen by God from among the Gentiles to be “the plant of righteousness” (Eth. *takla ṣedq*). This is the plant from which Israel will sprout. In the Bible, the chosenness of Abraham, using the verb *bḥr*, is made explicit only in Neh 9:7, though it may well be implicit much earlier.⁹ The dual notion that the election of Israel has its origin in the chosenness of Abraham and that this election is eternal is also found in the book of *Jubilees*, another work from the second century B.C.E. In *Jub.* 19:18 Abraham says about Jacob, “I

know that the LORD will choose him for himself as a people who will rise up from all the nations which are upon the earth.”

Week six (*1 En.* 93:8) describes the preexilic age as a time during which “the whole race of the chosen root will be dispersed.” Israel sprang from “the chosen root” (Eth. *šerw xeruy*) that is Abraham, hence the designation “the race of the chosen root.” And yet, chosenness did not make Israel immune to divine punishment, it did not prevent the Babylonian exile. Loren Stuckenbruck comments: “While Israel is and remains God’s special people, the fact that they descend from Abraham has not provided any guarantee that they would not be punished for their sins. Election must be confirmed through a further event of choosing.”¹⁰ That event is described in the next week.

With week seven (*1 En.* 93:9–10, 91:11) we have reached the central moment in Israel’s history according to the Apocalypse, the period spanning from the exile to the real time of the author.

And at its conclusion, the chosen will be chosen,
 as witnesses of righteousness from the everlasting plant of
 righteousness,
 to whom will be given sevenfold wisdom and knowledge. (*1 En.* 93:10)¹¹

Week seven begins with a reference to “a perverse generation,” that is, Israel during the exilic and early postexilic period. The deeds of the Israelites will be so wicked that God will intervene and choose anew, this time “the everlasting plant of righteousness.” The Apocalypse thus distinguishes between “the chosen,” i.e., all of Israel as the progeny of Abraham, and “the everlasting plant of righteousness,” a group that will not include everybody but only “the chosen of the chosen,” the community of the elect. Whereas Israel’s chosenness stems from Abraham’s special status, this group of the elect will be chosen only at the time of the Apocalypse’s author. And whereas the rest of Israel is “perverse,” this group will be endowed with wisdom and knowledge. The author does not further reveal the exact nature of this special knowledge, but the larger context of the *Epistle* makes clear that it concerns the proper understanding of the divine law and the eschatological lore, a secret knowledge about the end time that is deemed essential for obtaining salvation.¹²

A group called “the righteous and the chosen” also figures prominently in the *Book of Parables* (*1 En.* 37–71), the second and youngest in the collection of five books of *1 Enoch*, likely written at the turn of the c.E. It has long been recognized that the authors of the *Parables* drew their inspirations from earlier parts of *1 Enoch* and particularly from the *Book of the Watchers*.¹³ There “the righteous and the chosen” are mentioned in the introduction to the book (*1 En.* 1:1–5:9). Enoch declares that he will speak “concerning the chosen” (*1 En.* 1:3; cf. 58:1); they will enjoy special protection during the final tribulations (*1 En.* 1:8), on judgment day their sins will be forgiven, and they will inherit the world to come (*1 En.* 5:6–7).¹⁴

The same idea of a group of elect who claim for themselves the title “the righteous and the chosen” (or “the righteous and the holy,” or variations thereof) and who are singled out for their preferential treatment at the end of days is picked up and developed further in the *Book of Parables*.¹⁵ The text seems to suggest that the group has suffered from persecution and that some of them have died (*1 En.* 47:1, 48:7, 53:7, 62:11–12). Now they are comforted and promised protection from their oppressors, “the kings and the mighty” (*1 En.* 46:4, 62:1, 63:1). The *Parables* say of the resurrection of the dead (*1 En.* 51:1; see in particular 62:1), “the righteous and the chosen will have arisen from the earth”), at which there will be a judgment scene (*1 En.* 46:4–8; 48:8–10; 60:2, 10), and “the righteous and the chosen” will be granted life eternal and a restored earth (*1 En.* 45:4–6, 58:3, 61:4, 62:13–15). Enoch mentions repeatedly that on his otherworldly journeys he has seen the place where the chosen will dwell. (“There I saw the dwelling places of the chosen”; and 60:8, “east of the garden where the chosen and righteous dwell” [*1 En.* 41:2].)¹⁶

The central individual in the judgment scenes of the *Parables* is a transcendent figure who sits on the throne for judgment. This figure has many titles, among them “the Son of Man” (*1 En.* 46:2–4, 48:2, etc.) and “the Messiah” (*1 En.* 48:10, 52:4). His titles “the Chosen One” (*1 En.* 39:6; 40:5; 48:10; 45:3–4; 49:2–4; 51:3, 5, etc.) and “the Righteous and the Chosen One” (*1 En.* 53:6) correspond closely to the group of “the righteous and the chosen.” Their close relationship is further reinforced by the composition of the *Parables*: the epithet “the

Chosen One” (Eth. *xeryy*) is used particularly in connection with “the chosen ones.” In the Hebrew Bible, the title “Chosen One” is used in the Servant Songs in Second Isaiah (Isa 41:8, 9, 42:1, 43:10, 20, 44:1, 2, 45:4, 47, 49:7) to designate God’s Servant.¹⁷ In the *Parables*, this individual has been elevated to become a transcendent and preexistent figure, who judges the world but spares “the chosen ones.”

To summarize, in the Apocalypse of Weeks God chooses twice, first Abraham and through him all of Israel, and then again a group of the elect, “the chosen of the chosen,” who lived at the time of the author. Similarly, the *Parables* take the perspective of a group called “the chosen.” Here the term may well have some “sectarian” connotations. One of the epithets of the messianic figure who will spare them on the day of reckoning is “the Chosen One.” Finally, it is noteworthy that in a reasonably unified corpus like *1 Enoch* the term “chosenness” is largely confined to the first five chapters of the *Book of the Watchers*, the Apocalypse of Weeks, and the *Parables*. Elsewhere in *1 Enoch*, the term “the righteous” is preferred.

PSALMS OF SOLOMON

Israel and Jerusalem play a prominent role in the eighteen psalms that make up the *Psalms of Solomon*. The writers of the *Psalms* identify themselves with “Israel” (*Pss. Sol.* 7:8–10, 8:23–34, 9:1–11, 10:4–8, 14:1–5, 18:1–5).¹⁸ They also call themselves “the devout” (*Pss. Sol.* 10:5–8, 13:10, 14:3–5) and “the righteous” (*Pss. Sol.* 3:5–8, 9:7, 10:1–4, 13:9, 14:1–5, 15:6–9, 16:15), who reach out to their God and long for salvation (*Pss. Sol.* 12:6, 14:5, 18:1–5). A teleological focal point in the collection as a whole is the eschatological vindication of Israel, as colorfully expressed in the last two poems (*Pss. Sol.* 17:26–29, 18:1–9).¹⁹

“The righteous” define themselves in relation to their God but also vis-à-vis other groups in Israel. These are merely called “the sinners” (*Pss. Sol.* 3:9–12, 4:3–5, 13:6, 14:6–9, 15:10–12) and “the wicked” (*Pss. Sol.* 12:1–6), and no further identification about them is given.²⁰ In addition, some of the psalms express great hostility toward the nations (*Pss. Sol.* 1:2–4, 7:1–3, 6, 8:30). They were written in a situation of

considerable distress, when Jerusalem had been attacked, the population killed, their sons and daughters led away into captivity, and the temple desecrated by the enemy (*Pss. Sol.* 2:1–7, 8:14–21; also 17:11–18).²¹ It has long been recognized that the attack on Jerusalem described in *Pss. Sol.* 2 and 8 is Pompey's conquest of Judea in 63 B.C.E. Josephus (*Ant.* 14:1–79) provides an account of the events during the reigns of Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, of Pompey's capture of Jerusalem, and of the deportation of Aristobulus and his family to Rome (cf. *War* 1:117–59; also 4QpNah 3–4).²² *Psalms of Solomon* 2:26–27 relate the death of Pompey in 48 B.C.E., and the collection of the *Psalms of Solomon* as a whole may have been compiled in the decades thereafter, probably in or around Jerusalem.

Pompey's arrogant behavior in Jerusalem is described in *Pss. Sol.* 2 and 8.²³ The author makes no secret of his loathing for the Roman general. According to *Ps. Sol.* 2, Pompey breached the temple walls, trampled on the altar, and took many Jews captive to Rome (*Ps. Sol.* 2:1–2, 6). The events described in *Ps. Sol.* 8 are similar: Pompey captured fortified Jerusalem, killed the Jewish leaders, and exiled their families (*Ps. Sol.* 8:18–21). But the story is remembered not simply for its historical value. More than simply telling the story of Pompey, the author(s) of the *Psalms of Solomon* emphasizes that the Roman general was only acting on God's behalf and that his actions, though deplorable, were merely a response to the sins of the people of Jerusalem.²⁴ Indeed, the bulk of the poems is devoted to a description of these sins. They include various moral and ethical violations such as sexual improprieties, but the main charge is that the temple officials have polluted the temple (*Pss. Sol.* 2:3–4, 8:11–13).²⁵ It would be difficult to miss the paraenetic purpose of the poems.

It is in this context that we must understand the language of chosenness in the *Psalms of Solomon*. Right at the outset in *Ps. Sol.* 1, the poem that serves as an introduction to the entire collection, Mother Jerusalem laments over her arrogant children that their lawless acts exceeded those of their Gentile conquerors (*Ps. Sol.* 1:8; that Israel's sin surpassed that of the nations is repeated emphatically in *Ps. Sol.* 8:13). The poet compares Israel's lawlessness to that of the nations and finds that the attacks on Jerusalem, instigated by God, are fully justified. On

the opposite end of the collection, in *Ps. Sol.* 17, the acknowledgment of Israel's sins is repeated (*Ps. Sol.* 17:5–20).²⁶ But there we find also the reminder that God *chose* David and his human descendants *forever* (*Ps. Sol.* 17:4).²⁷ The poet therefore calls on God to restore the Davidic dynasty: “See, O LORD, and raise up for them their king, the son of David, at the time which you chose, O God, to rule over Israel your servant” (*Ps. Sol.* 17:21). This is followed by a description of the advent of the Messiah, a royal Davidic figure who will rule as king in Jerusalem and drive out the nations (*Ps. Sol.* 17:22–46).²⁸ Finally, in the last poem (*Ps. Sol.* 18), the poet recalls God's love for Abraham and his descendants. The attributes that describe Israel recall the similar titles in Gen 22:2 of Isaac—a potent allusion to Israel's progenitor now bound but soon released to new life.²⁹ “Your judgments are over the whole earth with pity, and your love is upon the offspring of Abraham, the sons of Israel. Your discipline is upon us as on a firstborn, an only son, to turn back the obedient soul from ignorant stupidity” (*Ps. Sol.* 18:3–4).³⁰

The chosenness of Israel is also the subject of *Ps. Sol.* 9. The poet first recalls that God is a righteous judge who forgives those who repent and confess their sins (*Ps. Sol.* 9:1–7), and then he turns his attention to Israel.

⁸And now, you are our God, and we are the people whom you have loved.

Look, and be compassionate, O God of Israel, for we are yours,
And remove not your pity from us, lest they attack us.

⁹And you chose the offspring of Abraham above all the nations,
and you placed your name upon us, O LORD,
and you will not reject us forever.

¹⁰You made a covenant with our fathers concerning us,
and we shall hope in you when we turn our souls toward you.

¹¹The mercy of the LORD is upon the house of Israel forever and ever.
(*Pss. Sol.* 9:8–11)

The poet appeals to God to have mercy on Israel, as Israel fears an imminent attack from the nations. The plea to be compassionate is based on Israel's chosenness: Israel is the people loved by God, a people who

belong to God (v. 8); God has chosen Abraham and his descendants from among the nations, he has called them by his name, and he has promised not to reject them forever (v. 9); and the covenant with Israel remains the foundation for Israel's hope (v. 10).³¹

THE TESTAMENT OF MOSES

The *Testament of Moses* as we have it today, a work otherwise known as the *Assumption of Moses*, dates from the turn of the c.e.³² Its beginning and ending are lost, but the general contours of the text are clear. The narrative frame of the book (*T. Mos.* 1:1–9 and 11:1–12:13) tells of an encounter between Moses and his successor, Joshua (the scene is modeled after Deut 31:23–30, 34:9). Moses is about to die and summons Joshua to give him his last instructions. The book thus presents itself as the written record of Moses's oral testament.

Framed by the narrative are Moses's instructions to Joshua (*T. Mos.* 1:10–10:15). They consist largely of an *ex eventu* prophecy of the history of Israel (the historical review proper begins in *T. Mos.* 2:1). The historical overview begins with the taking of the land and ends in the eschaton. The Mosaic "prophecy" of Israel's past is selective, however. Rather than aiming for completeness or historical accuracy, a principal motivation behind the recasting of Israel's past in the *Testament of Moses* is to retell the events in light of the Deuteronomic scheme of history. Specifically, history is divided into two cycles (chs. 2–4 and 5–10), each following the same sequence of sin (2; 5:1–6:1), punishment (3:1–4; 6:2–8:5), a turning point/repentance (3:5–4:4, 9), and salvation (4:5–9, 10).³³

The idea of chosenness is attested in the narrative frame of the book, that is, in the first cycle, and again (though less so) in the eschatological hymn of the second cycle, in chapter 10. Specifically, there are four aspects of chosenness that are emphasized in the *Testament of Moses*: the notion that God created the world for Israel; Jerusalem as the chosen place; Israel as the chosen people; and the eschatological elevation of Israel above all nations.

First, we begin with creation. Moses begins by calling on Joshua to be strong. Then he goes on to reveal to him a mystery. "He [God] cre-

ated the world on behalf of his people" (*T. Mos.* 1:12). In pseudographic literature this is the first attestation of the idea that God created the world for his people, an idea that will be repeated in *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*, two works of the late first century c.e.³⁴ The idea may well derive from the Song of Moses in Deut 32, a text that stands in the background of the *Testament of Moses*.³⁵ Johannes Tromp puts it well: "This concept should not be taken as some kind of metaphysical conviction about the reasons and motifs for creation, but rather as a strong expression of the idea of Israel's election."³⁶ Moses does not leave it with that, however. He adds that God kept the purpose of his creation a secret so that the nations "might abjectly declare themselves guilty" (*T. Mos.* 1:13) by their ill-informed deliberations—we are not told what the deliberations are about, but probably they concern the meaning of creation. God created the world for Israel, though this has not yet been revealed publicly. The implied scope of the Mosaic statement is remarkable: the election of Israel effectively *precedes* creation.³⁷ This will finally be made manifest at the end of time, which is imminent.

Moses returns to the topic of creation at the end of the book in chapter 12. There he assures Joshua that history, including the history of Israel's interaction with the nations, will unfold according to God's predetermined plan, which was put into place at the beginning of time. Once again, the overtones of Deut 32 are unmistakable. "God has created all nations on earth, and he foresaw us, them as well as us, from the beginning of the creation of the earth until the end of the world. And nothing has been overlooked by Him, not even the smallest detail" (*T. Mos.* 12:4).

Second, we turn to Jerusalem. After Moses revealed to Joshua the secret of creation, he appoints him chief archivist of the written tradition (*T. Mos.* 1:16–17). He gives Joshua "this writing," presumably a copy of the core of the *Testament* (now *T. Mos.* 2:3–10:10), so that later Joshua will know "how to preserve the books which I shall entrust to you" (*T. Mos.* 1:16; cf. 10:11 and 11:1), presumably a reference to the Torah. More significant than the mode of preservation for our purposes is the place where Joshua is to put the book. Moses tells him to deposit it "in earthenware jars in the place which he [God] has chosen from the beginning of the creation of the world" (*T. Mos.* 1:17). The formulaic language implies that the locus where Joshua shall deposit the precious

jars is none other than Jerusalem—and, more specifically, the place where the temple in Jerusalem will be, even though Joshua could hardly have been aware of the true significance of the place. The same language of God’s choosing a place is used in Deuteronomy in the context of the centralization of the worship (Deut 12:5, 11, 14; 14:23; 15:20, etc.; see also Neh 1:9 and 2 Chr 7:12).³⁸ Moses then continues to explain to Joshua that in this place “his [God’s] name may be called upon until the day of recompense when the LORD will surely have regard for His people” (*T. Mos.* 1:18). The place will retain its significance until the end-time. In other words, the Mosaic designation of the locus as the place chosen by God where the *Testament* is to be stored not only anticipates the building of the Jerusalem temple centuries after Joshua but even looks to the eschaton.³⁹

Third, let us examine the chosen people. Toward the end of his first cycle of historical “prophecies,” Moses refers to an anonymous intercessor who will arise at the time of the exile and pray on behalf of the exiles (*T. Mos.* 4:2–4). The intercessor will appeal to God for Israel’s release from captivity on two grounds: first, because God himself has chosen Israel; and second, because God entered into a covenant with the Israelites.

LORD, King of All on the throne on high, who rulest the world, who wanted this people to be your chosen people. Then you wanted to be called their God, according to the covenant which you made with their fathers. (*T. Mos.* 4:2)

The doxology lays the ground for the plea for mercy that follows. It was God who wanted to choose Israel, and it was God who wanted to be called their God. The election of Israel was then sealed by the covenant, the guarantor for Israel’s salvation (“Heilsgarantie”).⁴⁰ It is on these grounds that the anonymous intercessor pleads with God to have regard for the Israelites and to bring the exile to an end. A little later Moses assures Joshua that God will hear the prayer “because of the covenant which he had made with their fathers” (*T. Mos.* 4:5).⁴¹

Fourth, Israel will be exalted in eschatological time. The second cycle in the *Testament of Moses* culminates in an eschatological hymn

(*T. Mos.* 10:1–10). The introduction to the poem declares that God will establish his kingdom and avenge the Israelites against their enemies (*T. Mos.* 10:1–2). There follows a description of a theophany: God leaves his heavenly throne, the earth trembles, and the natural order is thrown into disarray (*T. Mos.* 3–7).⁴² The purpose of the theophany, finally, is revealed in the last part of the hymn. God will raise Israel to the heavens, so that they will see their enemies from on high and praise God (*T. Mos.* 10:8–10). There is no explicit language of chosenness in this hymn, but the idea is related: at the end of time, God will work vengeance on the enemies of Israel, destroy their idols, and exalt Israel to the stars.⁴³ The eschatological vindication of Israel and the punishment of her enemies is a recurring motif in pseudepigraphic writings, including our next two works.

FOURTH EZRA

The last two books to be discussed are two apocalypses of the historical type, *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*. Both were composed a couple of generations after the Roman destruction of the Jerusalem temple in the year 70 c.e. It has long been observed that *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* are linked to each other by a number of features: both texts are set fictitiously at the time of the fall of Jerusalem in 587 b.c.e., a historical moment of paradigmatic, even revelatory significance; both apocalypses are attributed to a biblical scribe of renown from the exilic and early postexilic periods; and both compositions share a number of generic, thematic, and linguistic traits.⁴⁴

4 Ezra opens with a long prayer in which Ezra, who is greatly distressed over the desolation of Jerusalem, first recounts Israel's history from Adam to the Babylonian Exile (*4 Ezra* 3:4–27) and then compares the current fate of Babylon—standing in for Rome—with that of Israel (*4 Ezra* 3:28–36). The historical review that occupies the first part of the prayer sets the stage for Ezra to make his point in the second: even though Israel has hardly been blameless in the past, Babylon has not been any better, and yet God allows Babylon, not Israel, to be prosperous. The idea of chosenness plays a role in both parts of Ezra's

prayer. In his historical review, Ezra dwells at some disproportionate length on the time of the patriarchs as it is related in the book of Genesis. Adam and the consequences of his transgression are of great concern to Ezra, and so are Noah and “the many nations” (*4 Ezra* 3:12) that lived after him.⁴⁵ After the flood these generations continued to do evil, and so God chose Abraham from among them.

And when they were committing iniquity before thee, thou didst choose for thyself one of them, whose name was Abraham; and thou didst love him, and to him only didst thou reveal the end of the times, secretly by night. (*4 Ezra* 3:13–14)

Ezra interprets the election of Abraham against the backdrop of the iniquities committed by the postdeluvian nations. They were even more ungodly than their ancestors (here the author may well have in mind the Tower of Babel story in Gen 11:1–9), and so God responded by choosing one of them, Abraham. Not much is said about the act of Abraham’s election, but the text does provide a few clues. First, we learn that it was at God’s initiative that Abraham was chosen. The short phrase “you chose for yourself one of them (*elegisti tibi ex his unum, cui nomen erat Abraham*)” underscores the inscrutability and arbitrariness of the divine act (cf. Neh 9:7; *1 En.* 93:5). God chose Abraham *for himself*.⁴⁶ Second, the subjective nature of the divine choice is further underscored by the affirmation that God had a particular affection for Abraham: “you loved him” (*et dilexisti eum*). The scriptural anchor for this claim is found outside the book of Genesis, in Isa 41:8 and 2 Chr 20:7, where Abraham is the one “who loved Me,” or simply “My friend.”⁴⁷ Third, and more unusual, is Ezra’s first remark about Abraham once he was chosen: God revealed to him “the end of times, secretly by night.” The latter part of the phrase implies that the revelation took place during the covenant ceremony in Gen 15, which occurred at night (Gen 15:17). Whereas according to the biblical account, the covenant is important mostly because of the promise of descendants to Abraham, Ezra emphasizes an aspect we do not find in Genesis: Abraham was the first human being to whom God revealed the eschatological secrets, the patriarch who was given insight into the end of times.⁴⁸

Following his historical review, Ezra turns to the current fates of Israel and the nations to underscore how they diverge (*4 Ezra* 3:28–36). The seer makes his point emphatically: God has seen the deeds of the Babylonians, and they are no better than Israel. On the contrary, it was Israel who believed in the covenants and kept the commandments. And yet, at present Israel lies subdued, whereas Babylon—that is, Rome—triumphs, or, in Ezra’s accusatory words to God, “you have destroyed your people and protected your enemies” (*perdidisti populum tuum et conservasti inimicos tuos* [*4 Ezra* 3:30]). Any idea that Israel’s misery can be justified because of Israel’s sins, as for example in *Pss. Sol.* 1, is here soundly rejected, if only because the other nations are no less sinful than Israel.

It is this last aspect in particular that continues to trouble Ezra. In the next chapter he bemoans that every day he has to witness Israel’s misery. He wants to know from God “why Israel has been given over to the Gentiles in disgrace; why the people whom you loved has been given over to godless tribes, and the law of our ancestors has been brought to destruction and the written covenants no longer exist” (*4 Ezra* 4:23). If in the previous chapter it was Abraham whom God loves, here it is Israel.⁴⁹ Ezra is distraught that God would surrender Israel to the Gentiles in an act of disgrace, in spite of the “Torah of our fathers,” thereby effectively declaring the covenant to be obsolete. Ultimately it is the reliability of the divine promise that is at stake.

The longest and most explicit meditation in *4 Ezra* on the election of Israel comes in Ezra’s second prayer in 5:23–30, a poetic reflection on the nature of chosenness. The prayer readily falls into two parts: the first part (vv. 23–27) consists of eight biblical images that symbolize God’s election of Israel; the language is repetitive and formulaic (“from all . . . thou hast chosen for thyself one”), with a recurring contrast between the many (standing in for the nations) and the one (which is Israel).⁵⁰ The eighth contrast relates how God chose Israel from among “the multitude of peoples” (*ex omnibus multiplicatis populis* [5:27]). This serves as the transition to the second half of the prayer (vv. 28–30), in which Ezra wonders why God has scattered Israel among the nations and handed Israel over to her enemies. It remains incomprehensible to the seer why Israel’s enemies are given the upper hand, even though

Israel remained faithful to the covenants. And why does God punish Israel by means of the sinful nations?⁵¹

Ezra's accusations become noticeably more poignant in 6:55–59. There Ezra returns once again to the contrasting comparison of the nations and Israel, but now the point of comparison is no longer loyalty versus disloyalty to the covenant but rather the complex, if enigmatic, interrelationship of creation, election, and, ultimately, redemption.

⁵⁵ All this I have spoken before thee. O LORD, because thou hast said that it was for us that thou didst create this world. ⁵⁶ But as for the other nations which have descended from Adam, thou hast said that they are nothing, and that they are like spittle, and thou hast compared their abundance to a drop from a bucket. ⁵⁷ And now, O LORD, these nations, which are reputed as nothing, domineer over us and trample upon us. ⁵⁸ But we thy people, whom thou hast called thy firstborn, only-begotten, kin, and dear one, have been given into their hands. ⁵⁹ If the world has indeed been created for us, why do we not possess our world as an inheritance? How long will this be so? (*4 Ezra* 6:55–59)

This brief pericope is framed by a reference to creation (vv. 55 and 59): Ezra claims that God created the world for Israel but that Israel does not possess the world.⁵² Worse still, the nations rule over and “trample on” Israel. What distinguishes this from previous passages in *4 Ezra* is the harsh, ontological language in which Ezra pitches the nations against Israel. God has proclaimed that the nations are “nothing,” “like spittle” (*dixisti eas nihil esse, et quoniam salivae adsimilatae sunt*),⁵³ and that they should be compared to “a drop from a bucket” (Isa 40:15, 17). Israel, on the other hand, is God’s “firstborn,” the “only begotten,” who is “zealous” for God and “most dear”—epithets that describe Isaac in the Akedah in Gen 22:2.⁵⁴

In a recent article on the idea of election in *4 Ezra*, John Collins has made much of this passage.⁵⁵ Collins takes offense at *4 Ezra*'s belief in election because of its disparaging treatment of non-Israelites. He grants that the book presumes a situation in which Israel has just been defeated and hence is in no position to mistreat anyone. “Nonetheless, Gentiles can scarcely fail to find Ezra's language of election offensive.”⁵⁶ Ezra's harsh words in *4 Ezra* 6:56 in particular reflect what Bruce Lon-

genecker has dubbed “ethnocentric covenantalism.”⁵⁷ Collins agrees. “The ‘ethnocentric covenantalism’ of Ezra regards the nations as spittle; the eschatological wisdom of Uriel seems to care only whether they keep the law; the apocalyptic visions consign them to destruction.”⁵⁸

Collins’s critique of the concept of election as ethnocentric is hardly new.⁵⁹ But is it an appropriate characterization of *4 Ezra*’s theology? Taken out of context, Ezra’s derogatory statement that the nations are like “spittle” would indeed be damning. But there is a specific context here that cannot be ignored: the book responds to the recent demolition of Jerusalem. *4 Ezra* is not a theological treatise that ruminates in general terms about the eschatological fate of all nations, and Ezra does not speak about “Gentiles” vs. Jews in general. The seer is concerned about Babylon—a cipher for Rome—and he expresses his hope for the eschatological turning of the tables, as it were, when the defeated will be set free. What is more, even the Jews will find little comfort in *4 Ezra*’s apocalyptic program. To brand *4 Ezra*’s theology “ethnocentric covenantalism” suggests, erroneously, that according to *4 Ezra* those who are part of the covenant will be saved at the end of time whereas those who stand outside the covenant will be condemned to eternal damnation. This notion has already been dismantled in the Enochic Apocalypse of Weeks, as we saw, where it is made clear that belonging to “the whole race of the chosen root” (*1 En.* 93:8) did *not* save “the chosen” from divine punishment, nor is it what we find in *4 Ezra* either. Uriel stresses over again that only a few of the righteous will be saved in the end: “Let many perish who are now living, rather than that the law of God which is set before them be disregarded!” (*4 Ezra* 7:20). Ezra is forced to concede: “And now I see that the world to come will bring delight to a few, but torments to many” (*4 Ezra* 7:47).⁶⁰ The covenant is no longer the operative principle, let alone a guarantee for salvation, as many in Israel are doomed to perish. We can discuss what the purpose of such an admittedly pessimistic outlook might be—one possible explanation would be that these passages are essentially paraenetic, i.e., that they call on the faithful to return to the covenant *now* so that they will be counted among the righteous *then*—but to find in *4 Ezra* a simple division between Israel, for whom salvation is guaranteed, and the Gentiles, who are destined to perish, is missing the point.

Once Ezra has taken Uriel's message to heart, his tone changes noticeably, and he moves from accusation to plea. In a short but strongly worded appeal toward the end of the third vision, the seer turns to his angelic interlocutor and says: "But spare your people and have mercy on your inheritance, for you have mercy on your own creation" (*4 Ezra* 8:45).

SECOND BARUCH

Like *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch* is set at the time of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, even though it was composed at the end of the first century c.e. Baruch, erstwhile the secretary and close confidant of the prophet Jeremiah, now has become a prophet in his own right who has effectively succeeded Jeremiah. As *2 Baruch* continues to tell the story that began in the Hebrew Bible, it remains firmly anchored in the tradition of Jeremiah: in form it closely follows its biblical predecessor, and in content it relates the events that surround the sacking of Jerusalem.⁶¹

Much of what we find in *2 Baruch* regarding the concept of chosenness resembles *4 Ezra*, though the author of *2 Baruch* likes to give the familiar ideas his own interpretive twist. Above we observed, for example, that early on in *4 Ezra* the seer challenges God and wonders "why the people whom you loved has been given over to godless tribes" (*4 Ezra* 4:23). *2 Baruch* begins with a narrative frame that sets the scene for the book: it relates how on the eve of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem God calls on Baruch to leave the city (*2 Bar.* 1:1–9:1). Visibly distraught, Baruch seeks to dissuade God from delivering Jerusalem up for destruction and, like Ezra, begins to argue with God. His argumentative strategy, too, revolves around a contrasting view of Israel and her enemies: the Babylonians are those who hate God, whereas God loves Israel. Says Baruch: "So then I am responsible for Zion, for they who hate You will come to this place and pollute Your sanctuary, and lead Your inheritance into captivity, and make themselves masters of those whom You have loved" (*2 Bar.* 5:1; cf. 3:5, 8:2). The motif of Israel as the people whom God loves reappears a few times throughout the book. In chapter 21, in a prayer which Baruch says while sitting in the

Kidron Valley, Baruch reminds God: “On account of Your name You have called us a ‘Beloved people’” (Syr. *‘amā’ ḥabībā’* [2 Bar. 21:21]). And in chapter 48, another lengthy prayer, Baruch pleads with God in moving language not to reject His people: “And do not cut off the hope of our people, and do not abridge the times of our aid. For this is the people which You have chosen, and these are the people to whom You have found no equal” (2 Bar. 48:19b–20).⁶²

The idea of chosenness appears in 2 *Baruch* in three larger contexts: one is the integrity and preservation of the land of Israel at the end of time as the place chosen by God; the second is the righteousness of the sages and the merit of their deeds for later generations; and the third is the eschatological orientation of 2 *Baruch* in general that dominates the book and defines its conceptualization of the relationship between Israel and the nations.

We have seen the first aspect, the significance of space as the chosen locale for God’s activities, already in the *Testament of Moses*. In *T. Mos.* 1:17 Moses orders Joshua to hide certain books “in the place which He [God] has chosen from the beginning of the creation of the world,” an obvious reference to the privileged status of Jerusalem, singled out by God already at the moment of creation. The same motif of Jerusalem as the chosen city is also attested in 2 *Baruch*, in the context of the advent of the Messiah. In 2 Bar. 40:1–3, a scene highly reminiscent of Dan 7, the Messiah appears in Jerusalem, summons the last wicked ruler to Mount Zion, indicts him and his entourage for their wicked deeds, pronounces judgment, and puts him to death.⁶³ Then the Messiah protects the rest of the people, as God explains to Baruch, “those found in the place that I have chosen” (Syr. *haw dmeštkaḥ b’atrā’ dagbit* [2 Bar. 40:2]). In other words, the Messiah protects the prophetic remnant in Israel in the age of the eschaton (see also 2 Bar. 77:4). In an important study, Liv Ingeborg Lied has underscored the abiding importance of space in the eschatology of 2 *Baruch* and of early Jewish apocalyptic literature in general.⁶⁴ Far from becoming obsolete at the end of time, the Land of Israel maintains its chosen status. Lied’s insistence to broaden our understanding of Jewish eschatology to find in it a combined conceptualization of space *and* time receives additional support from the other messianic pericopes in 2 *Baruch*. According to the

first messianic passage in *2 Bar.* 29:2–30:5, the Messiah will appear in Israel, protect its inhabitants and provide them with an abundance of food. Indeed, the messianic presence will initially be felt *only* in Israel. And according to the third and longest description of the Messiah, it is the Land of Israel itself that will guard those who live in it. At the visitation of the Messiah, “the Holy Land will have mercy on its own and protect its inhabitants at that time” (71:1).⁶⁵

The second aspect of chosenness in *2 Baruch* concerns the righteousness of the sages. Like Ezra, Baruch is quick to admit that Israel has not been blameless before God and that many in Israel have sinned. But he also points out that those who were righteous in the past were able to live their lives in confidence. They even interceded before God on behalf of others because they trusted in their deeds (*2 Bar.* 85:2), and they were saved by their deeds (*2 Bar.* 52:7), the very deeds that are now preserved in the heavenly reservoirs (*2 Bar.* 14:12). And so, Baruch reasons, their righteousness should have outweighed Israel’s sins and prevented the destruction of Jerusalem. “And lo, they strove, and not even for them did You have mercy on Zion. And if others did evil, Zion should have been forgiven on account of the deeds of those who did good deeds and should not have been destroyed on account of the deeds of those who committed iniquity” (*2 Bar.* 14:6–7; cf. 21:11).⁶⁶

In addition to the righteous, Baruch also remembers the patriarchs and God’s promises to them, which, our author is adamant, persist, even though the recent violent events in Jerusalem may call their power into question. After reminding God that he has called Israel his “Beloved People” (*2 Bar.* 21:21), Baruch goes on to evoke the memory of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob specifically.⁶⁷ “It is for them, You said, that You created the world” (*2 Bar.* 21:24). The claim that God created the world for Israel is already familiar from the *Testament of Moses* and *4 Ezra*.⁶⁸ The same claim is also made in *2 Baruch*, albeit with some variation. According to *2 Bar.* 14:18–19, God made the world for *all* human beings, not just for Israel;⁶⁹ according to *2 Bar.* 15:7 the world was created specifically for the righteous;⁷⁰ and according to *2 Bar.* 21:24–25, as we just saw, God made the world for the three patriarchs in Genesis and those who were like them. Such a juxtaposition of divergent concepts may irritate the modern reader in search of a single point

of view, but it is hardly at odds with the nature of early apocalyptic writings in general, which are by nature composites—intellectual amalgams of diverse traditions. In spite of this diversity of viewpoints, the divine interlocutor is able to answer all of Baruch's concerns—that God should have saved Zion because of the righteousness of the sages, and that the world was created for the righteous—with a single promise of the new world. “And with respect to the righteous about whom you said that because of them the world has come [into existence], so also that [world] which is to come will come [into existence] because of them. For this world is to them a struggle and a labor with much trouble, but that which is coming is a crown with great glory” (2 Bar. 15:7–8).⁷¹

The divine insistence on the ephemeral nature of this world and the repeated promise of the world to come leads us finally to the third aspect of chosenness in 2 *Baruch*, the eschatological outlook that pervades the book. 2 *Baruch*'s perception of Israel's status vis-à-vis the nations is inextricably bound up with the hope for Godly intervention and the expectation that the divine defeat of Israel's enemies is imminent.⁷² Whereas Ezra dwells at some length on the fact that at present the nations are prospering whereas Israel lies in ruins, Baruch soon comes to realize that God is about to overthrow Israel's opponents. And so the seer abandons his complaint about the nations and turns to his fellow mourners and asks them, “Why are you looking for the decline of those who hate you?” (2 Bar. 52:6; cf. 83:5)—there is no need to hope for the downfall of the enemy since the eschaton will soon make right what is wrong now. This should not be interpreted as yet another proof of the vengeful nature of apocalyptic writings, a class of texts which modern readers love to think of as the enfant terrible of early Jewish literature, if only because apocalypses allegedly incite violence against the nations. Quite to the contrary, Baruch calls on his audience *not* to look for the demise of Israel's foes and to leave the matter to God, who is sure to intervene soon. This hardly means that the wrong that Israel's enemies have done will be forgotten. In the last of 2 *Baruch*'s three messianic pericopes, the Messiah is said to assume the role of an eschatological warrior king: he summons all nations to Jerusalem and annihilates many of them. Then he sits down to pass judgment on those

who remain. It is telling that the nations will be judged not based on their behavior in general but specifically on how they have treated Israel in the historical past (*2 Bar.* 72:2–6).⁷³

Perhaps the most poignant passage in this respect comes in the epistle toward the end of the apocalypse. The seer comforts his addressees, telling them that God will avenge Israel on her enemies “according to all that they have done to us” (*2 Bar.* 82:2) and that the divine judgment is not far off. There follows in *2 Bar.* 82:3–9 a poem on the eschatological fate of the nations. The poem is made up of seven verses, each devoted to a false impression Israel currently has of the nations. Each verse in the poem consists of three lines: first what Israel beholds, then an accusation of the nation’s wrongdoing, and finally a damning prediction of their demise.

³Lo, for now we see the multitude of the prosperity of the nations,
while they act wickedly.
But they resemble a breath.

⁴We behold the multitude of their power,
while they act unjustly.
But they resemble a drop.

⁵We behold the firmness of their strength,
while they resist the Mighty One every hour.
But they shall be accounted like spittle.

⁶We ponder the glory of their greatness,
while they do not keep the commands of the Most High.
But like smoke they will pass away.

⁷We meditate on the fairness of their beauty,
while they are led by the pollutions.
But like grass that withers they will dry up.

⁸We consider the force of their cruelty,
while they do not remember the end.
But like a wave that passes they will be broken.

⁹We remark the pomp of their strength,
 while they deny the beneficence of God, who gave [it] to them.
 But like a cloud that passes they will pass. (2 Bar. 82:3–9)

— The texts we have discussed present only a slim excerpt of a significant library of Jewish books written toward the end of the biblical period and beyond. More books could be added but the main picture would not change: the apocryphal and pseudepigraphic writings testify to a dynamic and intellectually engaging debate—rooted in the Hebrew Bible and among diverse Jewish circles—at a crucially important moment in the history of early Jewish thought. Throughout the debate the chosenness of Israel recurs frequently, and in various mutations, as a topic of concern. We should be wary of any overly facile understanding that can only think of this ancient biblical idea as an expression of Israel’s superiority and a condemnation of the “Gentiles.” The picture is considerably more complex, and the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha contribute immeasurably to our understanding of this complexity.

NOTES

1. Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), esp. 55–169.

2. Jon D. Levenson, “The Universal Horizon of Biblical Particularism,” *Ethnicity and the Bible* (ed. Mark G. Brett; *BibInt* 19; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 143–69.

3. Jon D. Levenson, “Chosenness and Its Enemies,” *Commentary* 126.5 (2008): 25–31.

4. For a masterly discussion of the literature see Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha,” in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism* (ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 143–62; and Michael E. Stone, *Ancient Judaism: New Visions and Views* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011). For a concise overview, see Simon J. Gathercole, “Election,” in *Dictionary of Early Judaism*, 571–73.

5. There is some debate whether the Apocalypse of Weeks was originally an independent composition or whether it was always part of the *Epistle*. Here we note that the notion of chosenness does not seem to appear elsewhere in the *Epistle*, where the author refers to “the righteous” and “the devout,” but not to “the chosen.”

The secondary literature on *1 Enoch* has grown exponentially in recent years. A useful overview is Gabriele Boccaccini, ed., *New Light on a Forgotten Connection* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); on *1 Enoch's* composition, see Michael A. Knibb, "The Book of Enoch or Books of Enoch? The Textual Evidence for 1 Enoch," in *The Early Enoch Literature* (ed. Gabriele Boccaccini and John J. Collins; *JSJSup* 121; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 21–40.

6. The translation is from George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch: A New Translation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004).

7. "The chosen" already appear in *1 En.* 1:1–5:9, the introduction to the *Book of the Watchers*, which may well have inspired the Apocalypse of Weeks. References to "the chosen" in the Dead Sea Scrolls include *Musar le-Mevin* at 4Q418 69 ii 10 ("chosen ones of truth"), and the following self-designations of the Qumran community: "his [God's] chosen ones" (1QpHab 5:4); "his [God's] chosen" (1QpHab 9:12, i.e., the Teacher of Righteousness); "the chosen by the will [of God]" (1QS 8:6); "the chosen ones" (1QS 9:14); and "the congregation of his chosen ones" (4QpPs^a 1–2 ii 5). Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *1 Enoch 91–108* (CEJL; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007), 74–76.

8. George W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36; 81–108* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 442.

9. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 445. Cf. Isa 41:8, 51:1–2; 2 Chr 20:7. See also *Apoc. Ab.* 14:2, where the angel says to Abraham: "Know from this that the Eternal One whom you have loved has chosen you," and *Jub.* 2:20.

10. Stuckenbruck, *1 Enoch 91–108*, 118.

11. The Aramaic text from 4QEn^s 1 iv 12–13 reads as follows: "And with its end] there shall be chosen e[lect one]s as witnesses of righteousness from the eternal plant of righteousness, to whom shall be given sevenf[old] wisdom and knowledge." Stuckenbruck, *1 Enoch 91–108*, 123.

12. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 448; Stuckenbruck, *1 Enoch 91–108*, 124. *1 En.* 100:6 mentions that "the sons of the earth will contemplate these words of the this epistle," thus leaving the door open for outsiders to be brought in, as long as they comply with the Enochic teachings.

13. Gabriele Boccaccini, ed., *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); Michael A. Knibb, "Enoch, Similitudes of (1 Enoch 37–71)," in *Dictionary of Early Judaism*, 585–87.

14. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 162.

15. On the multiple connections between the *Book of the Watchers* and the *Parables*, see James C. VanderKam, "The Book of Parables within the Enoch Tradition," in *Enoch and the Messiah Son*, 81–99.

16. Cf. *1 En.* 45:4, 48:1, 51:5, and 70:3.

17. 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*, (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 169–91, here 189. With regard to David, see *Pss* 78:70, 89:20–22.

18. I follow the translation by Kenneth Atkinson, "Psalms of Solomon," *NETS*: 763–76.

19. George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah* (2nd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 238–47; James R. Davila, *The Provenance of the Pseudoepigrapha: Jewish, Christian, or Other?* (*JSJSup* 105; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 161.

20. "Righteousness" is also the key term in the Apocalypse of Weeks discussed above. See Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 441; Stuckenbruck, *1 Enoch* 91–108, 72. The opposition between "the righteous" and "the sinners" is a commonplace in texts with an eschatological focus. This is true for the Enochic *Book of Parables* and the *Epistle of Enoch*. See Stuckenbruck, *1 Enoch* 91–108: *1 En.* 92:3–5; 97:1–2; 98:4–8; 99:6–9; 100:5, 9; 102:4–103:8; 104:5–9.

21. Michael A. Knibb, "Temple and Cult in the Apocrypha and Pseudoepigrapha: Future Perspectives," in *Essays on the Book of Enoch and Other Early Jewish Texts and Traditions* (SVTP 22; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 388–406, here 389.

22. Shani Berrin, "Peshar Nahum, Psalms of Solomon and Pompey," in *Reworking the Bible: Apocryphal and Related Texts at Qumran* (ed. Esther G. Chazon, Devorah Dimant, and Ruth A. Clements; *STDJ* 58; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 65–84; James C. VanderKam, *From Joshua to Caiaphas: High Priests after the Exile* (Minneapolis: Fortress/Assen: Van Gorcum, 2004), 350.

23. The other two poems with historical allusions are *Pss. Sol.* 1 and 17. Kenneth Atkinson, "Herod the Great, Sosius, and the Siege of Jerusalem (37 B.C.E.) in Psalms of Solomon 17," *NovT* 38 (1996): 313–22, has shown persuasively that *Pss. Sol.* 17 alludes to the siege of Jerusalem by Herod the Great in 37 B.C.E. See also Kenneth Atkinson, *I Cried to the Lord: A Study of the Psalms of Solomon's Historical Background and Social Setting* (*JSJSup* 84; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 211–22; Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 247.

24. Michael E. Stone, "Reactions to Destructions of the Second Temple: Theology, Perception, and Conversion," *JSJ* 12 (1981): 195–204, here 197, has shown how in response to previous destructions and desecrations of the Jerusalem temple (Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C.E. and Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 169 B.C.E.), authors similarly explained the events as a divinely sanctioned punishment.

25. Knibb, "Temple and Cult," 388–92.

26. Note in particular the formulation in *Pss. Sol.* 17:5: "And, because of our sins, sinners rose up against us."

27. On David's chosenness, see 2 Sam 6:21; 1 Kgs 8:16, 11:34; Ps 78:70; 1 Chr 28:4; and Acts 13:34.

28. Atkinson, *I Cried to the Lord*, 139–44; John J. Collins, "A Shoot from the Stump of Jesse," in *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2010), 52–78, here 52–60.

29. Levenson, *Death and Resurrection*, 125–69.

30. Note the close parallel in 4 Ezra 6:58: "But we, your people, whom you have called your firstborn, only-begotten, kin, and dear one, have been given into their hands." See the discussion by Michael E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 189.

31. Cf. *Ps. Sol.* 7:8, 10:4. Like the Apocalypse of Weeks (1 En. 93:5, 8), the *Psalms of Solomon* use the plant metaphor for Israel's chosenness: "Their planting is rooted forever; they shall not be pulled up all the days of heaven; for the portion and the inheritance of God is Israel" (*Ps. Sol.* 14:4–5). On the historical background of Ps 9, see Atkinson, *I Cried to the Lord*, 190–93.

32. That the *Testament* stems from the early first century c.e. is clear from the references to Herod and his sons in *T. Mos.* 6:1–9. However, some have argued, with George W. E. Nickelsburg leading the charge, that chs. 6–7 are a secondary addition to a work which was originally composed in the second century b.c.e. during the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. See his "An Antiochan Date for the Testament of Moses," *Studies on the Testament of Moses* (ed. George W. E. Nickelsburg; SBLSCS 4; Cambridge, Mass.: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973), 33–37; and now in his *Jewish Literature*, 74–77, 247–48. It is not clear, however, that chs. 6–7 really are an interpolation. The case for the unity of the *Testament* has most recently been made by Norbert J. Hofmann, *Die Assumptio Moses: Studien zur Rezeption massgültiger Überlieferung* (*JSJSup* 67; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 329. The translation of the *Testament* is by Johannes Tromp, *The Assumption of Moses: A Critical Edition with Commentary* (*SVTP* 10; Leiden: Brill, 1993).

33. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 75. Both cycles employ the Deuteronomic scheme, albeit to different ends. Hofmann, *Die Assumptio Moses*, 45–80, offers a careful reading of the two blocks and their divergent theological emphases and concludes that the latter is intended to interpret the former: "So wäre es sogar durchaus denkbar, dass der zweite Block als Korrektiv zum deuteronomistischen Geschichtsbild im ersten geformt ist" (78).

34. Cf. 4 Ezra 6:55, 59; 7:11; and 2 Bar. 14:19. John J. Collins, "The Date and Provenance of the Testament of Moses," in Nickelsburg, *Studies on the Testament of Moses*, 15–32, here 27. On the relationship between the *Testament of Moses*, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch, see Hofmann, *Die Assumptio Moses*, 273–88. Rabbinic texts that express the idea that creation was for the sake of Israel are listed by Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 188–89.

35. Joel Kaminsky (oral conversation, May 2011) suggests that the idea is also implicit in Second Isaiah, especially in ch. 40 where the nations are viewed as insignificant, and in ch. 43, where God is trading other nations to redeem Israel.

36. Tromp, *Assumption of Moses*, 141.

37. Cf. Eph 1:4: “Just as he chose us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world (καθὼς ἐξελέξατο ἡμᾶς ἐν αὐτῷ πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου) to be holy and blameless before him in love.” Cf. also 1QS 3:15–16.

38. On Jerusalem as the chosen city in Pseudepigraphic writings, see *4 Bar.* 1:5 (“your chosen city” [τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἐκλεκτὴν]); *T. Lev.* 10:5; *T. Zeb.* 9:8; *3 Macc* 2:9. Note also our discussion above on *Pss. Sol.* 9:9.

39. Curiously, J. Priest, “Testament of Moses,” *OTP* 1:928, translates *T. Mos.* 2:6, “(The two tribes will) offer sacrifices in the chosen place for twenty years,” whereas the underlying Latin simply reads, “Et adferent victimas per annos XX,” with no reference to a “chosen place.”

40. Hofmann, *Die Assumptio Mosis*, 75.

41. The entire scene that combines the prayer for mercy, the attribute of Israel as the people loved by God, and the appeal to the covenant, is highly reminiscent of the pericope discussed above in *Pss. Sol.* 9:8–9.

42. Tromp, *Assumption of Moses*, 232–37.

43. The promise that God will exalt Israel on the back of an eagle (*T. Mos.* 10:8) stands in stark contrast to the self-glorification of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who, according to *Pss. Sol.* 1:5, “exalted themselves to the stars, they said they would never fall.” Cf. *L.A.B.* 23:2.

44. On the consanguinity of *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*, see George W.E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 283–85; Klaus Berger, *Synopse des vierten Buches Esra und der syrischen Baruch–Apokalypse* (Tübingen: A. Francke, 1992), 1–3. The literary histories of *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* and the multiple affinities that exist between them can be explained most plausibly if we assume that oral performance and literary composition contributed to the shaping of the books. See Matthias Henze, “*Fourth Ezra* and *Second Baruch*: Literary Composition and Oral Performance in First Century Apocalyptic Literature,” *JBL* 131 (2012): 181–200. All translations of *4 Ezra* are taken from Stone, *Fourth Ezra*.

45. The reference to Jacob is surprisingly terse and kept to a single verse: “You set apart Jacob for yourself, but Esau you rejected; and Jacob became a great multitude” (*4 Ezra* 3:16; cf. *Mal* 1:2–3).

46. Philo, *De Gigantibus*, 1:64; *Mutatione Nominum*, 1:66, 69, 71, 82. On rabbinic portraits of Abraham’s piety, see Jon D. Levenson, “The Conversion of Abraham to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam,” *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel* (ed. Hindy Najman and Judith H. Newman; *JS-JSup* 83; Leiden: Brill 2004), 3–40. Cf. *Jub.* 2:19 on the election of Israel, “Behold

I shall separate for myself a people from among all the nations. . . . And I will sanctify them for myself.” See also *Jub.* 19:18.

47. “Friend of God” then became Abraham’s “unofficial title” among early interpreters. It is widely attested in the literature of the Second Temple period and beyond. James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible As It Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 258, lists numerous texts.

48. A number of targumic and rabbinic texts describe how God showed Abraham the future course of history; see Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 71. In addition, see *2 Bar.* 57:2 about the time of Abraham: “It was then that the belief in a future judgment was conceived, the hope for a renewed world was then built, and the promise of the life that is coming after this was taking root.” On *2 Bar* 57:1–3, see Matthias Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism in Late First Century Israel: Reading Second Baruch in Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 275–78.

49. Cf. *Jer* 31:3 and *Hos* 11:1.

50. The images are: the forests of the earth/the vine; all the lands/one region; the flowers of the earth/one lily; the depths of the sea/one river; the cities/Zion; the birds/one dove; the flocks/one sheep; the multitude of peoples/one people. Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 126–27.

51. Ezra’s language is harsh and uncompromising: “If thou didst really hate thy people, they should be punished at thy own hands” (*4 Ezra* 5:30; cf. *Mal* 1:2–3).

52. Cf. *T. Mos.* 1:12, “He [God] created the world on behalf of his people.” See also *4 Ezra* 6:59, 7:11; and *2 Bar.* 14:19.

53. The closest parallel, once again, comes from *2 Baruch*: “But they shall be accounted as spittle” (82:5).

54. Cf. *Ps. Sol.* 18:3–4; Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 184.

55. John J. Collins, “The Idea of Election in *4 Ezra*,” *JSQ* 16 (2009): 83–96.

56. *Ibid.*, 94.

57. Bruce W. Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant: A Comparison of 4 Ezra and Romans 1–11* (Sheffield, UK: JSOT Press, 1991), 34.

58. Collins, “The Idea of Election,” 95.

59. Joel S. Kaminsky, “Did Election Imply the Mistreatment of Non-Israelites?” *HTR* 96 (2003): 397–425; and his *Yet I Loved Jacob: Reclaiming the Biblical Concept of Election* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 107–19.

60. This pessimism is expressed repeatedly throughout the book. See, for example, *4 Ezra* 8:3: “Many have been created, but few shall be saved.” Cf. 8:1, 8:55, and 9:15–16. Note also the poignant passage in 9:21–22: “So let the multitude perish that has been born in vain, but let my grape and my plant be saved.”

It is not clear whom the images of the grape and the plant represent, though presumably the angel is here thinking of the few eschatological survivors of Israel (Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 300).

61. Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, "Le personnage de Baruch et l'histoire du livre de Jérémie: Aux origines du livre de Baruch," *BIOSCS* 7 (1974): 19–21; idem, *L'Apocalypse syriaque de Baruch: Introduction, traduction du syriaque et commentaire* (2 vols., SC 144–45; Paris: Cerf, 1969); and more recently J. Edward Wright, "Baruch: His Evolution from Scribe to Apocalyptic Seer," in *Biblical Figures outside the Bible* (ed. Michael E. Stone and Theodore A. Bergren; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1998), 264–89.

62. Similarly, Baruch begins his epistle to the exiles with the words: "I remember, my brothers, the love of Him who created us, who loved us from of old, and never hated us" (2 Bar. 78:3).

63. For a discussion of this important scene, see David Edward Aune, with Eric Stewart, "From the Idealized Past to the Imaginary Future: Eschatological Restoration in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature," *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives* (ed. James M. Scott; *JSJSup* 72; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 147–77, here 153; 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; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 90–113, here 110–11.

64. Liv Ingebord Lied, *The Other Lands of Israel: Imaginations of the Land in 2 Baruch* (*JSJSup* 129; Leiden: Brill, 2008), esp. 185–241.

65. In 2 Bar. 29:2, God protects the inhabitants of Israel, in 40:2 it is the Messiah who protects them, and in 71:1 the Land itself. Robert Henry Charles, "II Baruch: I. The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch," in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (ed. Robert Henry Charles; 2 vols.; 1913; repr., Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 497, has found here three different sources, but this is forced. On the term "Holy Land" (2 Bar. 63:10, 71:1, 84:8), see Daniel J. Harrington, "The 'Holy Land' in Pseudo-Philo, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch," in *Emanuel: Studies in the Hebrew Bible, Septuagint, and the Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Emanuel Tov* (ed. Shalom M. Paul, Robert A. Kraft, Lawrence H. Schiffman, and Weston W. Fields; *VTSup* 94; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 661–72; and Lied, *Other Lands of Israel*, 198–210.

66. The idea that in the end God will have mercy on Israel because of Israel's righteous who have since fallen asleep is also attested in Pseudo-Philo, L.A.B. 35:3: "But he [God] will have mercy, as no one else has mercy, on the people of Israel, though not on account of you but on account of those who have fallen asleep." Cf. Rom 11:28–29. Friedrich Avemarie, "Erwählung und Vergeltung: Zur optionalen Struktur rabbinischer Soteriologie," *NTS* 45 (1999): 108–26.

67. According to *T. Levi* 15:4, the merit of the three patriarchs saved Israel from total annihilation by the Babylonians: “And unless you had received mercy through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, our fathers, not a single one of your descendants would be left on the earth” (cf. *T. Asher* 7:7).

68. Cf. *T. Mos.* 1:12; *4 Ezra* 6:59 and 7:11.

69. Cf. *4 Ezra* 8:44.

70. Cf. *4 Ezra* 8:1 and 9:13.

71. Frederick James Murphy, *The Structure and Meaning of Second Baruch* (SBLDS 78; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 31–67.

72. We should take note of another crucially important piece in *2 Baruch*’s rendering of Israel’s relationship with the nations, the Torah. In his final public address to the people, Baruch reminds his hearers solemnly that God has singled out Israel from among the nations by giving them the Torah. “To you and to your fathers the LORD gave the Torah above all nations” (*2 Bar.* 77:3). Ever since, the Torah has been a source of trust for Israel (see *2 Bar.* 48:22). But there is another side to the coin. Since with the Torah Israel has had full knowledge of the divine intent, Israel can no longer plead ignorance. In harsh language God speaks to Baruch about the impending judgment: “But My judgment exacts its own, and My Torah exacts its right” (*2 Bar.* 48:27).

73. Cf. *4 Ezra* 13:25–52. Michael E. Stone, “The Concept of the Messiah in IV Ezra,” in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough* (ed. Jacob Neusner; SHR 14; Leiden: Brill, 1968), 295–312, here 302; and John J. Collins, “A Shoot from the Stump of Jesse,” 52–78, here 77–78. The Syriac of *2 Bar.* 72:2–6 is difficult; see Bogaert, *L’Apocalypse syriaque*, 2:126–28.