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THE FIRST EPISTLE
OF
BARUCH,
TRANSLATED FROM THE SYRIAC,
WITH AN INTRODUCTION,
BY THE REV. DR. H. JOLOWICZ,
ORDINARY MEMBER OF THE GERMAN ORIENTAL SOCIETY.

READ AT THE MEETING OF THE
SYRO - EGYPTIAN SOCIETY,
DECEMBER 12, 1854.

JOHN LEE, Esq., LL.D., F.R.S, IN THE CHAIR.



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BARUCH

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REVISED EDITION OF THE SYRIAC

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

SINCE the late Anglican Archbishop *Richard Laurence* has been so fortunate as to discover and publish the Aethiopian originals of the books of Henoah, of the Ascension and Vision of the Prophet Isaiah, and of the fourth book of Ezra,¹ the interest in examining the so-called Pseudepigraphs of the Old Testament has been aroused anew, and the writers of ecclesiastical history, and of dogmatical researches, have by these, and similar discoveries, been supplied with the most important means for penetrating more deeply into the knowledge of the primary form of Christianity, as I have proved in my German translation of, and commentary on the Ascension and Vision of the Prophet Isaiah.² It is needless to repeat what I have said in that work, my present purpose being limited to a short account and translation of the so-called "First Epistle of Baruch," as it is reprinted in the Syriac original, as well as the Latin paraphrase in the Parisian Polyglot of the Bible, 1645, Vol. IX. p. 366-375, and in the London Polyglot, edited by *Walton* in the year 1657, Vol. 4.

¹ Book of Henoah, Oxf. 1821, 1833, and 1838. Ascension and Vision, Oxf. 1819
Liber Ezra, 1820.

² Die Himmelfahrt und Vision des Propheten Jesaia aus dem Aethiopischen und Lateinischen übersetzt und commentirt, von Dr. H. Jolowicz. Leipzig, 1854.

In those days of book-making, during the first centuries of the Christian era, Baruch, the secretary, friend, and fellow-sufferer of the Prophet Jeremiah (Jerem. 32, 12.), was the very person to whom various writings would be ascribed.

The ancient Jewish tradition, it is true, represents Baruch as a descendant of Rachab, and as a Priest, nay a Prophet and even a High-Priest, without mentioning any of his writings;¹ but the later rabbies as *Moses Maimonides*, in his celebrated work "Moreh Nebuchim," part II. chap. 32, *Immanuel Abuab* in his "Nomologia" (written in Spanish), pp. 160, 161, and 213, deny that Baruch possessed the prophetic gift, or was the author of the apocryphal book of Baruch.²

When and where he ended his days is a question about which several traditions were handed down to us. According to some, he died in Egypt, whither he had repaired with Jeremiah after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebukadnezar; according to others, in Babylon, where he lived twelve years after the event just mentioned. In opposition to these statements, the so-called apocryphal book of Baruch narrates, that he stayed at Babylon about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, but there is as little reliance to be placed on this account as on the whole book itself. (See *De Wette*, Einleitung ins Alte Testament, p. 440. *Berthold* Einleitung in die Bibel, vol. 4, p. 1738.)

Our pseudepigraph says nothing at all about the place where Baruch lived, and mentions only, towards the end of the second chapter, a former letter of his, addressed to the brethren

¹ Talmud Babylon. Megillah fol. 14. : בריך מבני בניה של רחב היה וכהן היה : ברך בן נריה היה כהן גדול ויצא (Rabba at Ruth 1) Bamidbar rabba fol. 8. מלמד שזכה בריך בן נריה לרוח הקודש. מכנות של רחב, (10.) ibid. ושירה שר מנוחה.

² Nomologia p. 161 : "De lo que auemos dicho se comprehende como Baruch ben Neriah, no alcançó el espíritu de profecía, antes de ser lleuado el pueblo captiao á Babilonia; y por esso no reputan los Hebreos este libro, y la carta que le atribuyen los Griegos y Latinos por Haggiographog, ni tan poco lo tienen; como lo confessa Hieronimo en su prefaciô sobre Irmeyahu, adonde dize estas palabras; Librum autem Baruch, notarii ejus, qui apud Hebraeos nec legitur nec habetur, praeter misimus.

in Babylon, by which, no doubt, the so-called Epistle of Jeremiah, now forming an appendix of the book of Baruch, is to be understood.

While the Apostolical Constitutions (book 5, last chapter) mention the apocryphal book of Baruch, not the slightest record is to be found concerning this Epistle of Baruch, neither among the Christian, nor the Jewish ecclesiastical authorities or dogmatists; and *Petrus Daniel Huetius* is right, when he states in his *Demonstratio Evangelica* (Proposit. IV. edit. Lipsiens. p. 450), that we are indebted for the authorship of the Epistle to a Syrian Christian. It would, however, be nearer the truth to consider the author as a Syrian Jew-Christian, who had made use of the old Jewish traditions concerning the destruction of Jerusalem by the angels of God, and of the disappearance of the holy vessels of the temple, &c.

The conclusion of the Epistle would indicate the author to have been a Roman-Catholic, for mention is made therein of the catholic doctrine of the intercession of the ancestors and the prophets in order to obtain forgiveness of sins, &c.

The time when the author wrote may be stated to have been between the sixth and seventh century. For the *Massorah of the Thora* (law) is mentioned, which, as the most recent researches prove, was first written about the year 600 p. c.¹ Further proof of the Epistle having been written at so late a period, is afforded by its language and style, chiefly by the beginning of the second chapter, where the author, in the style peculiar to the oriental writers of later dates, employs in alliterations and paronoma-

¹ The dispute concerning the origin and antiquity of the Massorah is old, and opinions of a most differing character have been recorded on the subject, both by Jews and Christians. (See my Introduction to the five books of Moses, Coeslin 1847, pp. 22-30.) The most recent researches on this important subject incline to the conclusion, that the view of *Elias Levita* (b. 1472. d. at Venice 1549.), "the Massorah was committed to writing in 506 p. c. at Tiberias" is correct. Should this be admitted, then *Ben Asher*, who lived at a later period, was its last compiler and author. And, in fact, Rabb *Saadja Gaon* (b. 892. d. 941 or 42) states, that he had seen the Massorah of *Ben Asher*. See *Leopold Dukes'* *Konteres ha-Massorah*, Stuttgart, 1844.

sias, which I (though perhaps imperfectly) have tried to render into English.¹

¹ This manner of writing and style, called poetical prose, is not older among the Arabs, than the time of *Mohammed* (b. 569. d. 632. See my Polyglot of Oriental Poetry, pp. 338, 371-75.), and it was at still later period introduced among the Jews. The first known Hebrew Poet who wrote in this manner was Rabbi *Eliezer ha-Kallir*, whose age is not clearly ascertained, and who must have lived before *Saadja Gaon*, Kallir being quoted by him, as the well-known *Leopold Dukes* has proved in his work, *Nachal Kedumim*, vol. I. But that also BEFORE KALLIR a similar metrical mode of writing was known, is clearly seen from the introduction of Rabbi *Saadja ben Maimon ibn Denan*, in his Hebrew Dictionary of Roots, written in Arabic, where it is said: I have found upon minute researche and enquiry, that there is no mention made of Hebrew metrical lines before Rabbi *Eliezer ha-Kallir*, ALTHOUGH SOME WERE IN EXISTENCE.

וכבר בקשתי והפשתי הרבה ומצאתי כי לפני הרוזי הרב הגדול ר' אלעזר הקליר לא ידענו ולא נשמענו לנו הרוזים באימתנו ואעפ"י שהיו.

It is possible, that the *Gaon Zahalle ben Rabby Netanael Gaon* (the period of his life is not yet fully ascertained), was a poet still older than *Kallir*. For there is a poem on record from him, which lies among the manuscripts of Oxford, and of which the critic, *H. Edelmann*, has an accurate copy; he calls himself the First Hebrew Poet.

ואמצא הן בעיניך-יודעי ישרון כי בישראל גברים
אשר יש בם יכולת לעשות מה-אשר לא יוכלו להם ברורים
אשר עברו למיום ציץ ישרון-ולא צמת בכלהם מהורים
להרבות שיר כעבדך-כמו צהלל מלמד בין הבירים:

Mr. *Edelmann* hopes, in his *Chronology of the Geonim*, to prove, that this *Zahalle* really flourished in the 6th century. May he soon have the satisfaction of being able to publish this essay in the interest of science!

FIRST EPISTLE OF BARUCH.

CHAPTER I.

THESE are the words which Baruch, the son of Neriah, sent to the nine and a half tribes living on the other side of the river Euphrates. Baruch, the son of Neriah, thus speaks to his brethren in exile : Grace and peace to you ! Well do I remember, my brethren the love of our Maker with which he has loved us everlastingly, therefore I do not consider the punishment with which he visited us to be a sign of his hatred. I am well aware, that although we are divided into twelve tribes, yet are we united by one tie only, like so many sons of one and the same father ; therefore do I hasten to bequeath to you the words of this letter before death overtakes me, to console you on account of the misfortune which has befallen you, and to inspire you with sympathy for the calamities with which your brethren were visited like yourselves ; and to make you believe that the judgment of God, which has driven you into exile, has been a just one. For truly your sufferings are less grievous than your crimes, and you bear your pains for your own good ; that you may stand one day freed from your sins in the sight of your ancestors, in order to escape annihilation at the time of the end. Eternal hope will be your portion, if you repent, so as to banish from your hearts the superstitious belief, on account of which you were driven from your country ; then will He remember you, who at all times has promised to the chosen ones of his people, that he never will forsake, nor desert us ; but that he will gather again in infinite mercy our scattered people.

And now, my brethren, I first will give you an account of



what befell Zion, when Nebukadnezar, the King of Babylon, went out against us; for we have sinned against God, and did not observe the commands which he gave us; wherefore has the same calamity befallen us, as yourselves, and our grief is more painful than yours. I will narrate to you, that when the enemy surrounded the city, God sent forth his angels, who broke down the fortifications of the walls, who crushed the pillars resembling iron-works; while, at the same time, many of the sacred vessels disappeared, in order not to let them fall into the hands of the enemy, and thus they left to the enemy the walls bursten, the House of God emptied, the sanctuary in flames, and the community diminished; that the enemy might not boast, saying: By the strength of my own hands have I made desolate the temple of God, on the day of battle. Your brethren were led to Babylon as captives and settled there; and we have remained here, very few indeed in number. This is the painful matter which I had to report to you in this letter.

Well do I know, that your consolation was greater, when Zion still stood in her lovely peace, than the sorrow which you feel for being far from Zion; but listen now to my speech, and you will be comforted. When I, plunged in sadness about Zion, prayed before God, and said: How long shall all these things weigh upon us; and shall the misfortune, which Thou hast decreed against us in Thy mercy and in Thy love, always cleave unto us? Then God revealed unto me a word of consolation, and made me see a vision, in order to put a stop to my wailings, and showed me the times still hidden, and the things which are approaching; all these things I will not withhold from you, that you may be comforted in all your manifold distresses. Know, that our Maker will take revenge upon all our enemies, according to all the evil they have done unto us; near is the day of the Lord, his mercy is coming, and not far is the end of his judgment. The other nations, it is true, compared with you, are still very great, in spite of their manifold transgressions; but they will vanish into nothing! Well may their government appear



great to you, although they commit every crime; however, like the dripping from the bucket, so will they melt away. If even their might should appear to you firmly established, in spite of their continual perversion towards God, they will be esteemed vain and nothing. Let the majesty of their glory shine far and wide; since they show themselves rebellious to the words and the laws of God, they will vanish like smoke. Let them pass their days in pleasure; although they indulge in licentiousness, they will wither like hay. Let their forehead be like metal, so that they do not think of death; yet they will be broken like the waves of the ocean. Although the dignity of their power may rise higher and higher; in spite of their denying the supreme goodness of their Maker, they will vanish away like the fleeting clouds. For God will very soon order the time to come, when he will sit in judgment upon the inhabitants of the world, and visit in truth all his creatures, according to their most secret doings; he will search the heart and the loins, and will bring forth all the secrets of men to the clearest daylight.

Therefore ye must not be discouraged by all the miseries which have befallen you; hope rather, that God will fulfill his promise. Envy not the peacefulness of nations, but remember what is reserved for you unto the days' end. The gloomy days, with what is therein, will soon pass away. The Governor of the world will appear in his omnipotence at the time of judgment, and will bring unto judgment all his creatures. Therefore, turn your hearts towards Him, in whom you believed in former days, that you suffer not in both worlds, here by exile, and there by pain of the soul!

CHAPTER II.

THERE is nothing perfect in all, that is, was, or ever will be, neither the good, nor the bad ; for in a moment there will be changed bravery into slavery, ambition into contrition, shining into declining, splendid attire into mire, lust into dust, haughtiness into lowliness, pleasure into pressure, desire into fear, the vain into pain, elevation into degradation. Now if all this will be fulfilled, who will then not be convinced, that the day of retaliation has come? In short, everything will be fulfilled according to truth, and I draw your attention to it, that you may well consider it. I was ordered by God to instruct you, and to show you before my death, some outlines of his commandments. Remember, that Moses has invoked heaven and earth as witnesses, saying : If you forsake the word of God, you will be forsaken, but if you observe it, you will be preserved ; and something more of the kind has he spoken to you, while you were still staying in the desert, the full number of twelve tribes. But since you have backslidden after his death, that what God has foretold you has befallen you. For Moses warned you of misfortune, that you might escape it ; but, because you did not follow his words, it has overtaken you. However, if in the days of misfortune, you will willingly observe what he has revealed unto you, the mercy of God will be yours, which is reserved for you. But this letter shall be a testimonial between me and you, in order to justify myself before Him who has sent me.

Be mindful of the *Thora* (Law), and of Zion, and of the Holy Land, and of your brethren, and of the covenant of your forefathers ; and do not forget the festivals, nor the Sabbath-days. Bequeath this letter, and the Massorah of the *Thora* (Law), to your descendants, in the same way in which you have received them,



and pray always to God in the fullest fervour of your heart, that you may gain his favour, that he turn his eyes from your sins, and remember the piety of your forefathers. For unless He judge us according to the greatness of His mercy, woe to us all, that we have been born! In former times, and among the generations before us, the pious and the true prophets were the protectors of our ancestors, and they even have been protection and shelter to us, when we still lived in our country and sinned. For by virtue of their perfect doings they prayed for us to God, and they obtained from Him what they prayed for, and God had mercy upon us. But now the pious are departed, and the prophets are dead; we were obliged to leave the country, Zion has been taken from us, and nothing has been left to us but God and his doctrine, as is manifest. When our hearts again turn to Him, He will restore our losses, double, and more; for that what we have lost was perishable, but what we gain in exchange will be imperishable. Thus I also have written to our brethren in Babylon, and have solemnly declared it to them.

And so may all that always be present to your mind, what has from the beginning been announced unto you, as you are living creatures, and able to govern your spirits; on account of this, God will prove forbearing to us; He will reveal unto us the future, and not conceal from us his doings at the end of days. Therefore, before God begins to execute the judgment of truth he loves, lift up your hearts to Him, that you may receive and not become prisoners, that you may live in hope and not perish, that you may become equal to your ancestors, and not be punished like your enemies. For the youth of the world is perishable, its productive powers are changeable, time disappears in a moment, the bucket is near the well, the vessel near the shore, the wanderer's steps are near home, and life not far from death. Therefore, hold yourselves ready, that you may rest after you have left the ship, for it is only then that you will be able to enjoy leisure, but not while you are still in it.

When God shall have fulfilled all this, there will be no place

for the repentance of sins, no limits of time, no measure for the several periods of time, no conversion in life, no occasion for praying, no solicitation for advice, no desire to get information, and no forgiving of sins, no place of confession, nor any prayer for sins, no intercession of ancestors, no mediation of the prophets, nor any help of the pious. There, on the contrary, the final judgment is the road to the fire, and the way to the lower depth; therefore for one, as for the other, one doctrine only, one world (and all what is within) When you receive this letter, read it before the ears of all your communities, meditate upon it on your fast-days, remember me by means of this letter, as I remembered you in it and you will always do well.



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