

CONFESSION & REPENTANCE

BARUCH 1:15 – 3:8

Deserved punishment

¹⁵And you shall say: The Lord our God is in the right, but there is open shame on us today, on the people of Judah, on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, ¹⁶and on our kings, our rulers, our priests, our prophets, and our ancestors, ¹⁷because we have sinned before the Lord.

¹⁸We have disobeyed him, and have not heeded the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in the statutes of the Lord that he set before us.

¹⁹From the time when the Lord brought our ancestors out of the land of Egypt until today, we have been disobedient to the Lord our God, and we have been negligent, in not heeding his voice.

²⁰So to this day there have clung to us the calamities and the curse that the Lord declared through his servant Moses at the time when he brought our ancestors out of the land of Egypt to give to us a land flowing with milk and honey.

²¹We did not listen to the voice of the Lord our God in all the words of the prophets whom he sent to us, ²²but all of us followed the intent of our own wicked hearts by serving other gods and doing what is evil in the sight of the Lord our God.

Daniel 9:7 is almost identical with verse 15. Both may be based on Ezra:

From the days of our ancestors to this day we have been deep in guilt, and for our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been handed over to the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plundering, and to utter shame, as is now the case.

– Ezra 9:7

However, whereas Daniel 9:4-19 is a prayer addressed to God, Baruch is speaking about God in the third person.

There are good reasons for concluding that Daniel 9:4-19 has been inserted into the Daniel scroll. It appears to be a prayer from the synagogue. Both this section of Daniel, and the prayer here in Baruch may belong to the fourth century BC (prior to Ezra).

The list in verse 16 echoes Jeremiah 32:32.

The closest parallel to verse 18 is in Daniel 9:9-10.

Verse 19 stresses the persistent, obstinate resistance of the people to God's commands.

For the curses see Deuteronomy 28:15-68 and Leviticus 26:14-39.

Verse 21 is identical with Daniel 9:10

'Judges' here refers to the leaders raised up by God in the period prior to the monarchy (see the Book of Judges).

Verse 2 refers back to verses 18-20.

On verse 3 see Jeremiah 19:9; Leviticus 26:29; Lamentations 2:20; 4:10.

The biblical basis for verse 4 is probably Jeremiah 42:18.

In verses 6-10, the exiled community admits its guilt.

Verse 6 repeats 1:15.

Verses 7-9 see Daniel 9:13-14.

Verse 10 see Daniel 9:10

¹So the Lord carried out the threat he spoke against us: against our judges who ruled Israel, and against our kings and our rulers and the people of Israel and Judah.

²Under the whole heaven there has not been done the like of what he has done in Jerusalem, in accordance with the threats that were written in the law of Moses.

³Some of us ate the flesh of their sons and others the flesh of their daughters.

⁴He made them subject to all the kingdoms around us, to be an object of scorn and a desolation among all the surrounding peoples, where the Lord has scattered them. ⁵They were brought down and not raised up, because our nation sinned against the Lord our God, in not heeding his voice.

⁶The Lord our God is in the right, but there is open shame on us and our ancestors this very day. ⁷All those calamities with which the Lord threatened us have come upon us.

⁸Yet we have not entreated the favour of the Lord by turning away, each of us, from the thoughts of our wicked hearts. ⁹And the Lord has kept the calamities ready, and the Lord has brought them upon us, for the Lord is just in all the works that he has commanded us to do. ¹⁰Yet we have not obeyed his voice, to walk in the statutes of the Lord that he set before us.

Prayer of repentance

¹¹And now, O Lord God of Israel, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and with signs and wonders and with great power and outstretched arm, and made yourself a name that continues to this day, ¹²we have sinned, we have been ungodly, we have done wrong, O Lord our God, against all your ordinances.

¹³Let your anger turn away from us, for we are left, few in number, among the nations where you have scattered us.

¹⁴Hear, O Lord, our prayer and our supplication, and for your own sake deliver us, and grant us favor in the sight of those who have carried us into exile; ¹⁵so that all the earth may know that you are the Lord our God, for Israel and his descendants are called by your name.

¹⁶O Lord, look down from your holy dwelling, and consider us. Incline your ear, O Lord, and hear; ¹⁷open your eyes, O Lord, and see, for the dead who are in Hades, whose spirit has been taken from their bodies, will not ascribe glory or justice to the Lord; ¹⁸but the person who is deeply grieved, who walks bowed and feeble, with failing eyes and famished soul, will declare your glory and righteousness, O Lord.

The prayer of repentance (2:11-35) begins here. For verses 11-12 see Daniel 9:15 (see Jeremiah 32:20-21).

Verse 13 see Daniel 9:16.

Verse 14 and its equivalent, Daniel 9:17, both appear to draw on 2Chronicles 6:19.

Verse 15 see Daniel 9:18.

For verse 16 see 2Kings 19:16.

Verse 17 see Daniel 9:18 and 2Kings 19:16. It expresses the traditional (pre-Daniel) Jewish understanding of death.

¹⁹For it is not because of any righteous deeds of our ancestors or our kings that we bring before you our prayer for mercy, O Lord our God.

²⁰For you have sent your anger and your wrath upon us, as you declared by your servants the prophets, saying: ²¹Thus says the Lord: Bend your shoulders and serve the king of Babylon, and you will remain in the land that I gave to your ancestors.

²²But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord and will not serve the king of Babylon, ²³I will make to cease from the towns of Judah and from the region around Jerusalem the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, and the whole land will be a desolation without inhabitants.

²⁴But we did not obey your voice, to serve the king of Babylon; and you have carried out your threats, which you spoke by your servants the prophets, that the bones of our kings and the bones of our ancestors would be brought out of their resting place; ²⁵and indeed they have been thrown out to the heat of day and the frost of night. They perished in great misery, by famine and sword and pestilence.

²⁶And the house that is called by your name you have made as it is today, because of the wickedness of the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

For the idea and imagery of verse 21 see Jeremiah 27:11-12.

Verse 26 see Jeremiah 11:17.

‘A new heart’

²⁷Yet you have dealt with us, O Lord our God, in all your kindness and in all your great compassion, ²⁸as you spoke by your servant Moses on the day when you commanded him to write your law in the presence of the people of Israel, saying, ²⁹“If you will not obey my voice, this very great multitude will surely turn into a small number among the nations, where I will scatter them.

³⁰For I know that they will not obey me, for they are a stiff-necked people. But in the land of their exile they will come to themselves ³¹and know that I am the Lord their God. I will give them a heart that obeys and ears that hear; ³²they will praise me in the land of their exile, and will remember my name ³³and turn from their stubbornness and their wicked deeds; for they will remember the ways of their ancestors, who sinned before the Lord.

³⁴I will bring them again into the land that I swore to give to their ancestors, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and they will rule over it; and I will increase them, and they will not be diminished.

³⁵I will make an everlasting covenant with them to be their God and they shall be my people; and I will never again remove my people Israel from the land that I have given them.”

Verse 27, Daniel 9:18 also speaks of God’s ‘great compassion’ (oiktirmos).

‘Come to themselves’ in verse 30 is literally “return to their heart”.

The promise of verse 31 recalls Jeremiah 32:39; Ezekiel 18:31 and Jeremiah 24:7.

‘Almighty’ (pantokrator) translates the Hebrew ‘of hosts’ (see 2 Samuel 5:10; 7:8, 26).

Baruch 3:1-18, unlike the rest of Baruch, is an appeal based on a resolve not to continue the iniquity of their ancestors.

¹O Lord Almighty, God of Israel, the soul in anguish and the wearied spirit cry out to you.

²Hear, O Lord, and have mercy, for we have sinned before you.

³For you are enthroned forever, and we are perishing forever.

⁴O Lord Almighty, God of Israel, hear now the prayer of the people of Israel, the children of those who sinned before you, who did not heed the voice of the Lord their God, so that calamities have clung to us.

⁵Do not remember the iniquities of our ancestors, but in this crisis remember your power and your name.

⁶For you are the Lord our God, and it is you, O Lord, whom we will praise.

⁷For you have put the fear of you in our hearts so that we would call upon your name; and we will praise you in our exile, for we have put away from our hearts all the iniquity of our ancestors who sinned against you.

⁸See, we are today in our exile where you have scattered us, to be reproached and cursed and punished for all the iniquities of our ancestors, who forsook the Lord our God.

