

ADMONITION & EXHORTATION

BARUCH 3:9 –4:4

Learn wisdom

**⁹Hear the commandments of life, O Israel;
give ear, and learn wisdom!**

**¹⁰Why is it, O Israel, why is it
that you are in the land of your enemies,
that you are growing old in a foreign
country,
that you are defiled with the dead,
¹¹that you are counted among those
in Hades?**

**¹²You have forsaken the fountain of
wisdom.**

**¹³If you had walked in the way of God,
you would be living in peace forever.**

**¹⁴Learn where there is prudence,
where there is strength,
where there is understanding,
so that you may at the same time discern
where there is length of days, and life,
where there is light for the eyes,
and peace.**

**¹⁵Who has found her place?
And who has entered her storehouses?**

**¹⁶Where are the rulers of the nations,
and those who lorded it over the animals
on earth;**

**¹⁷those who made sport of the birds
of the air,
and who hoarded up silver and gold
in which people trust,
and there is no end to their getting;**

**¹⁸those who schemed to get silver,
and were anxious,
but there is no trace of their works?**

**¹⁹They have vanished and gone down
to Hades,
and others have arisen in their place.**

This is a poem, part of the wisdom tradition. Compare Proverbs 4:20-23. It is addressed to those who have been outside Judah for a long time (verse 11).

Verse 12 echoes Jeremiah 2:13

My people have forsaken me,
the fountain of living water,
and dug out cisterns for them-
selves, cracked cisterns that
can hold no water.

The use of 'God' (theos) in verse 13 is typical of wisdom literature, which has international links. Verse 14, see Proverbs 3:13-18. 'Prudence' (phronesis) and 'understanding' (sunesis) are used interchangeably with 'wisdom' (sophia).

Verse 15 echoes Job 28:12, 20.

Pride and wealth eventually come to nothing.

**²⁰Later generations have seen the
light of day,
and have lived upon the earth;
but they have not learned the way
to knowledge,
nor understood her paths,
nor laid hold of her.**

**²¹Their descendants have strayed far
from her way.**

**²²She has not been heard of in Canaan,
or seen in Teman;**

**²³the descendants of Hagar, who seek
for understanding on the earth,
the merchants of Medan and Tema,
the story-tellers and the seekers for
understanding,
have not learned the way to wisdom,
or given thought to her paths.**

**²⁴O Israel, how great is the house
of God,
how vast the territory that he
possesses!**

**²⁵It is great and has no bounds;
it is high and immeasurable.**

**²⁶The giants were born there, who were
famous of old,
great in stature, expert in war.**

**²⁷God did not choose them,
or give them the way to knowledge;**

**²⁸so they perished because they had no
wisdom,
they perished through their folly.**

‘Teman’(verse 21) was an Edomite city famed for wisdom (see Jeremiah 49:7).

‘Medan’(verse 23; perhaps ‘Midian’) was a son of Abraham (see Genesis 25:2). Medan is in Arabia. As is ‘Tema’(see Genesis 25:15).

‘House of God’(verse 24) refers to the whole universe.

The ‘giants’(verse 26) refers to the semi-divine beings who existed before the flood (see Genesis 6:4). The idea was born of the gigantic structures from prehistoric times in Palestine.

Wisdom given to Israel

²⁹**Who has gone up into heaven, and
taken her,
and brought her down from the
clouds?**

³⁰**Who has gone over the sea,
and found her,
and will buy her for pure gold?**

³¹**No one knows the way to her,
or is concerned about the path
to her.**

³²**But the one who knows all things
knows her,
he found her by his understanding.
The one who prepared the earth
for all time**

**filled it with four-footed creatures;
³³the one who sends forth the lightning,
and it goes;
he called it, and it obeyed him,
trembling;**

³⁴**the stars shone in their watches,
and were glad;
he called them, and they said,
"Here we are!"
They shone with gladness for him
who made them.**

³⁵**This is our God;
no other can be compared to him.**

³⁶**He found the whole way to
knowledge,
and gave her to his servant Jacob
and to Israel, whom he loved.**

³⁷**Afterward she appeared on earth
and lived with humankind.**

In Sirach, Wisdom says of herself:

I dwelt in the highest heavens, and
my throne was in a pillar of cloud.

– Sirach 24:4

Verse 30, see Job 28:12-19.

Verse 33, see Job 38:35.

Verse 35, compare Isaiah 43:10-11;
44:6; 45:18.

Verse 36, compare Job 28:23.

Verse 37, compare Sirach 24:10-12,
which speaks of Wisdom making her
home in Jerusalem.

God gave Wisdom to mankind by giving Israel the Torah.

Verse 3 echoes Deuteronomy 4:8

What other great nation has statutes
and ordinances as just as this entire
law that I am setting before you
today?

Verse 3 appears to encourage resistance to Greek 'wisdom'.

**¹She is the book of the commandments of God,
the law that endures forever.
All who hold her fast will live,
and those who forsake her will die.**

**²Turn, O Jacob, and take her;
walk toward the shining of her
light.**

**³Do not give your glory to another,
or your advantages to an alien
people.**

**⁴Happy are we, O Israel,
for we know what is pleasing
to God.**

