



BARUCH

BARUCH (Barūk, Bārūkin Ar. sources), the son of Neriah, was the scribe and disciple of the prophet Jeremiah, who lived at the time of the Babylonian occupation of Judea and the first Jewish exile to Babylonia (586 B.C.). Despite the relatively modest position which this Baruch might be supposed to have had according to the biblical account, he became a major figure of popular legends, and several extracanonical biblical books were composed, of which he was the supposed author. Since he accompanied Jeremiah in his exile to Babylonia, a medieval Jewish tradition (attested from the tenth century a.d.) placed his tomb on the Euphrates, not far from the tomb of the prophet Ezekiel; these tombs served as centers for Jewish pilgrimage from Iraq and Iran in the Middle Ages, and there were reports of various miracles produced at Baruch's tomb.

Baruch is of interest to Iranian studies chiefly because he was identified with Zoroaster by the Syriac authors Išo'dād of Marv (3rd/9th cent.) and Solomon of Baṣra (7th/13th cent.), an identification perpetuated by some of the Arab historians (see the material collected by Richard Gottheil, "References to Zoroaster in Syriac and Arabic literature," in *Classical Studies in Honour of Henry Drisler*, New York, 1894, pp. 24-32, as well as Joseph Bidez and Franz Cumont, *Les Mages hellénisés. Zoroastre, Ostanès et Hystaspe d'après la tradition grecque*, Paris, 1938, repr. Paris, 1973, I, pp. 49ff., and the texts referred to and published in the second volume).

The identification of Zoroaster with the disciple of Jeremiah is puzzling, and the explanations put forward for it have not been quite convincing. It has been



pointed out, for example, that an action attributed to Jeremiah was to hide the fire of the Jerusalem Temple, so that it should not be soiled by the Babylonians, and in this he could have something in common with the prophet of ancient Iran and his concern with fire. The analogy seems both remote and unsatisfactory, because this would make Zoroaster the equivalent of Jeremiah, not of Baruch. The latter, however, had become in Jewish apocryphal literature a figure of such great mystical wisdom, being credited as the author of a number of visionary revelations involving mystical flights to heaven, that the equation with Zoroaster, the great seer of Iran, might not have seemed too far-fetched.

The important thing about this identification is that in certain Christian circles in Iran, perhaps also among Jews, and possibly also among Muslims, efforts were made to create a common denominator between the two sets of traditions, the Judeo-Christian on the one hand, and the Iranian on the other. Similar attempts at harmonizing and equating figures from the two traditions are found, for example, with regard to Yima (Jamšēd), whose legend partly coincides with that of the prophet Isaiah; Gayōmard, who is expressly identified with a variety of biblical figures; and other persons of Iranian mythology and history.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

See also A. Ben Yaakov, *Qevarim qedošim be-Bavel*, Jerusalem, 1973, pp. 38ff.

J. Neusner, "Barukh ben Neriah and Zoroaster," *Journal of Bible and Religion* 32, 1964, pp. 359-60.

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