

*The Other Lands of Israel: Imaginations of the Land in 2 Baruch*. By Liv Ingeborg Lied. (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 129). Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008. Pp. xviii, 375. Cloth with dust jacket. €119.00/US\$ 189.00. ISBN: 978-90-04-16556-4.

This elegant book, based on the author's 2006 doctoral dissertation at the University of Bergen, Norway, makes an important contribution to two areas in the field of Pseudepigrapha studies. The book deals, first of all, with *2 Baruch*, a *pseudepigraphon* that has received relatively little attention since its re/discovery by Antonio Ceriani in the Ambrosian library a century and a half ago. Lied, a master exegete of this intriguing text, is at her best when she deals with concrete passages. Her study is a treasure trove filled with exegetical gems and detailed observations that both charm and convince. It is in its numerous exegetical details that the book shines.

The second area to which Lied contributes is early Jewish eschatology. Whereas most scholars strive to understand the conceptualization of time in eschatological thought, Lied re/directs our attention to the conceptualization of space, and, more specifically, to the notion of the Land. The aim of her study, Lied explains in the opening sentence, is to "explore the conception of Israel's Land as a redemptive category" (1). In other words, she examines the role of the Land-theme as a central, abiding category in *2 Baruch's* eschatology.

To bring new insights to an old problem, Lied employs the help of the French philosopher Lefebvre and the American geographer Soja. Particularly appealing to her is their notion that "humans create and shape space by their practices" (14). Accordingly, Lied calls for a fundamental shift in spatial epistemology and argues for what she calls a praxis epistemology: space is defined by acts and presence and not by territory. The meaning of spatial references in *2 Baruch*, to Judah, for example, to the Land, Jerusalem, or to Mount Zion, is not exhausted in their reflection of real geographical places. Instead, according to Lied's praxis epistemology, "texts create and recreate imagined spaces" (313). Specifically, and this is the core argument of the book, the different versions of the Land in *2 Baruch* are constructs that are created by Israel's righteous praxis. "The Land was always constituted by the localised, law-abiding, and cult-observing praxis of the righteous" (308).

Lied finds that *2 Baruch's* imagined lands changed throughout history, since it is the people and their righteous living that create the space they live in. To reconstruct these changes, Lied identifies three historical periods and organizes her chapters accordingly. The first period (chapters two and three of the book) is the First Temple period, characterized by a steady decline of righteousness; the second period (chapters four and five) is the end time, from the fall of the temple to the beginning of the messianic age, a period of reversals and perversion; and the third period (chapters six and seven) is the time of redemption, from the

messianic era to the final actualization of the world to come. Contrary to earlier studies that hold that the land becomes obsolete in the end time, Lied argues that *2 Baruch* never rejects Israel's land as a redemptive category in the eschaton but transforms it. The exegetical observations that fill these chapters are devoted to the task of explaining exactly how the land theme is transformed through history.

Lied's insistence to recognize space as an abiding category in *2 Baruch's* eschatology—and in Jewish eschatology in general, we might add—is entirely convincing and can serve as an important corrective to attempts to define eschatology exclusively in chronological terms. What is more, few will contest that space, like time, is part of the author's religious imagination, that it is constantly negotiated and imagined, and that references in *2 Baruch* to various places are significant beyond their real, geographical meaning. But in some places Lied's praxis epistemology goes too far. Note, for example, her following statement, "The status 'Land' is not inherent to a territory, but dependent on the transformative ability of righteous praxis" (17). When Baruch returns to the ruins of the Jerusalem temple and laments, "Because in that place where I am now prostrate, of old the high priest offered holy sacrifices and placed thereon an incense of fragrant odors" (*2 Baruch* 35:4), is not the point precisely that Baruch prays to God on the ruins of the temple, in which case geographical continuity is all that matters, and regardless of the people's righteousness?

Lied's praxis epistemology is an appealing concept, and it is well explained. The close connection between righteous behavior and the creation of space as a redemptive category remains less clear, however. It is a central theological claim of *2 Baruch* that the promises to the patriarchs are not called into question. Were not Abraham and his offspring promised the Land irrespective of their behavior? Also, it is not always clear whether Lied claims that it is the people of Israel that created the space they live in or the text that tells their stories. She claims both interchangeably, though they are clearly different claims.

One last observation. The division of history (and of the book) into three main periods is undoubtedly motivated, at least in part, by Lied's desire to bring together time and space in her reconstruction of *2 Baruch's* eschatology. But these three periods are Lied's periods, not *2 Baruch's*. As a result, she has to jump considerably in the text, with divergent text passages from different parts of *2 Baruch* frequently juxtaposed. The reader familiar with *2 Baruch* will not always find it easy to find one's way in the book.

In the end, however, it is Lied's detailed reading of many passages in *2 Baruch*, the many cross-references to cognate literature, and Lied's mastery of the material that convince and make this book important.

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