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## THE LIST OF LEADERS IN 5 EZRA 1:39–40

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5 Ezra 1:38–40 provides a dramatic climax to the book's first chapter, in which Ezra, assuming a prophetic role, has announced God's intention to replace God's stubborn and recalcitrant former people with "another nation," which "will certainly keep [God's] statutes" (1:24). In 1:38, Ezra, addressed by God as "father," is instructed to "look with glory and see the people coming from the east." Verses 39–40, translated here from the more original "Spanish" recension,<sup>1</sup> enumerate the leaders of the coming people:

I [God] will lead (*dabo ducatum*) them, (I) together with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Elijah and Enoch, Zachariah and Hosea, Amos, Joel, Micah, Obadiah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Jonah, Malachi [or: Mattathias], Habakkuk, and twelve angels with flowers (*angelos duodecim cum floribus*).

The idea of a glorified group of individuals "coming from the east" to Israel or Jerusalem, besides being present here in 5 Ezra (and in its immediate literary models, Bar 4:36–37 and 5:5), is something of a leitmotif in biblical and early Jewish literature. In an article entitled "The 'People Coming from the East' in 5 Ezra 1:38,"<sup>2</sup> the present author noted that the evidence for this motif

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<sup>1</sup> For the "Spanish" recension of 5 Ezra as more original in this and most other passages, see Theodore A. Bergren, *Fifth Ezra: The Text, Origin and Early History* (SBLSCS 25; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), ch. 4. The secondary "French" recension, which by virtue of tradition is still printed in the NRSV and most other modern translations, clearly betrays its derivative character in 1:39–40: the missing minor prophet Haggai is restored, the twelve minor prophets are rearranged in their traditional Septuagintal order, and the strange "twelve angels with flowers" at the end of the list are removed. See further below.

<sup>2</sup> Theodore A. Bergren, "The 'People Coming from the East' in 5 Ezra 1:38," *JBL* 108 (1989): 675–83.

comprises mainly descriptions of various groups of Jews returning from an "exile" of some kind in an eastern land. These exiled groups range from the ten northern tribes of Israel, exiled by the Assyrians, through the Judeans exiled to Babylonia in the sixth century B.C.E. (the point of reference of the passages in Baruch), to what seem to have been exiled groups in the past history of the Dead Sea Scrolls community. The main point of the article is that the author of 5 Ezra, an early Christian ideologue, has appropriated this widespread Jewish leitmotif and applied it to the Christians as another idealized, glorified "coming" people, this time coming to Israel to displace the allegedly dispossessed Jews. The facts that these Christians had never actually been in exile and that few, if any, actually came "from the east" are insignificant compared to the substantial mythopoetic power of the leitmotif, or myth, of glorified, returning exiles that was so widespread in Jewish tradition. By "borrowing" this motif and incorporating it in this verse, the author of 5 Ezra enables his audience to share in the power of that myth.

If 5 Ezra 1:38 clearly evokes a context of return from exile of a group of ideal persons, the origin and function of the list of their leaders in 1:39–40 are less obvious. From where did the author of 5 Ezra get this list, and why does it contain the individuals it does? Furthermore, what function were these individuals expected to serve in the context of a return from exile? Although the group of leaders listed is no doubt distinguished, it is rather large and heterogeneous, and one wonders why such a gaggle of worthies would be required as guides in the first place. After all, God is expected to provide primary leadership for the returnees;<sup>3</sup> and most of the descriptions of return from exile surveyed in the article mentioned above pay little attention to who, beyond the assumption of divine guidance, will help the returnees get where they are going. Thus, the source and function of the lengthy list of leaders in 5 Ezra 1:39–40 remain something of a mystery. This article attempts to explicate these issues.

### I. The Individual Elements of the List in 5 Ezra 1:39–40

It is widely assumed in the Jewish accounts of exiles returning from the east discussed above that God will lead them. Baruch 5:9 states as much: "For God will lead Israel with joy" (see also Bar 5:6: "God will bring them back to you"). The Christian poet Commodian, who draws on Jewish sources to describe the return of the ten northern tribes to Israel, states that they are accompanied directly by God (or the "angel" of God) on their journey.<sup>4</sup> Accord-

<sup>3</sup> See Bar 5:6, 9; and the discussion below.

<sup>4</sup> *Instr.* 1.42.31–32; *Carm. ap.* 961–62. *Carm. ap.* 969, which states that "the angel of the

ing to 4 *Ezra* 13:47, God stops the channels of the Euphrates so that the ten tribes can pass over dryshod on their return. Isaiah 40:1–11, the first section of Second Isaiah, which inspired the accounts in Bar 4–5 and the parallel text *Psalms of Solomon* 11, is also germane here (esp. Isa 40:3). Other relevant biblical pericopes are Exod 6:6; Isa 65:9; and Ezek 20:38. Accounts of God's "angel" leading the people and of God drying up rivers to facilitate their return remind us that many of these later descriptions of return from exile drew inspiration in part from the story of the exodus journey.

The three leading biblical patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—are of course seminal figures in any account of Jewish history. Elijah and Enoch are renowned as the two biblical figures who ascended into heaven or were "taken" by God, supposedly without dying (2 Kgs 2:11; Gen 5:24). These two are linked or mentioned together in a plethora of early Jewish and Christian sources,<sup>5</sup> and their paired appearance here is not surprising, especially since in certain Christian circles they were viewed as being the "two witnesses" of Rev 11.<sup>6</sup> There are also various early Jewish and Christian sources that, like 5 *Ezra* 1:39–40, link the three patriarchs with Elijah and Enoch<sup>7</sup> or, alternatively, with "the prophets" or "all the prophets."<sup>8</sup>

The list of what seem to be eleven of the twelve minor prophets presents several difficulties. First, why is Haggai omitted? Second, the generally more reliable "Spanish" text of 5 *Ezra* also leaves out Malachi but adds in the penultimate position "Mattathias" (not surprisingly, this name is emended to "Malachi" by most editors). Finally—and this is not a "difficulty" strictly speaking—the list is presented in a seemingly random order.

Regarding the omission of Haggai, F. Strickert argues that the absence of Haggai here and of Ezekiel in the list in 5 *Ezra* 2:18 (this list—which contains

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(Most) High" will provide leadership for the tribes, is especially interesting in view of the reference to "twelve angels with flowers" in 5 *Ezra* 1:40.

<sup>5</sup> See *Apoc. Zeph.* 9:4; *Gk. Apoc. Ezra* 5:22; *Apoc. Elijah* 4:7–19; 5:32; *Apoc. Paul* 20, 51; and *Apos. Constit.* 5.7.8; 8.41.4. W. Bousset assembled a large number of Christian texts dealing with the return of Elijah and Enoch (*The Antichrist Legend* [London: Hutchinson, 1896], 27, 203–11), e.g., Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 5.5.1; Hippolytus 43.21.8; Ps.-Methodius, 7, 99; Ephrem Syrus, chs. 11–12; *Ethiopic Apocalypse of Peter*; Ps.-Ephrem 9; Ps.-Johannine *Apocalypse* 8; *Syriac Apocalypse of Peter* (fragment); *Syriac Apocalypse of Ezra* 14; and Tertullian, *De anima*. Cf. *Apoc. Dan.* 14:1–10. See R. Bauckham, "Enoch and Elijah in the Coptic *Apocalypse of Elijah*," *Studia patristica* 16, no. 2 (1985): 69–76.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., *Apoc. Elijah* 4:7–19, and the various texts collected by Bousset that are listed in the preceding note. Cf. also *Apoc. Dan.* 14:1–10.

<sup>7</sup> *Apoc. Zeph.* 9:4 (here are also present Zephaniah, in the form of an angel, and many other angels) and *Apoc. Paul* 47–51. These texts are discussed further below.

<sup>8</sup> Luke 13:28; *Sib. Or.* 2:245–48; *Apoc. Paul* 25–27, 47–49. These texts are treated further below.

Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Daniel—in combination with 1:39–40 completes the roster of biblical writing prophets, according to the Greek reckoning) reflects an anti-temple bias on the part of the author.<sup>9</sup> Given the evidence, this theory is difficult to dispute. Although overall there is little other pointed evidence of anti-temple bias in 5 Ezra, 1:31 reflects a distaste for temple sacrifice, and 1:33 (“Your house is desolate!”) is sometimes taken (as in Matt 23:38 and Luke 13:35, the NT models for the verse) as a reference to the temple. Indeed, in few Christian authors after 70 C.E. does one find explicitly positive statements about the Jerusalem temple.

The Mattathias/Malachi situation is a conundrum. The book of Malachi does exhibit a strong concern for temple protocol, which, if our argument concerning Haggai and Ezekiel is correct, would make Malachi a candidate for omission. But then what place does “Mattathias” have in the list? Strickert theorizes that this may be a reference to the evangelist Matthew, who is a favorite of 5 Ezra, and that our author is here dramatizing a conviction that the modern Christian “prophets” are now taking their place among the ancient Jewish ones.<sup>10</sup> This argument would be more forceful if “Mattathias” were last in the list of “minor prophets,” but he is followed by Habakkuk. The theory that this is a reference to Mattathias the patriarch of the Maccabee clan likewise lacks force, again since the name is set squarely among the minor prophets. It seems most reasonable for the present to emend the “Spanish” reading Mattathias to Malachi, recognizing nonetheless that this would be a surprising scribal error and that there exist other solutions to the problem.

The seemingly random order of the list of eleven minor prophets in 1:39–40 is brought to our attention mainly by the secondary “French” recension, which adds Haggai and Malachi, omits Mattathias, and lists the twelve neatly in their Septuagintal order. There is, however, no compelling reason why the twelve should be listed in a particular or “canonical” order in a text like 5 Ezra. A similarly “random” list of the twelve is found in *Asc. Isa.* 4:22.<sup>11</sup>

Last in 5 Ezra’s list of leaders are “twelve angels with flowers.” This reference has generally confounded commentators. Most point to a reference in 3 (*Greek*) *Bar.* 12:1–5, where Baruch, touring the fifth heaven, saw that “angels came carrying baskets filled with flowers,” which they presented to the arch-

<sup>9</sup> F. Strickert, “The Destruction of Bethsaida: The Evidence of 2 Esdras 1:11,” in *Bethsaida: A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee*, vol. 2 (ed. R. Arav and R. Freund; Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 1999), 347–72, here 352.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 364.

<sup>11</sup> For the order of the “Twelve” in ancient manuscripts and canon lists, see H. B. Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (repr. ed.; New York: Ktav, 1968), 201–14, 227. The issue is discussed *extenso* in B. A. Jones, *The Formation of the Book of the Twelve: A Study in Text and Canon* (SBLDS 149; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), esp. 2–13.

angel Michael. The flowers are “the prayers of men” or “the virtues of the righteous and the good works which they do,” which Michael will in turn present to God.<sup>12</sup> Besides these angels with full baskets, however, there are others whose baskets are half full (12:5–8) or who come apparently carrying nothing (ch. 13). The former category of angels are “dejected” or “distressed” because of their shortcoming; the latter complain that they have been “handed over” to evil humans and ask to be “withdrawn from them.” Apparently, then, each of the angels has been assigned to a particular human being, and the measure of the “basket” that they bring to offer to God is proportional to that person’s virtue.

## II. Formal Analogues to 5 Ezra 1:39–40 in Early Jewish and Christian Sources

Having surveyed the individual elements of the list in 5 Ezra 1:39–40, we turn to the nature and purpose of the list as a whole. First, in purely formal terms, this list of worthies bears a strikingly close resemblance to various lists found in early Jewish and Christian sources of OT worthies resident in a glorified, post-mortem context. In many cases, it is expected that righteous believers can hope to encounter these individuals after death.

Perhaps the closest parallels in content to the list in 5 Ezra 1:39–40 are two groups of worthies encountered by Paul in his two tours of paradise in *Apoc. Paul* 20–30 and 45–51. These tours are separate and distinct literary entities and are usually regarded as having been derived by the author from different sources.<sup>13</sup> In the first, Paul encounters first Enoch and Elijah; then the three major prophets; then Amos, Micah, and Zechariah; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; Lot, Job, “and other saints,” and finally David. The list of those encountered by Paul in the second tour is even more wide-ranging; it includes, among others, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; Enoch and Elijah; two groups of “twelve,” one of which is the twelve sons of Jacob (ch. 47) and the other unidentified (ch. 49);<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> In this section, as in 3 *Baruch* in general, the Slavonic and Greek versions differ in detail. Note the similarity of Michael’s role here with that attributed to him in *Apoc. Paul* 43, discussed below.

<sup>13</sup> This is the case whether one follows the early suggestion of M. R. James (*The Apocryphal New Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1924], 555) that chs. 45–51 are a later addition, or the more recent opinion of P. Piovaneli (“Les origines de l’Apocalypse de Paul reconsidérées,” *Apocrypha* 4 [1993]: 25–64, esp. 55) that the work is to be read as a whole but as having multiple sources.

<sup>14</sup> A case can be made that this second group of twelve either comprised, or at least included some of, the twelve minor prophets. The present form of the text, while it specifies the number twelve, gives only the three major prophets by name, providing an account of the “martyrdom” of each. Thus, while these “twelve” either were, or included, prophets, little more can be said about them with confidence.

and numerous “angels.” In each list, it is clear that at least some of the worthies encountered are mentioned because they have experienced martyrdom.<sup>15</sup>

The roles of “angels” in the *Apocalypse of Paul* are especially interesting in light of our discussion of 3 *Bar.* 12–13 and its relation to 5 *Ezra* 1:40. In the early part of the *Apocalypse of Paul* (before his first tour of paradise in chs. 20–30), Paul sees and learns of numerous angels, which, much like the angels of 3 *Baruch*, appear before the higher powers to inform them of the good or evil deeds of human beings. Every human has a familiar, indwelling angel which “protect[s] and preserve[s]” him or her (ch. 7) and reports the person’s good or evil actions to God every day at sunset and sunrise (chs. 7–10, 16–17). “And one angel goes forth rejoicing from the man he indwells but another goes with sad face” (ch. 7). This is close to the description in 3 *Baruch*, so close that it may well be dependent on that book or on a common source.<sup>16</sup>

Later in the text of the *Apocalypse of Paul*, Michael states, “It is I who stand in the presence of God every hour. . . . For one day or one night I do not cease from praying continually for the human race, and I pray for those who are still on earth” (ch. 43).<sup>17</sup> In Paul’s first tour of paradise (chs. 20–30), however, no mention is made of these angels who indwell humans and report their deeds to God.

The second tour, in chs. 45–51, is different from that described in chs. 20–30 in that several of the worthies are described as being accompanied by their own personal angel. Moses and Job, in fact, are described as having multiple “angels” (chs. 48, 49). In the narrative of this tour Paul asks his interpreting angel, “Does then each of the righteous have an angel as his companion?” The reply: “Each of the saints has his own angel who helps him and sings a hymn, and the one does not leave the other” (ch. 49).<sup>18</sup> The angelology expressed here is distinctly different from that enunciated in 3 *Baruch* and in the earlier part of the *Apocalypse of Paul*, in that the angels are companion counterparts of saints who are already in a glorified state; these angels are entirely positive in func-

<sup>15</sup> In the first list, six of the prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Micah, Zechariah; ch. 25) who are mentioned together have in common the fact that, according to the *Vitae Prophetarum*, they are the six who were martyrs (see D. Satran, *Biblical Prophets in Byzantine Palestine: Reassessing the Lives of the Prophets* [SVTP 11; Leiden: Brill, 1995], 52–55). The accounts of martyrdom of the three major prophets in the second list (ch. 49) are mentioned above.

<sup>16</sup> Note also Matt 18:10: “See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven.” The *Apocalypse of Paul* has an interesting reverse counterpart in *T. Asher* 6:4–6, where a person’s demeanor when he dies reflects the peaceful or tormenting quality of the angel whom he will meet after death.

<sup>17</sup> Compare Michael’s role in 3 (*Greek*) *Bar.* 12:1–5, discussed above.

<sup>18</sup> In *T. Isaac* 2, similarly, the chief angel, Michael, when he is sent to Isaac, who is about to die, looks so much like Abraham that Isaac questions him about the resemblance. Michael’s reply: “I am not your Father Abraham, but I am the one who ministers to your father Abraham” (2:11).

tion, rather than “reporting upon” the good or evil actions of the individuals to whom they are assigned. It seems plausible that the type of angels described in *Apoc. Paul* 45–51 could have given rise to a description of “twelve angels with flowers” as part of a group of worthies who lead the righteous in a return from exile, as in 5 *Ezra* 1:39–40. More will be said about this possibility below.

Several other texts containing lists of patriarchs and prophets similar to that in 5 *Ezra* 1:39–40 also depict these OT worthies as resident in a glorified, post-mortem setting. Luke 13:28, for example, speaks of “Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God” (the Q parallel in Matt 8:11 lacks “and all the prophets”). In both Luke and Matthew, this passage is associated with an ingathering of righteous individuals from the cardinal directions and an eschatological banquet in “the kingdom of God/heaven.” The event of ingathering portrayed here (“Many shall come from the east and west and sit down to eat . . .” [Matt 8:11]) could even be construed as a “return from exile” such as that envisioned in 5 *Ezra* 1:38.<sup>19</sup>

Several passages in 4 Maccabees employ similar terminology in a like context. In 13:17, one of the soon-to-be martyred brothers proclaims that “if we so die, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob will welcome us, and all the fathers [πάντες οἱ πατέρες] will praise us.” In 16:25, “those who die for the sake of God live to God, as do Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the patriarchs [πάντες οἱ πατριάρχαι]” (compare Luke 20:37–38). 4 Maccabees 7:19 likewise speaks of “they who believe that to God they do not die; for like our patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they live to God.”

In *Apoc. Zeph.* 8–9, Zephaniah, in the company of “myriads of myriads of angels” (8:2), first puts on an angelic garment and himself participates in a newly “angelized” state. Then, accompanied by a “great angel,” he crosses over from Hades to the domain of the righteous dead and sees there Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Enoch, Elijah, and David. In ch. 11, he again sees Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, together with the “great angel” and all the righteous, all of whom are in a glorified, post-mortem state, praying to God daily for those who are in torment. This is not unlike the role assigned to Michael in *Apoc. Paul* 43, discussed above.

The Christian *Greek Apocalypse of Ezra* features a brief passage in which Ezra, taken on a tour of paradise before he is about to die, sees there “Enoch and Elijah and Moses and Peter and Paul and Luke and Matthew and all the righteous and the patriarchs” (5:22). No further information is given about the activities of these worthies.

Finally, there are several other texts that focus on the continuing presence

<sup>19</sup> See G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (HTS 26; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 35 and n. 119.



of the three patriarchs in an after-death context. According to *T. Ab.* 20:14 [A], the “mansions” of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the “tents of [God’s] righteous ones” are situated in paradise. *Testament of Isaac* 2:5–7 states that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all possess a “throne” in heaven, where they dwell with “all the saints.” Again in *Apoc. Paul* 48, Moses states that at the death of Jesus, God, Michael, “all the angels and archangels,” and “Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the righteous” wept for him as he hung on the cross.

Clearly, then, it is not uncommon, in texts that are roughly contemporary with 5 Ezra, for groups of patriarchs, prophets, and angels similar to those mentioned in 5 Ezra 1:39–40 to be depicted as residing in a glorified, post-mortem state. Here, commonly, their main purpose is to greet, succor, inspire, and generally provide guidance for the righteous dead. They also occasionally, as in *Apoc. Zeph.* 11 and *Apoc. Paul* 43, intercede with God for (unrighteous) humans.

### III. Functional Analogues of 5 Ezra 1:39–40 in Texts Describing Resurrection

Although we have located here one of the possible points of origin for lists such as that in 5 Ezra 1:39–40, we have yet adequately to account for the function of this list. First, the leaders in 5 Ezra are not in a removed, post-mortem state of being; they exist in a more physical, earthly context, providing leadership for living, breathing human beings. Second—and this is a significant point—the function of the leaders in 5 Ezra 1:39–40 depends on *movement*. They do not subsist in a static state of glory, but are active in a process of leading a band of returning exiles. Thus, the activity, or functional dimension, of the leaders in 5 Ezra 1:39–40 is rather different from the examples we have cited thus far and still requires explication.

The solution to this problem, I believe, lies in a group of texts that, like those considered above, depict groups of OT patriarchs and prophets in an exalted, after-life setting, but provide one additional feature: that of resurrection. In this context, the worthies retain their glorified existence, their status as individuals who are worthy to live “with God” in perpetuity, and their roles of aiding and succoring the righteous dead, but they are accorded one additional feature—they lead, or are the first to participate in, the process of resurrection. In this state, not only does their activity become more directly connected with earthly existence, but they also acquire characteristics of purposeful activity, or movement.

One text of this nature is *Sib. Or.* 2:238–51. In this passage, normally

understood as a Christian addition to an originally Jewish oracle,<sup>20</sup> God raises the dead and then sits on a heavenly throne. There first arrives Christ, who comes in glory with the angels and sits on God's right side as a judge. Then come Moses, "having put on flesh"; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; Joshua, Daniel, Elijah, Habakkuk, and Jonah; "and those whom the Hebrews killed" (presumably prophets).<sup>21</sup> "He [probably Christ] will destroy all the Hebrews after Jeremiah" (v. 249). There follow the separation and judgment of the righteous and the wicked.

In this important passage, as in 5 Ezra 1:39–40, the various patriarchs and prophets who are enumerated could be understood as "leaders" of the people, in the sense that they, because of their exalted status, are the first to attain the state of resurrection and thus provide guidance for others. *Sibylline Oracle 2* differs from 5 Ezra 1:39–40 in that both righteous and wicked are involved in the eschatological scenario.

The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* feature two intriguing eschatological passages in which Jacob's twelve sons "rise," together with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to lead their respective tribes in the eschatological era. In *T. Jud.* 25, in the eschatological scenario at the end of the testament, "Abraham and Isaac and Jacob will rise to life [ἀναστήσεται . . . εἰς ζωὴν] again, and my brothers and I will be chiefs of our tribes in Israel" (25:1), each in his own order. The "angels of the presence" will especially bless Judah (25:2). Here, as in 5 Ezra, the event that is presided over by the patriarchs is an entirely positive affair; there is little or no mention of judgment or the fates of sinners.

In *T. Benj.* 10:6–8, the eschaton is envisioned as follows:

Then you will see Enoch, Noah, and Shem, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, rising on the right hand in gladness. Then shall we [the twelve sons of Jacob] also rise, each one over our tribe, and worship (Jesus); and all those who believed him on earth will rejoice with him. Then, too, all men will rise, some to glory and some to disgrace.

The judgment follows.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> J. J. Collins, in *OTP* 1:330. Collins dates the Christian redaction of this oracle between 95 and 150 C.E. (p. 332).

<sup>21</sup> For Christian accusations of Jews' having "killed the prophets," see esp. Matt 23:30–38 and its parallels in Luke 11:47–51 and 13:33–35. See further n. 15 above.

<sup>22</sup> In *T. Jud.* 25, *T. Benj.* 10:6–8, and 5 Ezra 1:39–40, several groups of worthies are cited, including Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and ending with a group of twelve. In *T. Zeb.* 10:2, likewise, Zebulon will rise from the dead to head his tribe at the last judgment.

Prof. G. W. E. Nickelsburg, in a private communication, noted the relevance to these passages of what is apparently the last pericope in Q, Matt 19:28/Luke 22:30. Here Jesus assigns his followers an eschatological role that would normally be ascribed to the twelve patriarchs: "you will . . . sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

This description parallels that in 5 Ezra in that the patriarchs are again “leaders” of the “coming people” in the sense that they are the first to appear in the resurrection. Note also the themes of rejoicing and glory, consonant with 5 Ezra 1:37–40. Like *Sib. Or.* 2, the passage is explicitly Christian. Also like *Sib. Or.* 2, but unlike *T. Jud.* 25, the resurrection and judgment scenarios include both the righteous and the wicked.

The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* includes one further passage relevant to our theme. In *T. Levi* 18:14, again situated in an eschatological passage at the end of the testament, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob “shout in exultation” at the eschatological presence of Jesus, the “new priest,” who binds Beliar and puts an end to sin.

Another text bearing on the idea of OT worthies in a resurrection context is Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho*. In 45.2–4, Trypho asks whether “those who lived according to the law given by Moses” would “live in the same manner with Jacob, Enoch, and Noah in the resurrection of the dead.” Justin answers in the affirmative: “Since those who did what is universally . . . good are pleasing to God, they will be saved through this Christ in the resurrection equally with those righteous persons who were before them, namely, Noah, and Enoch, and Jacob. . . .” Again, in 80.1, 5, Justin maintains that “there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem,” where “[the] people [will] be gathered together, and made joyful with Christ and the patriarchs, and the prophets.” Finally, in 113.3–4, Justin holds that “Jesus the Christ will turn again the dispersion of the people [τὴν διασπορὰν τοῦ λαοῦ ἐπιστρέψει] . . . after the holy resurrection, [he] will give us the eternal possession.”

These references from Justin are significant in several regards. First, as in both *Sib. Or.* 2 and the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, the “patriarchs and prophets” serve as leaders of the people in the resurrection. As in *Sib. Or.* 2 and the *Testament of Benjamin*, Jesus plays an important role in the proceedings. Justin, like 5 Ezra and the *Testament of Judah*, focuses on the positive dimensions of the process, viz., the rewards enjoyed by the righteous. Finally, in an extremely significant associative move, Justin in 113.3–4 explicitly connects the resurrection with a return from dispersion, or a return from exile. According to him, this process will be led by Jesus. This passage provides an important conceptual link between texts such as those considered above, which speak of leaders of the resurrection, and 5 Ezra 1:39–40, which does not mention resurrection explicitly but has a similar group of worthies leading a return from exile.

The strong thematic connection of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob with the resurrection motif that we noted in *Sib. Or.* 2 and the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* appears also in Mark 12:18–27 and its Synoptic parallels, wherein Jesus uses Exod 3:6 to support the idea of resurrection: “And as for the dead being raised [ἐγείρονται], have you not read in the book of Moses . . . how God said to him, ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and

the God of Jacob”? He is not God of the dead, but of the living” (Mark 12:26–27). This pericope, especially in its Lukan form (Luke 20:27–38, esp. v. 38: “for all live to [God]”), recalls the statements cited above in 4 Macc 7:19 and 16:25 that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob “live to God.”

Finally, the idea of resurrection may even be implicit in some of the “post-mortem” texts discussed above, for example, the Q pericope Luke 13:28//Matt 8:11.<sup>23</sup> Note that both passages speak of the glorified Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the context of an ingathering of righteous individuals from the cardinal points in order to participate in an eschatological banquet. Such an ingathering could easily be connected with the process of resurrection, as does Justin in *Dialogue* 113.

There is one further text in which the twelve minor prophets in particular, so dominant in the list in 5 Ezra 1:39–40, could be interpreted as being connected with resurrection—Sir 49:10: “May the bones of the Twelve Prophets send forth<sup>24</sup> new life from where they lie, for they comforted the people of Jacob and delivered them with confident hope.” Most modern commentators argue that this passage is not a reference to resurrection and that Ben Sira himself did not have a developed ideology of resurrection.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, the passage (like Ezek 37:1–14, the allegory of the “dry bones”<sup>26</sup>) uses language that is strongly evocative of the concept of resurrection, and it is possible that later interpreters, including perhaps tradents like the author of 5 Ezra, read Sir 49:10 as a reference to resurrection and developed from there an association between the twelve minor prophets and resurrection.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> See n. 19.

<sup>24</sup> The Greek word here, ἀναθάλοι (from ἀναθάλλω), means “to sprout afresh, (make to) flourish, revive.” The Hebrew text is partially preserved in MS B; it has been restored to פִּרְחִיתָ, from the root פִּרַח, “to sprout, send forth buds or shoots.” Interestingly, this Hebrew word is also used of bones in Isa 66:14: “Your bones shall flourish (תִּפְרַחְנָה) like the grass.” It seems most likely that Ben Sira’s usage depends on the passage in Third Isaiah.

G. W. E. Nickelsburg (in a private communication) also noted *T. Sim.* 6:2: “My bones will flourish as a rose in Israel, and my flesh as a lily in Jacob,” and its similarity to Ben Sira 50:8, a description of the high priest Simon ben Onias.

<sup>25</sup> E.g., P. W. Skehan and A. A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (AB 39; New York: Doubleday, 1987), 84–87. F. Saracino (“Risurrezione in Ben Sira?” *Henoch* 4 [1982]: 185–203) does, however, argue that Sir 46:12; 48:11, 13; and 49:10 evince a belief in resurrection (see Skehan and Di Lella, *Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 86 n. 14).

<sup>26</sup> 4QPseudo-Ezekiel seems to interpret Ezek 37 as referring to individual rather than national resurrection: see B. G. Wright, “Talking with God and Losing his Head: Extrabiblical Traditions about the Prophet Ezekiel,” in *Biblical Figures Outside the Bible* (ed. M. E. Stone and T. A. Bergren; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 296–303.

<sup>27</sup> Note that the same phraseology is used earlier in Ben Sira 46:12 with reference to the biblical judges. Skehan and DiLella argue that both passages derive from 2 Kgs 13:20–21, a story that also has ties to resurrection (*Wisdom of Ben Sira*, 517). Note also the reference to Isa 66:14 in n. 24 above.

In the passages discussed above, it becomes clear that lists of OT worthies such as that found in 5 Ezra 1:39–40 occur not only in general in contexts describing a glorified, post-mortem state of existence, but also specifically in texts concerned with the process of resurrection, that is, “return” from a post-mortem state to a more physical, worldly state. It is this latter context, I would argue, the so-called resurrection parade, that furnishes the more immediate background, or “setting in life,” for the list of worthies in 5 Ezra 1:39–40. First, in both cases, in the resurrection texts and in 5 Ezra, the worthies provide leadership, going first and setting an example for a larger group of righteous humans. Second, in both cases, the role of the worthies is set in a process of movement. Third, in both cases the worthies do not reside in an abstract, idealized setting, but are leading followers in a process that involves physical, worldly existence. In each of these ways, 5 Ezra is closer to the “resurrection” texts than to those that simply list OT worthies residing in a glorified, post-mortem setting.

If the list in 5 Ezra 1:39–40 finds its most immediate literary and ideological setting in traditional Jewish and Christian lists of OT worthies leading a process of resurrection, the fact remains that 5 Ezra 1:39–40 does not mention or even imply the idea of resurrection.<sup>28</sup> Rather, the context here is that of a return from exile, or an ingathering of the dispersion. Is it possible to draw any connections between these two apparently rather disparate ideological contexts?

The answer may lie in a text like Justin’s *Dialogue* 113.3–4, which does in fact draw a functional equivalence between the ingathering of the dispersion and the process of resurrection. 5 Ezra, in conjoining to its description of return from exile a list of biblical leaders who probably would have been recognized by its readers as typical of post-mortem or resurrection contexts, seems to be making the same kind of hermeneutical maneuver. This is a mode of interpretation that understands death metaphorically as a form of exile, or “dispersion,” and therefore interprets resurrection as a reversal of that state—a return from exile, or an ingathering of the dispersion. The use of this hermeneutic by Justin in the mid-second century suggests that the author of 5 Ezra, writing probably between 130 and 250 C.E., was not innovative in making this connection.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> This is not true, however, for 5 Ezra as a whole, in which the concept of resurrection is absolutely central (see 2:16, 23, 26, 31).

<sup>29</sup> G. W. E. Nickelsburg has pointed out that perhaps the first text to draw a correspondence between return from exile and resurrection is 2 Macc 7, in which traditional language from Second and Third Isaiah describing the exile and expected return of the sons of Mother Zion (see also Bar 4–5) is appropriated to articulate a hope for the resurrection of the mother’s seven sons (*Resurrec-*

As to the theological “location” of this tradition, it is striking how many of the texts that we have examined, although drawing ultimately on Jewish sources, are themselves Christian in provenance. We may hypothesize that, whereas lists of OT patriarchs and prophets residing as “alive” in a post-mortem setting are clearly Jewish in origin, the use of such lists in a resurrection context seems to be most characteristic of Christian traditions in the first three centuries C.E. This seems to be the case especially in texts wherein explicitly Jewish traditions are being commented on (Justin), developed (the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*), or expanded (*Sib. Or. 2*) by Christian authors. 5 Ezra, which develops and reformulates Jewish traditions in many other places, fits firmly within this Christian exegetical tradition.<sup>30</sup>

#### IV. The “Twelve Angels with Flowers” in 5 Ezra 1:40

There remains the question of the “twelve angels with flowers” that conclude the list in 5 Ezra 1:39–40. Our investigations above strongly suggest that these “angels” are concerned or connected with the fates of humans. It seems possible that their “flowers,” as in 3 (*Greek*) *Bar.* 12:1–5, represent either the righteous deeds or prayers of these humans. However, there are other explanations for the angels and their flowers, and the designation of twelve such figures remains enigmatic.<sup>31</sup>

One possibility is that these angels somehow symbolize or represent a twelvefold group of human beings—perhaps the twelve patriarchs, the twelve minor prophets, or even the twelve Christian apostles/disciples. This possibility is made more concrete by a text such as *Apoc. Paul* 45–51, in which each OT patriarch or prophet residing in paradise has a familiar, companion angel, “the one [of which] does not leave the other” (ch. 49). Although most of 5 Ezra’s list

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*tion, Immortality, and Eternal Life*, 106–8). Nickelsburg attributes this connection to “the Hasidic apocalyptic exegesis of Third Isaiah” (p. 107).

Ezekiel 37, cited above, is another text in which language appropriate to both national restoration and individual resurrection occurs in the same context. Note also *Bar* 3:10–11.

<sup>30</sup> For another striking example of this process in 5 Ezra, see T. A. Bergren, “5 Ezra, Dayyenu, and Improperia: The Tradition History of the Exodus-Review in 5 Ezra 1,” in *A Multi-form Heritage: Studies on Early Judaism and Christianity in Honor of Robert A. Kraft* (ed. B. G. Wright; Scholars Press Homage Series 24; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999) 109–22.

<sup>31</sup> The Armenian and Georgian versions of *Life of Adam and Eve* 33:1–2 state that Adam and Eve each had twelve guardian angels who would accompany them in the garden until dawn, at which time the angels would ascend to heaven to worship God. This could well be related to the fact that the twelve angels in 5 Ezra 1:40 have “flowers” (cf. 3 [*Greek*] *Bar.* 12:1–5, discussed above).

comprises human worthies who are identified as humans, it is possible that this final body of twelve angels represents or symbolizes a specific group of humans who are being portrayed in an other-worldly, glorified context. Indeed, it is not uncommon in early Jewish and Christian literature for the righteous dead, or righteous heroes assumed into heaven, to be characterized as “angels.”<sup>32</sup>

How might the three possibilities suggested above work themselves out? Regarding the idea that these “twelve” refer to the twelve Christian apostles/disciples, this text could well reflect F. Strickert’s thesis that our author might wish to place “modern” Christian leaders in the context of more ancient Jewish ones (see above). This theory is supported by 5 Ezra 1:37: “the apostles bear witness to the coming people with joy.” However, there do not seem to be other contexts in which the twelve Christian apostles/disciples are represented as angels, not to mention angels bearing flowers.<sup>33</sup>

With reference to the twelve sons of Jacob or the twelve tribes of Israel, the main evidence that the “twelve angels” represent these groups seems to be the two passages from the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* discussed above (*T. Benj.* 10:6–7 and *T. Jud.* 25). On the basis of these passages, this possibility seems at least plausible.

If the twelve angels of 5 Ezra 1:40 represent the twelve minor prophets, this would constitute a “doublet” tradition, since (most of) the minor prophets have already been listed by name directly before this in 5 Ezra 1:39–40. Still, such a doublet is not impossible. In support of this possibility we refer again to Sir 49:10, quoted above: “May the bones of the Twelve Prophets send forth new life from where they lie, for they comforted the people of Jacob and delivered

<sup>32</sup> In Qumran literature, see 1QS 4:6–8, 11–13; 1QM 12:1–7. 2 (*Syriac*) *Baruch* states that the righteous dead will be “changed . . . into the splendor of angels” (51:5) and “will be like the angels” (51:10) (cf. 1 *Enoch* 62:13–16). In 2 *Enoch* 22:8–10 Enoch, taken on high, becomes an angel; the same happens to Zephaniah in *Apoc. Zeph.* 8–12 and to Isaiah in *Asc. Isa.* 9:30. For extended discussion of this theme, see M. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), esp. chs. 2–3.

Compare Mark 12:25 (and its Synoptic parallels): “For when [people] rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.” Note, again, the connection with resurrection. The latter part of this pericope, Mark 12:26–27, is quoted and commented on above.

For a textual connection between “angels” and “prophets,” see *Gos. Thom.* 88: “The angels and the prophets will come to you and give to you those things you (already) have. . . .”

<sup>33</sup> Note, however, the Q pericope discussed in n. 22. Also, Prof. G. W. E. Nickelsburg, in a private communication, pointed out that the twelve minor prophets, who are literally the last group in the Greek Bible, would make a neat transition to the “new” twelve, the Christian apostles. Furthermore, the word *angelos*, as “messenger,” would be appropriate to the twelve Christian apostles, who were sent out, according to tradition, not only during Jesus’ ministry but also in postresurrection appearances.

them with confident hope.” A reference such as this, or traditions analogous to it, might have spawned an idea of the twelve prophets being like “angels,” who have somehow attained a “new life” beyond the grave, and who are once again in a position to “comfort” and “deliver” their followers, perhaps even by bearing flowers in a manner similar to that envisioned in 3 (*Greek*) *Bar.* 12:1–5.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, as noted above (n. 24), the Hebrew word for “send forth” that seems to have stood in the original is פָּרַח, which literally means “to sprout, send forth buds or shoots.”

Another consideration that might lead us to connect the “twelve angels with flowers” with the twelve minor prophets is the fact that the word “angel,” in both Hebrew (מַלְאָךְ) and Greek (ἄγγελος), literally means “messenger.” This is also the meaning of the name Malachi (מַלְאָכִי, “my messenger/angel”), one of the two minor prophets missing from the “Spanish” text of 5 Ezra 1:39–40. Indeed, the Old Greek (LXX) text of Mal 1:1, where the MT has מַלְאָכִי, reads ἄγγελου αὐτοῦ, “his [God’s] messenger.” Although the textual possibilities become convoluted, it is conceivable that there might have been an interchange, intentional or unintentional, at some point in the tradition history of 5 Ezra that led to a confusion between “twelve angels/messengers,” the reading of the present Spanish text, and “Malachi/my messenger, one of the twelve,” which is inexplicably missing from the Spanish text.<sup>35</sup>

Although it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to choose between the possibilities, I would suggest that the “twelve angels” in 5 Ezra 1:40 do indeed represent glorified or idealized versions of some such group of human beings, or perhaps, in a more straightforward way, are the angels who accompany them in their post-mortem state, as in *Apoc. Paul* 45–51. As for their “flowers,” it is worth noting that these plants, which periodically return from the dead, are an appropriate symbol of resurrection—even in modern-day festivals that celebrate the resurrection of Jesus.

<sup>34</sup> In *Apoc. Zeph.* 8–12, Zephaniah, one of the twelve, is translated to heaven, puts on an angelic garment, and becomes like an angel (see the discussion above).

<sup>35</sup> Haggai, also missing from 5 Ezra’s list of the twelve, is in Hag 1:13 also called “the angel/messenger of the Lord” (cf. *Vit. Proph.* 14:1).