

Dear reader,

This is a pre-copyedited, author-produced version of an article accepted for publication in *The Journal of Theological Studies* following peer review. The version of record (The Journal of Theological Studies, Volume 67, Issue 2, October 2016, Pages 701–704) is available online at: <https://academic.oup.com/jts/article/67/2/701/2585066>
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/flw092>

Original publication:

Fischer, Georg

Review of: Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah: A Commentary Based on the Texts in Codex Vaticanus. By Sean A. Adams. Pp. xi + 252. (Septuagint Commentary Series.) Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014.

The Journal of Theological Studies, Volume 67, Issue 2, October 2016, Pages 701–704

Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/flw092>

Access to the published version may require subscription.

Published in accordance with the policy of Oxford University Press:

https://academic.oup.com/journals/pages/self_archiving_policy_f

Your IxTheo team

Review of:

Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah: A Commentary Based on the Texts in Codex Vaticanus. By Sean A. Adams. Pp. xi + 252. (Septuagint Commentary Series.) Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014. ISBN 978 90 04 27733 5 and 27849 3. Hardback €104/\$135; e-book n.p.

So far 13 volumes of the prestigious Septuagint Commentary Series have now been published, and Adams' excellent contribution provides a valuable tool for all those interested in Bar and EpJer. In contrast to other volumes, e.g. those on Exodus or Micah, he deals with two books which are only extant in Greek. He takes as his base text the Codex Vaticanus (B), the oldest and probably the best manuscript (p. 32 and 147), as is the norm for the series (an exception being the commentary on Genesis).

He presents introductory sections for both books (1–32 and 147–163) dealing with issues of textual tradition, dating, provenance, purpose, use of scripture, language and grammar (with extensive statistical material), literary influence; ancient sense-unit delineations, with the variations found throughout the several manuscripts, receive special emphasis and serve as a basis for the structuring of Bar and EpJer. Adams' commentary on these books is not only the first to appear in English, it is also the most accurate discussion of them and their textual basis, and gives extensive and detailed information on all these aspects.

The book presents a transcription of Codex Vaticanus, combined with a rather literal translation on the opposite right-hand pages (34–49 and 166–173); this is followed by a verse by verse analysis of Bar and EpJer, organized according to the indications given by the paragraph breaks of Codex B: Bar 1:1–13; 1:14–3:8 (subdivided into 1:14–2:10; 2:11–35; 3:1–8); 3:9–4:4; 4:5–5:9 (subdivided into 4:5–18; 4:19–29; 4:30–5:9); and for EpJer: Preface – 14a; 14b–27; 28–38; 39–50; 51–63; 64–72. Adams assumes that Bar reached its final stage of composition in the 2nd and 1st centuries BC (5), and EpJer still earlier, in the 3rd or 2nd century BC (149).

The commentary sections excel in their straightforward, unambiguous analyses and concise presentation, dealing effectively with the problems of the text, the various positions taken and particular difficulties. Adams exhibits sound judgement, describing very precisely the arguments put forward and differentiating clearly between what can be accepted and what is not accurate (e.g. 130–131). It is a pleasure to follow his thinking as he wends his way through the jungle of opposing opinions, and to recognize that most of his solutions are balanced and convincing. He refers repeatedly to the “narrative world” as one criterion for his decisions.

Adams brings a rich and extensive background to this study, giving close attention to clusters of words, to grammatical constructions, to use of expressions, to phrase structure, as well as to subtle details of the texts, interpreting the books within the context of the Septuagint and its use of language. He is obviously well-acquainted with the relevant studies, intertestamental literature and the works of the Church Fathers, and thus can compare motifs in Bar or EpJer with similar passages in Greek literature or in other ancient books.

However, there are a few points which merit further discussion. For example, the translation of Bar 2:30 “they will return to their heart” (41, explained on p. 87) is probably too literal and does not convey the sense of the phrase as a coined expression, meaning rather “they will return / convert in their heart”. The rendering of *διάνοια* in EpJer 5 as “heart” (167, and interpreted thus on p. 177), on the other hand, is relatively free. But in general the translations are close to the original and helpful.

The unique motif of the “prayer of the dead of Israel” in Bar 3:4 (41: rendered as “... of those who have died of Israel”, treated on p. 92) would also invite a symbolic reading, as a description of the situation of God’s people being “dead” because of their sins (proposed by O.H. Steck in his commentary of 1998).

The unit delimitation of Bar 4:19–29, taken from the ancient manuscripts (23 and 128), is debatable. It occurs in the middle of Jerusalem’s address to her children, and the mode of communication of the city speaking as “I”, addressing her children as “you”, starts earlier in 4:17. EpBar 28–38 receives the heading “The Corruption of Their Priests” (187), although Adams himself acknowledges (190) that the helplessness of the idols is a major issue from V 33 onward.

The commentaries on Bar and EpJer are rather technical and end abruptly with the explanations of the subscriptions (146 and 203). Certainly, some major motifs have been dealt with in the introduction. However, readers would like to be given some idea of the overall meaning or impact of these books, and also of their theological contribution, so that concluding sections and reflections on the message would have been welcome. This is also true on a smaller scale, where special accents with regard to the significance of the text could have been brought out further. For example, in Bar 1:11 (59), is found the only invitation to pray for “enemies” in the Old Testament, with the exception of Jer 29:7; the meaning of “the Holy One” as a designation for God in Bar could have been commented on (131f), and there are other instances.

In the commentary sections it is not easy for readers to orient themselves when consulting the book, as the transitions from one verse to the other are often difficult to pick up and sometimes are not even indicated. Thus one has to seek the relevant text within long sections (e.g. p. 61–77, for Bar 1:14 to 2:10) without knowing immediately what is discussed. It would be desirable – at least for further books of the series – to facilitate consultation by more detailed subdivisions and by marking the verse which is going to be treated.

However, these remarks are not intended to diminish the considerable value of Adams’ study and its strengths in other areas. His contribution outweighs by far the minor critical notes mentioned above.

Georg Fischer SJ
Theological Faculty of the
University of Innsbruck, Austria