

Access to Heavenly Treasuries:
The Traditionsgeschichte of a Motif

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Several OT Wisdom Literature passages contain rhetorical questions underscoring human lack of access to supra-terrestrial "storehouses/treasuries". In Job 38,22 God challenges Job: "Have you entered the storehouses (*'ôṣ^erôt*, LXX *θησαυρους*) of the snow, or have you seen the storehouses (*we'ôṣ^erôt*, LXX *θησαυρους*) of the hail?" The "Hymn to Wisdom" of Bar 3,9-4,4¹ voices an analogous question in 3,15 "Who has found her [Wisdom's] place? and who has entered her storehouses (*θησαυρους*)?" Of course, references to (variously denominated) "heavenly repositories" do occur elsewhere in the OT², just as do generalized allusions to the impenetrability of God's (Wisdom's) secrets³. In this study, however, my concern is with elucidating the Vor- and Nachgeschichte of the specific collocation "(not) entering storehouses" in the above texts.

With regard to the background of Job 38,22; Bar 3,15, I propose that their formulations were inspired by the motif, found in both Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern literature, of "the privilege/right of entry into a royal treasury". In the OT itself, the motif emerges most clearly in 2 Kgs 20,13 (= Isa 39,2): "(Hezekiah) showed them [the envoys of Merodachbaladan] all that was found in his storehouses (*b^e'ôṣ^erôtāw*)..."⁴, see also 1 Kgs 10,4; 20,6;

- 1 On this text, see: J. AMOZ, *Estudio sobre Baruch 3,9-4,4*, *Mayéutica* 7 (1981) 161-177; J.R. BUSTO SAIZ, *Baruc 3,9-4,4: Estructura y Contenido, Palabra y Vida* (FS J. ALONSO DIAZ, ed. A. VARGAS-MACHUCA & G. RUIZ), Madrid, 1984, 121-129.
- 2 See e.g.: Deut 28,12; 32,34; Job 9,9; 37,9; Ps 135,7; Jer 10,13; 51,16; Sir 43,14, cf. Ps 33,7; Sir 39,17.30. See further 1QS 10,2; ;QM 1,12; 1QM 10,12; 11QPs^a 26,14-15; 2 Bar 10,11; 4 Ezra 5,9-10; 6,40; 1 En 54,7; 69,24.
- 3 See e.g.: Job 9,10; 28; Ps 145,3; Ec 3,11; Sir 1,3.6; 18,4-6.
- 4 On this text, see C.T. BEGG, *Hezekiah's Display* (2 Kgs 20,12-19), BN 38/39 (1987) 14-18.

Est 1,4. Outside the OT, the motif surfaces in texts from a variety of periods and cultures⁵. In the 8th century B.C. "Victory Stela of King Piye", e. g., a prince named Pediese submits himself to the Nubian conqueror Piye with the words "When you enter my house, my treasury will be open to you. I shall present you with my father's possessions"⁶. Similarly, the Mesopotamian wisdom writing "Counsels of Wisdom" (second half of the second millenium B.C.) speaks of the special privilege of the favorite royal official:

My son, if it be the wish of the prince that you
are his
If you attach his closely guarded seal to your
person
Open his treasure house, enter within
For apart from you there is no one else (who may
do this)
Unlimited wealth you will find inside⁷

Also of relevance is the topos encountered in a series of Assyrien "Royal Annals" dating from the 9th through the 7th centuries B.C. Here, an Assyrian monarch records e.g., that he penetrated the sealed treasuries of a defeated ruler, surveyed their contents and subsequently appropriated these. By way of example, I cite the following sequence from the "Monolith Inscription" of Shalmaneser III (859-824) concerning the sequels to his overthrow of a king Giammu:

His treasury I opened. I saw his wealth. His
goods, his property, I carried off and brought to
my city Assur⁸.

In surveying the above texts, one notes that, in all of them, "entry into a royal treasury" betokens the preeminent status of the entrant. Such entry may be accorded by the king to whom the treasury belongs as a particular

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- 5 I cite only a sample of the relevant material; see further the article mentioned in n. 4.
 - 6 Translation by M. LICHTHEIM, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, III, Berkeley, 1980, p. 77.
 - 7 Translation by W.G. LAMBERT, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*, Oxford, 1960, p. 103. On this text, see C.T. BEGG, *Hezekiah's Display: Another Parallel*, forthcoming in BN.
 - 8 Translation by D.D. LUCKENBILL, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, I, New York, 1968 = 1927, p. 222. See also I, p. 144 (Assur-nâsir-pal); II, p. 95 (Sargon); II, p. 116 (Sennacherib), II, p. 145 (Sennacherib); II, p. 309 (Assurbanipal). Compare Isa 45,1-3.

privilege to (representatives of) another king (2 Kgs 20,13; the Piye stela) or to a favorite courtier ("Counsels of Wisdom"). Conversely, the entry may represent a "right of conquest" assumed by a victorious monarch (the Assyrian Royal Annals). In any event, however, it is, I suggest, against the background of these texts that one best appreciates the force of the rhetorical questions (and their expected negative answers) in Job 38,22 and Bar 3,15: their formulations are intended to underscore that, whatever may be the case with earthly king's treasuries, no human being, however privileged or powerful, can expect to penetrate the heavenly/sapiential "storehouses".

Use of the "treasury entry motif" did not, I would further note, terminate with the OT Wisdom writers. Already B. DUHM noted with reference to the implied negation of Job 38,22: "Henoah hat natürlich alle diese Behälter gesehen"⁹. DUHM made this observation citing 1 Enoch 60. In fact, though, DUHM's lone citation can be readily supplemented with other comparable texts of extra-Biblical "apocalyptic literature" in which a seer claims to have been allowed access to various heavenly treasuries. Claims of this sort generally stand within what M.E. STONE has called "lists of revealed things"¹⁰. They likewise occur with particular frequency in the pseudepigraphical "Henoah literature". Accordingly, I begin my survey of the relevant passages with this body of material. In 1 Enoch 17,3 the seer affirms "... I saw chambers of light and thunder..."¹¹. His claim in 18,1 runs "... I saw the storerooms of all the winds..."¹². Likewise of interest is 41,4-5 "... I (also) saw sealed storerooms from which the winds of the storerooms of hail and the winds of the storerooms of mist are distributed... And I saw the storerooms of the sun and the moon, from which place they come out and to which place they return..."¹³. Also worthy of note is the text cited by DUHM, 60,11-12, "... the other angel... was showing me... the storerooms of the winds..."¹⁴. Lastly, in 71,4 Henoah avers "(Michael) also showed me... all the reservoirs

9 B. DUHM, Hiob, KHCAT 16, Freiburg, 1897, p. 185.

10 M.E. STONE, Lists of Revealed Things in the Apocalyptic Literature, Magnalia Dei (FS G.E. WRIGHT, ed. F.M. CROSS et al.), Garden City, NY, 1976, 414-452.

11 Translation by E. ISAAC, in The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, I (ed. J.H. CHARLESWORTH), Garden City, NY, 1983, p. 22.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., p. 32.

14 Ibid., p. 41. See too the description of the operation of the various heavenly "reservoirs" in 60,18-21.

of the stars and the luminaries..."¹⁵.

The seer of 2 Enoch makes similar claims for himself. In the shorter recension of that work (designated "A" by R.H. CHARLES) one reads at 5,1-6,1:

And they showed me there the treasuries of the snow and the cold... And they showed me there those guarding the treasuries; {and they showed me there the treasuries} of the clouds, from which they go in and come out. And they showed me the treasuries of the dew... Angels were guarding their treasuries...¹⁶

Subsequently at 40,10-11 in that same recension Henoch avers:

I, I wrote down the repositories of the snows and the storehouses of the ice, and of every spirit of the cold. And I, I observed how, at certain seasons, their custodians fill up the clouds with them, and the treasuries are not emptied. I, I wrote down the chambers of the winds, and I, I observed and I saw how their custodians carry scales and measures. <First they place them in the scales>, and secondly in the measure, and it is by measure that they release them...¹⁷

3 Enoch too is not without analogous motifs. In 8,1-2 Enoch/Metatron relates how God "opened" the "gates" of the treasuries housing assorted divine benefits (understanding, prudence, etc.) and conferred these upon him¹⁸. Thereafter, 10,6 records God's statement concerning the seer: "... I have put him in charge of all the stores of the palaces of Arabot, and all the treasuries that are in the heavenly heights"¹⁹. Finally, in a passage found in an appendix to certain manuscripts of 3 Enoch, 48C,3, a similar divine word occurs: "'I appointed him' - over all the storehouses and treasuries which I have in every heaven, and I entrust to him the keys to each of them"²⁰.

Enoch is not, however, the only apocalyptic seer from whom claims about

15 Ibid., p. 49.

16 Translation by F.I.ANDERSEN, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, I, p. 113. Compare the somewhat divergent reading of the longer ("J") recension on p. 112.

17 Ibid., p. 167. Compare the longer recension's reading of 40,9-11 on p. 166.

18 Translation by P. ALEXANDER, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, I, pp. 262-263.

19 Ibid., p. 264.

20 Ibid., p. 311.

entry into the heavenly treasures are made. The Biblical Antiquities of Pseudo Philo 19,10 narrates God's revelation to the dying Moses:

And he showed him the place from which the clouds draw up water to water the whole earth, and the place from which the river takes its water... and the place in the firmament from which only the holy land drinks. And he showed him the place from which the manna rained upon the people²¹

Likewise Ezra in the Greek Apocalypse of Ezra 5,23 affirms: "I saw... the storehouses of the ice"²², while 2 Baruch 59,11 records that God showed Moses, *inter alia*, "the treasures of the light"²³.

The foregoing survey makes clear that the motif of "entry into heavenly treasures" had considerable currency in apocalyptic literature; this literature regularly depicts its seer-heroes as enjoying entrée into the supra-terrestrial storerooms housing e.g., meteorological phenomena, the heavenly bodies and divine benefits. It is only, however, against the background of Wisdom texts like Job 38,22 and Bar 3,15 that the import of this feature becomes fully evident: the apocalypticists have transformed the generalized implicit negations of those texts into positive assertions about an Enoch, a Moses, or an Ezra. In so doing, their intention was, obviously, to underscore the stature of those figures to whom they attribute their teachings as ones accorded a privilege which Wisdom Literature intimated exceeds the prospects of any and all humans²⁴. At the same time, in their utilization of the "entry motif" the apocalyptic writers make clear that such entry was never - as is frequently the case with penetrations of the treasures of

21 Translation by D.J. HARRINGTON, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, II, Garden City, NY, 1985, pp. 327-328. (The *Biblical Antiquities* is, of course, not an apocalyptic work, overall; its use of the motif in question does constitute an affinity between it and the apocalyptic literature, however).

22 Translation by B.M. METZGER, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, I, p. 577.

23 Translation by A.F.J. KLIJN, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, I, p. 642.

24 The above discussion has an obvious bearing on the wider question of the relationship between "Wisdom" and "Apocalyptic" on which see the article of STONE cited in n. 10.

earthly kings (see above) - a matter of a human right or initiative, but always of an undeserved divine favor²⁵. Thereby, in the manner of an Aufhebung, they preserve the underlying thrust of Wisdom Literature's negations.

25 In this connection it is à propos to note within Apocalyptic Literature itself the occurrence of a text like 4 Ezra 5,37 where the angel Uriel addresses Ezra with the (unmeetable) challenge; "open for me the closed chambers and bring forth for me the winds shut up in them..." (Translation by B.M. METZGER, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, I, p. 533).