The previous chapter has shown that the righteous remnant survives in the Kidron valley. Still, although the escape to the Kidron valley saved the remnant during the destruction of Jerusalem, and although it enhanced the survival prospects of the remnant in the sense that it enabled the remnant to be dead and foreign to the order of the corruptible world, it was the social space of the city of the pillar and the wall, constituted by the practices of the righteous remnant, that safeguarded the community. Hence, in order to argue the rescue of the remnant from the hardships of the end-time 2 Baruch envisions the righteous community and its practices in spatial terms. The remnant and its righteous works are therefore themselves the main factors of end-time survival.

A central issue in the previous chapter was 2 Baruch’s stress on Baruch’s leadership. In the end-time, the acts of Baruch, the perfect community leader, were vital to the survival of the remnant. He atoned for the tribes, he instructed his followers and he comforted them with regard to their future prospects. Indeed, as that chapter pointed out, the leader and his acts were foundational to the space of the community. Since the leader distinguished for them light from darkness and life from death by his investigation of the Law, his presence among them was decisive for the continued existence of a protective spatial enclave.

2 Bar. 43 introduces an important shift in 2 Baruch. In that passage God announces to Baruch that Baruch will leave Mount Zion and that he will die, or otherwise leave the earth. Baruch obediently follows God’s command. He leaves Mount Zion for good and goes to Hebron. In Hebron he prepares for his ultimate departure from earth. In light of the conclusion of the previous chapter, this prospect challenges the very basis of the remnant’s spatial foundation and existence. If the leader in fact leaves the remnant, what will there be?

In the present chapter I will discuss how 2 Baruch envisions the effect of Baruch’s imminent departure from earth on the space of the remnant. The remnant is still in the wilderness of the end-time, but Baruch’s move from Mount Zion to Hebron affects the description of the
space of the remnant. How does Baruch’s move to Hebron change the description of the space of the remnant during the last days of Baruch’s life on earth? How does 2 Baruch picture the remnant’s space after Baruch has left them?

The Last Days and Deeds of Baruch

Announcing Baruch’s departure from the wicked world,1 God says:

You, then, Baruch, strengthen your heart for that which has been said to you, and trust the things which have been shown to you, because for you there are many eternal consolations. For you will go away from this place and leave these regions which are seen by you now. And you will forget that which is corruptible and you will not again remember those things which are among the mortal ones. Go therefore and command your people and come to this place, and afterwards fast seven days, and then I will come to you and speak with you (43:1–3).

This passage proclaims Baruch’s imminent departure from this world. According to 43:2, he will leave the place (atrā hānā) and regions (atra-wātā aylyyn) he dwells in, and leave behind everything that belongs to the corruptible world. In fact, 2 Baruch already hinted at Baruch’s near departure in 3:1–3:2.

And I said: O Lord, my Lord! Have I come to this world to see the evils of my mother? No, my Lord. If I have found mercy in your eyes, take first my spirit, that I may go to my fathers and not see the destruction of my mother. For both these two matters are pressing to me: I cannot resist you, but my soul also cannot see the evils of my mother.

This passage shows that Baruch is torn between life on earth and resting with the fathers already before the destruction of Jerusalem. However, the announcement of the approaching departure becomes explicit

1 2 Baruch’s descriptions of Baruch’s departure from the earth are not unanimous. He may die (e.g., 78:5; 84:1), or maybe his departure is better described as a rapture (13:3; 76:2). Himmelfarb has defined ‘rapture’ in the following manner: “Ascent to heaven at the initiative of God” (Ascent to Heaven, 5; Cf. also A.W. Zweip, The Ascension of the Messiah in Lukan Christology (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 74–75)). Probably, 2 Baruch is intentionally unclear on the issue, maybe to imitate other exemplary figures (Cf. 4 Ezra 14:9; L.A.B. 48:1–2; 2 En. 36; 64; Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to Deut 32; 34:5). In any case, Baruch will depart and be taken up (43:2; 46:7; 48:30). Cf. further Charles, Apocalypse of Baruch, 68–69; 73; Bogaert, Apocalypse de Baruch I, 113–119; II, 78; Whitters, Epistle, 44–45.

2 As well as in 13:3.