BEGINNING with the Babylonian exile in the 6th century BCE, the existence of a
growing number of Jews in the diaspora became a significant and challenging
factor in the history of the Jewish people. Already the book of Jeremiah wit-
tnesses to a controversial discourse on how Jews should behave in the situation
of exile and what they should expect from this situation for the future of the
people as a whole (cf. particularly the letter of Jeremiah to the exiles in Jer 29).
Six centuries later, after the divestiture of the Zealot attempt to free Israel from
Roman hegemony and the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE, the
relations between the Jewish diaspora and the homeland became even more a
divisive issue among the intellectual forces of the people. Some fifty years later,
one of these forces set the final seal of approval on the temple’s destruction
by military means against the Romans and thus enforced the development
towards a new kind of Rabbinic Judaism.¹

⁴ Baruch belongs to a group of Hellenistic-Jewish writings attributed to
Jeremiah and/or his scribe Baruch that have become particularly important
for the study of diaspora literature and the development of a diaspora identity
in close relation to the homeland after the events of 70 CE. The book is com-
posed as a fictitious retelling of the story of exile, and through the course of the
plot it establishes an interesting discourse on identity formation of the Jewish
people.² One of the most significant features of this discourse in ⁴ Baruch is

¹ For the complexity of the relationship between the homeland and the diaspora see, e.g.,
Isaiah M. Gafni, Land, Center and Diaspora: Jewish Constructs in Late Antiquity (JSPSup 21;
² On this issue see, e.g., (with particular focus on the Jewish diaspora in Egypt) John M. G.
Barcley, Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)
(Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996); Eric S. Gruen, Diaspora: Jews
the exchange of letters between the homeland, namely Jerusalem represented by Baruch, and the diaspora, represented by Jeremiah. The fictional interaction between these two different perspectives reveals a certain ideology of how its author—or its “Trägerkreise”—imagine the continuing relationship of diaspora Judaism to the homeland, and particularly to the mother city of Jerusalem, even after the temple would definitively remain destroyed. Judaism without temple is a Judaism effectively challenged to vitalize the mutual relation between diaspora and homeland. In this paper, I aim at presenting a broader perspective of this challenge of the Jewish people developed in 4 Baruch and identifying the inner-Jewish discourse on the relationship between Jerusalem and the diaspora at the beginning of the second century CE.

2 Contextualization of the Issue

In order to contextualize the story told in 4 Baruch, a few introductory remarks on its literary and historical setting may be in order. The common view situates its origin in close relation to the second Jewish revolt (132–135 CE), although it remains disputed whether 4 Baruch was written before or after the Bar-Kokhba war. This event and its outcome are perhaps as important for the history of the Jewish people as the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. It is thus no surprise that 4 Baruch retells the old story of the temple destruction from the 6th century and the following Babylonian exile in order to re-apply this
