

Dale C. Allison, Jr.
Testament of Abraham



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Loren T. Stuckenbruck
and
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For John Matthew

In remembrance of so many stories read together, including this one

Preface

Several years ago, I read some of the Pseudepigrapha to my children, who were then 6, 8, and 10. They hated *Joseph and Aseneth*. They liked the *Testament of Job*. But they loved the *Testament of Abraham*. Their delight in the latter, and a later request to hear it again, solidified my conviction that the *Testament of Abraham* is a wonderful story with potentially wide appeal. So when an invitation came to write a serious commentary upon the book, I eagerly accepted. As things have turned out, two years spent working on something other than the New Testament, my usual focus, has been both very enjoyable and very profitable; and I modestly hope that my efforts herein will contribute not only something to the academic understanding of early Judaism but that they might also help others to appreciate more a very entertaining and humane book—one which, in a better world, might have made it into the canon.

It remains for me to thank the following people: James H. Charlesworth, who first introduced me to the *Testament of Abraham* during graduate school at Duke University; Loren Stuckenbruck, who asked me to contribute to the series, Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature; Pieter van der Horst, the editor for this volume, who kindly read through the manuscript and offered learned suggestions for improvement; Claus-Jürgen Thornton, who expertly hastened the book through the publication process; Anita Johnson and the staff of the Barbour Library at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, who diligently obtained sometimes obscure, hard-to-get publications; Kathy Anderson, my much-appreciated secretary, who happily helped me with a million things, both large and small; and my wife, Kristine, and our children, Emily, Andrew, and John, who display constant love and—like the author of the *Testament of Abraham*—good humor.

Dale Allison

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Abbreviations

The following list consists of abbreviations used in this volume. In the book, these usually follow *The SBL Handbook of Style* (ed. by P. H. Alexander et al.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999). For reasons of space, however, the abbreviations used for biblical and other ancient sources, as well as technical abbreviations, are not included in this list; these likewise correspond to those abbreviations suggested in the *Handbook*. Ancient sources not mentioned in the *Handbook* are given abbreviations in an analogous form. In any case, the full titles of all ancient writings are provided in the Index of References.

ABD	D. N. Freedman (ed.), <i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> (6 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1992)
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
AGAJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
ALGHJ	Arbeiten zur Literatur und Geschichte des hellenistischen Judentums
ANET	J. B. Pritchard (ed.), <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> (3 rd ed.; Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University, 1955)
ANRW	W. Haase and H. Temporini (ed.), <i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> (95 vols.; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1972–)
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
BAGD	W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (2 nd ed., rev. F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker; Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago, 1979)
BAR	British Archaeological Reports
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BD	<i>Book of the Dead</i>
BE	<i>Bulletin Épigraphique</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum theologicarum Lovaniensium
BGU	<i>Ägyptische Urkunden aus den (K.) Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin. Griechische Urkunden</i>
BHM	A. Jellinek (ed.), <i>Bet ha-Midrash</i> (6 vols.; Leipzig: C. W. Vollrath, 1853–77; repr. Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1967)
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>

BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BS	M. Schwabe and B. Lifshitz, <i>Beth She'arim: The Greek Inscriptions</i> (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1974)
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZRG	Beihefte der Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CCGS	Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca
CE	<i>Chronique d'Égypte</i>
chap(s).	chapter(s)
CIG	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum</i>
CIJ	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum</i>
CIL	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>
CMC	Cologne Mani Codex
CPJ	<i>Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum</i>
CRINT	Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CT	A. de Buck, <i>The Egyptian Coffin Texts</i> (7 vols.; Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1935–61)
CTA	A. Herdner, <i>Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques découvertes à Ras Shamra-Ugarit de 1929 à 1939</i> (Paris: P. Geuthner, 1963)
DDD	K. van der Toorn (ed.), <i>Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible</i> (2 nd ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1999)
<i>Dict. Bib.</i>	<i>Dictionnaire de la Bible. Supplément</i> (Paris: Letouzey & Ané)
Suppl.	
Ecclus	Ecclesiasticus
ECLS	Early Christian Literature Series
EG	<i>Epigrammata Graeca</i>
FoiVie	<i>Foi et Vie</i>
fol., fols.	folio(s)
fr., frags.	fragment(s)
Gr.	Graecus
HO	Handbuch der Orientalistik
HSCP	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
IGA	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae antiquissimae</i>
IGRom	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JE	<i>Jewish Encyclopedia</i>
JECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
JIGRE	W. Horbury/D. Noy, <i>Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)

JIWE	D. Noy, <i>Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe</i> (2 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993–95)
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JSHRZ	<i>Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit</i>
JSJ	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSP	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series
JSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LSJ	H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, and H. S. Jones, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> (9 th ed.; with rev. supplements; Oxford: Clarendon, 1996)
LXX	Septuagint
MAMA	<i>Monumenta Asiae minoris antiqua</i>
MT	Masoretic Text
NovTSup	Novum Testament Supplements
NT	New Testament
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OGI	<i>Orientis Graeci inscriptiones selectae</i>
OT	Old Testament
OTL	Old Testament Library
P. Bod.	<i>Papyrus Bodmer</i>
P. Fay.	<i>Papyrus Fayyum</i>
P. Lond.	<i>Papyrus London</i>
P. Oxy.	<i>Papyrus Oxyrhynchus</i>
P. Chester Beatty	<i>Papyrus Chester Beatty</i>
PG	J.-P. Migne (ed.), <i>Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Graeca</i> (Paris: Migne et al., 1.1857–167.1866)
PGM	K. Preisendanz, <i>Papyri Graecae Magicae</i> (2 vols.; Leipzig: Teubner, 1928–31; repr. Leipzig and Munich: Saur, 2001)
PSI	<i>Papiri Greci e Latini</i> (Pubblicazioni della Società Italiana per la Ricerca dei Papiri Greci e Latini in Egitto, Florence)
RAC	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i>
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
RecLng.	Long recension (of the Testament of Abraham)
RecShrt.	Short recension (of the Testament of Abraham)
RGRW	Religions in the Graeco-Roman World
RHR	<i>Revue de l'histoire des religions</i>
RSR	<i>Recherches de sciences religieuses</i>
SAC	Studies in Antiquity and Christianity

SANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
SB	<i>Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLEJL	Society of Biblical Literature Early Judaism and Its Literature
SBLSCS	Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>SecCent</i>	<i>The Second Century</i>
<i>SEG</i>	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i>
SFSHJ	South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism
SHR	Studies in the History of Religions
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SHAW	Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha
TA	<i>Testament of Abraham</i>
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> (10 vols.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964–76)
Theod.	Theodotion
TLZ	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TQ	<i>Theologische Quartalschrift</i>
TS	Texts and Studies
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum/Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism
TT	Society of Biblical Literature. Texts and Translations
TTPS	Society of Biblical Literature. Texts and Translations. Pseudepigrapha Series
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
UT	Ugaritic Texts
UUA	Uppsala Universitets årsskrift
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

INTRODUCTION

The *Testament of Abraham* (hereafter *TA*) first came to the attention of western academics with the publication, in 1892, of the critical edition of M. R. James. In contrast to the meager report in Gen 25:7–10, the book imaginatively recounts the dramatic and humorous circumstances of Abraham's death. When the day for the patriarch to depart this life draws near, God sends an angel, the Commander-in-chief Michael, to tell the philanthropist to set his affairs in order and otherwise prepare to die. When the archangel descends and greets the virtuous man, the latter fails to recognize his heavenly visitor, although he was one of three angels who, under the oaks of Mamre, announced the birth of Abraham's beloved son, Isaac (Genesis 18). The earthly host shows such hospitality to his mysterious houseguest and is so good-natured and pious that the angel cannot bring himself to deliver his message. Excusing himself, Michael returns to heaven, from which God sends him once again to tell Abraham that his end is near.

Going back to Abraham, Michael eventually reveals his true identity and his mission. Abraham, however, refuses to co-operate. The man who, in the biblical tradition, is the paradigm of submission to God's will here disobeys his lord. Eventually, the patriarch proposes a bargain: he will relinquish life if he is first shown all the creation. God agrees, and Abraham travels upon a cloud to behold the world. But God, who is far more compassionate than the sinless saint, has to bring the tour to a premature halt when the patriarch begins calling down death upon the people he spies sinning.

Abraham is next taken to the place of judgment, where he witnesses the post-mortem weighing of souls and learns compassion for sinners. Upon returning to earth, however, he reneges on his deal and again refuses to give up his soul. At this point, God retires Michael and, in his place, commissions Death to take the patriarch's life. Although Abraham likewise refuses to co-operate with this new visitor, his obstinance does not matter. Death, after revealing his terror and decay, manages to trick him and draw forth his soul anyway. And so the book ends, with Abraham never having composed a will or accepted his own death.

I. The Greek Texts

The Testament of Abraham exists in two very different Greek recensions. *Witnesses to the Long Recension (hereafter RecLng.)*¹

- A Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds grec 770, fols. 225v–241r; dated 1315. James privileged this manuscript, which Schmidt prints as the best representative of RecLng., although he corrects lacunae and other clear errors, usually with the assistance of A's closest relatives (see below).² A is in a collection that contains a version of the *Dormitio Mariae*, a book with many parallels to TA 20.
- B Jerusalem, Library of the Armenian Patriarch, Holy Sepulcher 66, fols. 256r–276r; 15th century. This is also bound in a collection with a version of the *Dormitio*.
- C Oxford, Bodleian, Canonicianus grec. 19, fols. 128v–144v; 15th century. C “came from Venice with the rest of the Canonici MSS. and may have been copied there direct from E, to which it shews the closest similarity, only differing here and there by accidental omission, and more frequently by an increased tendency to itacism.”³
- D Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds grec 1556, fols. 22r–32v; 14th century.
- E Vienna, Theol. grec. 333 (formerly 337), fols. 34r–57r; 11th century. The oldest RecLng. witness; see the edition of Vassiliev.
- F Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds grec 1313, fols. 32v–37v; 15th century. The text ends in 5:2.
- G Istanbul, Library of the Patriarch Panaghias 130, fols. 140r–153r; 17th century (not used by James). The title of G, like that of L, attributes TA to Chrysostom.
- H Andros, Zoodochos Pigi Monastery 9, fols. 65v–81r; 16th century (not used by James). The title credits TA to the monk Hesychias.
- I Ankara, Library of the Turkish Historical Society, Gr. 60, pp. 267–320; 16th century (not used by James).
- J Montpellier, Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Médecine, Gr. 405, fols. 61r–83r; 15th–16th century (not used by James, although he knew of its existence).

¹ Scholars have, following James, labeled the long recension A, the short recension B. This is confusing as the letters represent manuscripts in both recensions, so I have preferred RecLng. and RecShrt. for the long and short recensions respectively.

² James, *Testament*, 1: “the best MS of the Longer Recension which I have used.” Schmidt, *Testament*, 29, finds *homoioteleuton* in A 2:7–8; 4:1; 7:7; 8:8; 9:8–10:1; 10:9; 11:1–2, 3, 6; 12:7; 13:9; 14:6; 16:3, 6; 17:14 (bis); 19:13–14; 20:6.

³ So James, *Testament*, 3.

- K Jerusalem, Library of the Greek Patriarch, Saint Saba 373, fols. 405r–411v; 16th century (not used by James). The text is fragmentary and has this order: 1:1–2:4; 7:8–8:11; 11:5–19:4; 2:5–6:5.
- L Venice, Marcienne, Gr. VII, 39 (coll. 1386), formerly Nanius CLV, fols. 359r–378v; 16th century (not used by James). Like G, this makes Chrysostom the author.
- M London, British Museum, Addit. 25881, fols. 366r–378r; 16th century (not used by James).
- N Athos, Monastery of Panteleimon 631, fols. 49r–67v; 17th century (not used by James). Chaps. 19–20 are abbreviated, and the language is modernized.⁴
- O Jerusalem, Library of the Greek Patriarch, Saint Saba 492, pp. 33–44; 18th century (not used by James). The beginning of the text is mutilated; it starts at 7:7.
- P Bologne, University Library of Bologna 2702 (formerly 579), fols. 129r–152v; 15th century (not used by James).
- Q Athos, Monastery of Constamonitou 14, pp. 358–91; 15th century (not used by James).
- R Patmos, Monastery of Saint John 572, fols. 186v–193v; 16th century (not used by James). This is mutilated after Isaac’s dream. It contains a unique conclusion, based upon Ps.-Cyril of Alexandria, *Hom. diversae* 14. Schmidt’s edition prints the Greek text of this ending (fols. 190r–193v) on pp. 170–73.
- S Athens, Faculty of Modern Greek and Byzantine Philology cod. Sp. P. Lambros 10, fols. 110r–150v; 17th century (not used by James). The Greek is modernized. See Agouridès’ edition.
- T Therapnes, Monastery of the Holy Forty Martyrs 53, fols. 102r–121v; 18th century (not used by James).
- U Andros, Monastery of Saint Nicholas 8, fols. 37v–43v; 18th century (not used by James).
- V Meteora, Monastery of the Transfiguration 414, fols. 44v–56v; 17th century (not used by James). The text is mutilated and the order is as follows: 1:1–3:10; 16:5–20:10; 4:9–8:5.
- W Sinai, Saint Catherine’s Monastery, Gr. 431, fols. 80v–94r; 15th century (not used by James). Schmidt did not have access to this manuscript when constructing his critical apparatus.

Schmidt has established, largely on the basis of common omissions, that RecL^{ng}. contains three subgroups. A G H I K N and B F J Q W (the latter agree in omitting 19:14–20:5) have the longest text. C E P V and D L M represent a shorter text: they omit 5:11–6:8; 8:6–8; 13:10–14; 14:11–12; 17:7–8; 19:4–6; and 19:8–16. D L M further skip 17:4–8. These omissions are clearly secondary; that is, the longest text is older. O S T U, which are

⁴ See Schmidt, *Testament*, 26.

from the 17th and 18th centuries and are in modern Greek, contain most of the omissions common to C E V P and D L M and represent an even shorter text, which again is secondary.

In addition to the witnesses just listed, some manuscripts remain unedited. Three represent RecLng.: Cluj, Library of the Romanian Academy ms. 364, pp. 5–60 (17th century); Chios, Public Library, ms. A, collection of K. Amantos, fols. 44v–67r (17th century); and Berlin, Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, Gr. 320 (Graec. quart. 22), fols. 65r–80v (15th century; lost during World War Two). Two additional manuscripts are of unknown affiliation: Sinai, Saint Catherine’s Monastery, Gr. 1936, fols. 193r–211r (17th century), and Sinai, Catherine’s Monastery, Gr. 1937, fols. 32v–88v (17th century).

Readers interested in studying the variants to *TA* must consult Schmidt’s apparatus, which renders James’ edition obsolete. The present commentary generally restricts its annotations to variants that significantly alter the sense or that illustrate an important tendency in the textual tradition, particularly the tendency to shorten *TA*, which bears on the issue of how the recensions developed; see p. 20.

The translation of RecLng. herein closely follows Schmidt’s critical edition, which means that it usually translates A. I have, however, occasionally judged that A contains a younger and inferior reading, in which case I have translated another variant and usually noted the departure from A in the textual notes.

Witnesses to the Short Recension (hereafter RecShrt.)

- A Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Fonds grec 1613, fols. 87v–96v; 15th century. James thought this the best witness to RecShrt., but he had access only to A B and C.
- B Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Supplément grec 162, fols. 106v–114v; 14th century. This modern Greek text breaks off at 13:15.
- C Vienna, Hist. gr. 126, fol. 10v–18r; 14th century. 13:8–14:6 is missing. This shows occasional knowledge of a RecLng. reading. Michael is a στρατιώτης in 2:4 (cf. RecLng. 2:2, 4) and Adam is the πρωτόπλαστος in 8:12 (cf. RecLng. 11:9–11; 13:2, 5).
- D Milan, Ambrosienne, Grec 259 (D 92 sup.), fols. 115r–118v; 11th century (not used by James).
- E Milan, Ambrosienne, Grec 405 (G 63 sup.), fols. 164r–171r; 11th century (not used by James). This is the basis for Schmidt’s critical edition of RecShrt. fam. E. It contains more Semitisms and fewer late words than other members of RecShrt. and is likewise closer to the Coptic and Slavonic. It is clearly the best RecShrt. witness, as Schmidt has demonstrated.⁵

⁵ Schmidt, *Testament*, 10–14.

- F Meteora, Monastery of the Transfiguration 382, fols. 123r–130v; 15th century (not used by James).
- G London, British Museum, Addit. 10014, fols. 38r–39v; 16th century (not used by James). The text breaks off at 4:9.
- H Athens, Society of History and Ethnology 254, fols. 215r–221r; 16th century (not used by James). The manuscript ends at 7:10.
- I Athos, Monastery of Koutloumous 176, fols. 106v–112v; date: 1438–1439 (not used by James). The ending (14:6–7) of I is close to RecLng.’s ending (20:8–15). 7:15–9:4 is missing.

B F G constitute a family sufficiently different from A C D E H I that Schmidt prints two RecShrt. texts, with B and E as the primary witnesses. The present translation of RecShrt. consistently renders Schmidt’s edition of RecShrt. fam. E.

II. The Other Versions

Coptic

The oldest copy of *TA* is a fragmentary fifth-century Sahidic papyrus, unfortunately yet unpublished, held by the Institut für Altertumskunde of the University of Cologne.⁶ It is reportedly close to the complete Bohairic text in Vaticanus Copt. 61, fols. 148v–163v (dated 962), which I. Guidi published in 1900.⁷ There are translations of this latter manuscript into English, French, and German.⁸ The Coptic, although abridged, is for the most part close to RecShrt. Schmidt characterizes it as “une adaptation plutôt qu’une traduction.”⁹ In a few places the Coptic agrees with RecLng. against RecShrt. Abraham’s vision of the heavenly judgment is told in the first person singular, as in RecLng. 12:1–3 and (perhaps) 11:4–5; and in the Sahidic papyrus, Death has the faces of a basilisk and a panther, as in RecLng. 19:14.

Arabic

Of the several Arabic manuscripts, only Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris Arabic ms. 132 fols. 2r–10v (dated 1629) has been published, and that just in part.¹⁰ There are perhaps half a dozen additional unedited manuscripts.¹¹ W. E. Barnes supplied a partial English translation of ms. 132 for James,

⁶ Cornelia Römer and Heinz J. Thissen, “P. Köln Inv. nr. 3221: Das Testament des Hiob in koptischer Sprache. Ein Vorbericht,” in *Studies on the Testament of Job* (ed. Michael A. Knibb and Pieter W. van der Horst; SNTSMS 66; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 33–34.

⁷ Guidi, “Il testo copto del Testamento di Abramo.”

⁸ MacRae, “Coptic Testament”; M. Chaîne, in Delcor, *Testament*, 186–213; Andersson, “Abraham’s Vermächtnis.”

⁹ Schmidt, *Testament*, 40. J. T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumrân Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 105, gives no reason for his idiosyncratic judgment that “the oldest, and the original, text is preserved in the Coptic recension.”

¹⁰ Zotenberg, *Manuscrits orientaux*.

¹¹ Details in Delcor, *Testament*, 17, and Schmidt, *Testament*, 42–43.

and Delcor's commentary appends a French translation by Marius Chaîne and Philippe Marçais.¹² The Arabic derives from the Coptic.¹³

Ethiopic

There are two Ethiopian versions of *TA*, one Falasha, one Christian.¹⁴ They are closely related, the Falasha perhaps being derived from the Christian text.¹⁵ The latter is attested only by the fragmentary Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris Ethiopic ms. 134, fols. 1r–5r (15th century). Aaron Zeev Aešcoly has edited this and supplied a French translation.¹⁶ The Falasha is known from several manuscripts. Conti Rossini and Aešcoly have published critical editions of Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris Ethiopic ms. 107, fols. 20v–26r (19th century), the latter with a French translation, and Leslau has translated the same manuscript into English.¹⁷ A second Falasha manuscript is Cambridge University Library Ethiopic 1878 (19th century), which Maurice Gaguine edited for his 1961 Manchester Dissertation.¹⁸ This dissertation also discusses and prints variants from other Christian manuscripts for which there are no modern printed editions. According to Leslau, “there is no doubt that Arabic was the source of the Ethiopic translation The very close correspondence between the two texts, as well as the words copied from Arabic, such as *'atal*, ‘tamarisk,’ or misunderstood expressions such as *qirn*, ‘enemy,’ instead of *qarn*, ‘ray,’ is adequate proof of dependence.”¹⁹

¹² James, *Testament*, 135–39; Delcor, *Testament*, 242–52.

¹³ See Schmidt, *Testament*, 43, who argues that the Arabic is closer to the Bohairic than to the Sahidic. James did not recognize the priority of the Coptic over the Arabic.

¹⁴ For a list of the manuscripts see Denis et al., “Testament” (2000), 185–87.

¹⁵ So Leslau, *Falasha Anthology*, 94–95 (“almost certainly”).

¹⁶ Aešcoly, *Recueil de textes falachas*, 66–75. There is a second French translation by Marius Chaîne and André Caquot in Delcor, *Testament*, 221–24.

¹⁷ Conti Rossini, “Nuovi appunti sui Guidei d’Abissinia”; Aešcoly, *Recueil de textes falachas*, 49–67; Leslau, *Falasha Anthology*, 96–102.

¹⁸ Gaguine, “Falasha Version.” Delcor, *Testament*, 19–23, summarizes some of Gaguine’s conclusions. Gaguine raises the possibility that one Ethiopic manuscript, which attributes its contents to Frumentius, that is, Abba Salama, a fourth-century bishop of Axum, whom Athanasius consecrated, might be correct, which would mean that *TA* was translated into Ethiopic in the fourth century.

¹⁹ Leslau, *Falasha Anthology*, 95.

Slavonic

According to Émile Turdeanu, the Slavonic witnesses, which go back to a translation of the tenth century or earlier, fall into four families. He labels these S1, S2, S3, and S4.²⁰ S1, represented by seven witnesses, is the most important, and its best witnesses are mss. P (Moscow Public Library 27, collection of P. I. Sevast'anov, fols. 1r–6r; 13th century; Middle Bulgarian) and T (Trinity Saint Sergius Monastery Moscow 730, fols. 2r–10v; 16th century; Russian Church Slavonic).²¹ Donald S. Cooper and Harry B. Weber have translated P into English and filled its lacunae with readings from T.²²

S1 and S2 are closely related to RecShrt. E. Schmidt thinks they derive from a near relative of that manuscript.²³ Cooper and Weber, however, note that there are also agreements with B F G and other RecShrt. witnesses against E, so “the relationships involved are more complex than the simple grouping of the Church Slavonic texts with E would indicate.”²⁴ S3 and S4, which are shorter than S1 and S2, likewise belong to the RecShrt. family.

Romanian

TA was popular in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Romania, and it is represented by about two dozen manuscripts in the Biblioteca Academiei Române in Bucharest. Moses Gaster produced the first edition of the Romanian in 1886 (with an English translation). He used three witnesses, one fragmentary. Nicolae Roddy's critical edition, published in 2001, now supersedes his work. Roddy takes into account almost all of the known Romanian witnesses. Like Gaster, he too supplies an English translation.

Three of the Romanian manuscripts represent RecShrt. and go back to a Slavic prototype related to Turdeanu's families S3 and S4. This means that they are inferior witnesses to RecShrt.²⁵ The remainder of the Romanian manuscripts belong to RecLng., and Roddy bases his critical edition upon these. Both Schmidt and Roddy show that the longer Romanian is in fact most closely related to Greek manuscripts D L M. Roddy further

²⁰ Turdeanu, *Apocryphes*, 202–38.

²¹ For P see Polívka, “Die apokryphische Erzählung”; for T see Tixonravov, *Literatury*, 79–90.

²² Cooper and Weber, “Slavonic Testament.”

²³ Schmidt, *Testament*, 33–36.

²⁴ Cooper and Weber, “Slavonic Testament,” 304.

²⁵ Turdeanu, *Apocryphes*, 28–29, 32–33. Text in Petriceicu-Hasdeu, *Cărțile*, 189–94.

argues that “the Romanian version was copied [at the beginning of the 17th century] from a single prototype which had entered the region north of the Danube through one of a number of Wallachian monasteries. There it was transformed in more ways than a simple translation before it was disseminated throughout Romanian-speaking regions.”²⁶

²⁶ Roddy, *Romanian Version*, 18–19.

III. The Relation of the Two Greek Recensions

James, the first editor of *TA*, thought that *RecLng.*, which is almost twice the length of *RecShrt.*, “presents us with what is on the whole the fullest, clearest, and most consistent narrative. Its language, however, has been to some extent mediaevalised”; *RecShrt.*, by contrast, is “an abridgement whose language is on the whole more simple and original than that of *A.* It omits much, and in several places adulterates the narrative It is not an abridgement of *A.*”²⁷ James nonetheless thought that, in a few instances, *RecShrt.* is probably more primitive—elements of Isaac’s vision in chap. 7, for example, and Abraham’s anxiety about being too large to squeeze through the narrow gate in 9:1–3. Perhaps most students of *TA*, including Box and Sanders, have accepted James’ conviction about the fundamental priority of *RecLng.*²⁸

Turner, focusing on the linguistic data, argued instead for the relative priority of *RecShrt.*²⁹ On his view, both its vocabulary and syntax show it to be for the most part a pre-Christian translation of a Hebrew original. He dated the original Greek text behind *RecShrt.* to the second century BCE, and he thought it came into being shortly after the Hebrew *RecLng.*, while also a translation from Hebrew, is later and for the most part secondary. Although it derives from a text written 70 BCE – 70 CE, its present form must be, given the vocabulary, later than the fifth or sixth century CE.³⁰ Yet Turner acknowledged that, at some points, *RecLng.* is more primitive. In *RecShrt.* 6:1–2, Isaac asks Abraham to open the door, after which he

²⁷ James, *Testament*, 49.

²⁸ Box, *Testament*, xii–xv; Sanders, “Testament,” 872. Cf. Colafemmina, *Testamento*, 9. Box finds *RecShrt.* original in several particulars—the tamarisk tree with 300 branches (3:2), Michael’s ascent for prayer at sunset (4:4), the removal of Abraham’s soul “as in a dream” (14:6). He also believes that *RecLng.* has “amplified” the description of Death (chap. 17).

²⁹ Turner, “Testament,” 48–100, 194–257.

³⁰ Turner later retracted some of his opinions in correspondence with Sanders, including his claims about a Hebrew original; see Sanders, “Testament,” 873, n. 14. For a later statement of his more nuanced views see Turner, “Testament” (1984), 393–96.

arises (ἀνέστη) and opens the door. In RecLng. 5:8, Isaac asks Abraham to arise (ἀνάστα) and open the door, after which, in 5:9, Abraham arises (ἀναστάς) and opens the door. According to Turner, RecShrt. presupposes the fuller request in RecLng.³¹ Given that this is not, for him, an isolated instance, that he finds other places where the two recensions seemingly supplement each other, he judges that RecLng. is based not upon RecShrt. but rather upon a Greek text antecedent to RecShrt., and that RecShrt. is actually a shortened version of something longer.

Schmidt has also argued, in accord with Turner's linguistic observations, for the relative priority of RecShrt.³² He stresses the importance in particular of ms. E, which has support from the Coptic and Slavic and is the oldest Greek witness to RecShrt. He further contends that there are certain Egyptian ideas in RecLng. alone whereas both RecShrt. and RecLng. show points of connection with Iranian religion. His explanation for this is that RecShrt. is closer to the hypothetical original than RecLng.: Palestinian circles influenced by Zoroastrianism produced something close to RecShrt. in the first century while RecLng. represents a revision made in Egypt during the second or early third century.³³ The Bohairic, moreover, may represent a stage intermediate between the two Greek recensions.³⁴

Nickelsburg, in dialogue with Schmidt, has urged that RecLng. is "more artful" than RecShrt.; it has "shape and plot, and out of these, a discernible point to make" whereas the shorter is "a potpourri of incidents, elements, and characters, with little evident structure, plot, and relationships among the characters."³⁵ Furthermore, items integral to RecLng. appear also in RecShrt., where they have no obvious *raison d'être*. While Abraham's

³¹ Turner, "Testament," 255.

³² Schmidt, "Testament," 115–24; "Two Recensions."

³³ Already Box, *Testament*, xxviii–xxix, had a similar view: "the story in its original (Hebrew) form probably grew up in the first half of the first century A.D. ... This probably formed the basis of a free Greek version, which was embellished with some special features (e.g. in the description of the Angel of Death) which owed their origin to Egypt (Alexandria)." Schmidt may not be right in his generalization about the absence of Egyptian elements from RecShrt., for Enoch as the heavenly scribe appears only in RecShrt., and his functions are reminiscent of the scribe-god Thoth, who records the outcome of the postmortem assize. Further, RecLng. may have some Iranian elements unique to it; see on 17:8.

³⁴ Given, however, that RecLng. and RecShrt. sometimes agree with each other against the Bohairic, this last proposition seems problematic; see George W. E. Nickelsburg, Jr., "Eschatology," 63.

³⁵ Nickelsburg, "Eschatology"; "Structure and Message." The quotation is from p. 93 of the latter. For Schmidt's response to Nickelsburg see "The Two Recensions."

request to see the whole world is part of a delaying tactic in RecLng., it has no motivation in RecShrt. And whereas, in RecLng., the soul singled out in chap. 11, with its good and evil deeds balanced, becomes an opportunity to teach Abraham a lesson about mercy, in RecShrt. the soul enters and exits the story without contributing to the wider plot. Nickelsburg describes RecShrt. as in part “the result of a clumsy process of oral transmission, in which the storyteller(s) badly garbled the tradition.”³⁶

Ludlow contends that RecLng. gives us “the best sense of the original comic, parodic tale.”³⁷ RecShrt., by contrast, lacks the whimsical elements typical of the original story.³⁸ Like Nickelsburg, he notes that some of the narrative elements common to both recensions have a clear function only in RecLng. Michael’s tears, for example, turn into stones (or a stone in RecShrt.). Only in RecLng., however, does this miracle play any further role in the story: when Abraham seeks to persuade Sarah that he knows Michael’s true identity, he brings forth the stones, which he has hidden (6:7). RecShrt. nowhere returns to the metamorphosis, so the miracle is not integrated into the surrounding story. Again, in RecLng. it is precisely Abraham’s refusal to follow Michael that leads to God sending Death. In RecShrt., where Abraham does not resist Michael, Death’s advent has no rhyme or reason. RecShrt., then, seems to presuppose something like RecLng., where Death comes because Michael fails.

One of Ludlow’s contributions is to observe that there are contacts between RecLng. and both families of RecShrt., B F G as well as E. This entails that there is no simple linear relationship between the three families. This fact, among others, leads Ludlow to posit the following analysis:



³⁶ Nickelsburg, “Structure and Message,” 93.

³⁷ Ludlow, *Abraham*, 180. See the whole discussion, pp. 152–80, and note the generalization on pp. 119–20: “Recension A focused on a ‘cause-effect’ type plot as part of its comic strategy: to show Abraham’s cunning and stubbornness advancing the events of the story. Recension B seems to have more disconnected episodes (particularly in the second half) because it adapted these events from Recension A but without the same narrative context.”

³⁸ Cf. Gruen, *Diaspora*, 183: RecLng. “is the fuller, the more absorbing, the more coherent, and—by far—the funnier.”

In the judgment of the present writer, when all is said and done, James's judgment, which holds RecShrt.'s much shorter story line to be secondary, is sound. Yet the issue remains very complex.³⁹

1. One need not, in theory, regard either recension as prior. It is conceivable that an earlier *TA* was shorter than RecLng. and longer than RecShrt., that neither is more faithful to the hypothetical original. One should also keep in mind the good possibility that, in one or more particulars, neither recension preserves the original. There may be sections in which both have moved away from an older text. One place where this seems likely is in the judgment scene in chap. 11; see pp. 239–41.

2. Although the two recensions typically recount the same events with different words, there is enough overlap in vocabulary to show that they go back to the same Greek exemplar. They cannot represent independent translations of a Semitic *TA*; see pp. 86–88 and 149–51.

3. As James observed, and as Turner's dissertation establishes at length, the language of RecShrt. is more Semitic and less ecclesiastical than RecLng.⁴⁰ RecLng. is not, however, devoid of Semitisms. The following are among the more obvious:

ἄγγελος κυρίου: 6:1; 7:12

ἀμὴν: 2:12; 8:7; 14:5; 18:10; 20:2, 15

ἄρχομαι, pleonastic: 5:9; 7:2

δοξάζω τὸν θεόν: 15:5

ἐκ γὰρ τῶν τριῶν ἀνδρῶν οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ εἷς ἐξ αὐτῶν (resumptive pronoun): 6:5

ἐν ῥιπῇ ὀφθαλμοῦ: 4:5

καὶ ἰδοῦ: 2:1

πάντας τοὺς υἱοὺς τῶν ἀνθρώπων: 2:4; 4:3 (cf. 16:6: τοὺς υἱοὺς τῶν ἀνθρώπων)

προσώπου + genitive following ἀπό, ἐκ, πρό: 2:1; 9:5; 12:9, 12; 15:11, 14

ῥῆμα = *res*: 13:8

σπλάγχνον of tender emotions: 3:9; 5:10, 14

τάδε λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός: 8:5; 9:4, 7

χερουβίκος: 9:8; 10:1

ψυχὴ = "person": 2:3, 12

verb often placed first (or immediately after the copula): 1:1, 2, 3, 4, 7; 2:1, 2, 4, 8, 9, 10, 12; 3:1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12; etc.

For full discussion of these and other possible Semitisms readers may consult Turner's lengthy discussion.

³⁹ See esp. Kraft, "Recensional Problem."

⁴⁰ Turner, "Testament," 48–107, 195–249.

Turner himself at one time urged that the two recensions are translations of a Hebrew work, to which RecShrt. is more faithful. This is very far from certain. Not only does Raymond Martin's statistical work fail to establish a Semitic origin for either recension,⁴¹ but one can scarcely exclude the possibility of a redactor who, because he grew up speaking Hebrew or because he was immersed in biblical Greek, introduced Semitisms. Certainly scribes sometimes introduced Semitisms into New Testament texts.⁴² As for the supposed Hebrew original, Sanders has observed that, while RecShrt. can easily be translated into Hebrew, "it is the classical Hebrew of the early narrative sections of the Bible that emerges, not any form of late Hebrew as known from the late canonical books, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and rabbinic literature."⁴³ And because there are Greek works that imitate LXX translation Greek—Luke's infancy narrative comes to mind—but no later Hebrew texts that emulate classical biblical prose, it seems best to infer that *TA* was composed in "Semitizing Greek."⁴⁴

4. The Greek of RecLng. is, without question, on the whole later than the Greek of RecShrt. One must indeed suspect the following words and phrases, found in RecLng. but not RecShrt., of being Christian and/or medieval:

ἀβόστακτος meaning "intolerable" is rare outside of Christian sources; see on 17:17

ἄγγελος ... ὁ ἐπὶ τὸ πῦρ ἔχων τὴν ἐξουσίαν echoes Rev 14:8; see on 13:11

ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος + ὁ + characterization of God appears in Rev 4:8 and later Christian texts; see on 3:3

ἀδελφοί μου ἀγαπητοί is a New Testament and typically Christian expression; see on 20:15

ἀμέτρητος after ἔλεος is a patristic idiom; see on 14:9

ἀμήν and ἀμήν, ἀμήν, prefatory, come from the Jesus tradition; see on 2:12 and 20:2

ἀμήν γένοιτο is common in Christian texts, beginning with *Prot. Jas.* 13; see on 2:12

ἀμόλυντος with moral application is characteristically Christian; see on 11:12

⁴¹ Raymond A. Martin, "Syntax Criticism." His conclusion is that "net frequencies do not put either recension in the translated or the original Greek ranges of the scale, though Recension B is just a little shy of falling into the translated Greek range." For criticism of Martin see Kraft, "Recensional Problem," 133–35. Box, *Testament*, xxviii, already opined: "it must be confessed that the Greek does not read like a translation."

⁴² Sanders, *Tendencies*, 190–255.

⁴³ Sanders, "Testament," 873.

⁴⁴ So too Delcor, *Testament*, 32–34.

- ἀναίσχυντον πρόσωπον has its closest parallels in late patristic texts; see on 16:1
 ἀνύμνησις does not appear otherwise until the sixth century CE; see on 20:13
 ἀνυπόφορος is typical of Byzantine writers; see on 19:6
 ἡ ἄνω βασιλεία has parallels in patristic but not Jewish Greek texts; see on 7:7
 τῶν ἄνω δυνάμεων qualifying Μιχαήλ is popular with Christian writers; see on 9:3
 ἀξιωθῶμεν τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς at the end of a book is standard for Christian hagiography; see on 20:15
 ὁράτος πατήρ is a Christian expression; see on 9:7
 ἡ ἀπάγουσα εἰς τὴν ζωὴν comes from Matt 7:14; see on 11:10
 ἡ ἀπάγουσα εἰς τὴν ἀπώλειαν comes from Matt 7:13; see on 11:11
 ἀπὸ μηκόθεν appears often in Epiphanius and is characteristic of later Greek; see on 2:2
 ἄχραντος, of a voice, occurs in Severianus Gabalensis and Photius; see on 20:13
 δοξάζοντες τῷ πατρὶ καὶ τῷ υἱῷ κ.τ.λ. ends countless Christian books; see on 20:15
 ἐν ἀληθείᾳ θεοῦ λόγου is a Christian idiom; see on 20:2
 δέησις καὶ εὐχή seems to be Byzantine; see on 14:6
 δέσποτα παντοκράτωρ in direct address to God may have only Christian parallels; see on 8:3
 καὶ δεῦρο ἀκολούθει μοι is from the Jesus tradition; see on 20:3
 δευτέρα παρουσίᾳ has no Jewish parallel but is popular in Christian writers; see on 13:6
 δι' ἄκραν ἀγαθότηταν has parallels in Theodore the Studite and Maximus the Confessor; see on 14:14
 δίκαιους καὶ ἀμαρτωλούς is typical of patristic sources; see on 13:3
 δοξολογία is rare in non-Christian texts; cf. Sophocles, *Lex.*, s.v., and see on 20:13
 εἴ τις τὸ ἔργον κατακαύσει is from Paul; see on 13:12
 εἴ τις δὲ τὸ ἔργον τὸ πῦρ δοκιμάσει ... σῶζεσθαι comes from 1 Cor 3:10–15; see on 13:13
 εἰσερχομένης διὰ τῆς στενῆς πύλης is influenced by Matt 7:13–14; see on 11:7
 ἐκφοβεῖν τὴν ψυχὴν may have only patristic parallels; see on 16:5
 ἐν ἀμαρτίᾳ διάγοντας has its closest parallels in Tit 3:3 and Chrysostom; see on 10:13
 ἐνδόξου ... παρουσίας is typical of Christian writers from the second century on; see on 13:4
 ἐνδοξότης is a late word, most common in Justinian; see on 16:4
 ἔξωθεν τῶν πυλῶν may be confined to Byzantine sources; see on 11:4
 ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὸ στήθος αὐτοῦ κλαίων derives from John 13:25 and 21:20; see on 20:6
 ἐπουράνια πνεύματα may be attested only in Christian writings; see on 4:9
 ζηλώω + πολιτεία is characteristic of Christian hagiography; see on 20:15
 ζυγάς appears to be late and exclusively Christian; see on 12:18
 τὸν θάνατον βλέπειν, unlike “to taste death,” is likely a Christian idiom; see on 19:10
 τὸν θάνατον τοῦ ἀμαρτωλοῦ ἕως οὗ ἐπιστρέψαι belongs to a Christian textual tradition; see on 10:14

ἡ τοῦ θανάτου δρεπάνη has precise parallels only in Christian texts; see on 4:11
 τοῦ θανάτου πικρὸν ποτήριον seems to be a Byzantine expression; see on 1:4
 θαῦμα θαυμάτων appears only in Christian sources beginning with Hippolytus; see
 on 7:10

ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατήρ, unqualified, is common in patristic writers; see on 20:12
 θεοῦφαντος meaning “divinely woven” is known from patristic texts after the fifth
 century; see on 20:10

θρόνος φοβερός is Byzantine; see on 12:3–4

καθέκαστον is common in Byzantine literature; see on 9:3

καθότι ἔθος is known elsewhere only in late Scholia; see on 2:2

καθυπουργέω is rare until patristic times; see on 12:17

κἄν τε ἀγαθὸν κἄν τε πονηρὸν is most common in patristic sources; see on 6:8

κατήλθε ... ὁ ἰδρῶς ... αὐτοῦ ὡσεὶ θρόμβοι αἵματος belongs to a Jesus typology; see
 on 20:5

οἱ κλέπται ... κλέψαι καὶ θῦσαι καὶ ἀπολέσαι is from John 10:10; see on 10:5

κρίναι τὸν κόσμον is Christian apart from *Sib. Or.* 4:184; see on 13:4

κρίσις καὶ ἀνταπόδοσις is characteristic of Christian writers, not Jewish Greek texts;
 see on 10:15

ὁ κριτὴς τῶν ἀπάντων καὶ θεός in 20:3 is a Christian appellation for the divinity;
 see on 14:2

λυπέω καὶ ἀδημονέω are also co-ordinated in Matt 26:37 and several Church
 Fathers; see on 7:5

μάταιος κόσμος is a common Christian idiom; cf. Rom 8:20 and see on 1:7

μέγεθος + ἀγάπης is a patristic idiom from the fourth century on; see on 17:7

τὰ μέλη τῆς σαρκός is known from Ps.-Justin and fourth-century Christian texts; see
 on 20:5

μετὰ σπουδῆς καὶ πολλῶν δακρῶν has its closest parallels in the Fathers; see on
 14:12

ἡ μνήμη τοῦ θανάτου appears in Christian writers beginning with Origen; see on 4:6

μοναὶ τῶν ἁγίων recalls John 14:2 and later texts dependent on it; see on 20:14

μύρισμα is rare outside late patristic texts; see on 20:11

νεονύμφους ὀψικευομένους is a Byzantine combination; see on 10:3

ὁδός ... πλατεῖα καὶ εὐρύχωρος comes from Matt 7:13–14; see on 11:2

ὁδός στενὴ καὶ τεθλιμμένη comes from Matt 7:13–14; see on 11:2

ὀδυρομένη πικρῶς has close parallels only in Christian texts; see on 20:6

οὐ θέλω ἀπολέσαι ἐξ αὐτῶν οὐδένα is influenced by John 18:9; see on 10:14

οὐ λύπη οὐ στεναγμός following “Abraham’s bosom” is liturgical; see on 20:14

ὀψικεύω is otherwise unattested until the seventh century; cf. Sophocles, *Lex.*, s.v.,
 and see on 20:12

πανευπρεπής is rare outside of patristic texts; see on 2:4

πανθαύμαστος of a saint is clearly Christian; see on 11:8

πανίερος becomes common only in Christian texts; see on 1:2

πανόσιος is a late, patristic word occurring in John Climacus and Photius; see on
 13:2

- τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν appears only in Christian literature; see on 13:14
- πανώλεθρος describes Death in Eusebius, Theophylact Simocatta, and Ps.-Chrysostom; see on 18:1
- πληθὸς ἀγγέλων at the death of a saint is a typical Christian motif; see on 20:10
- πληροφορέω meaning “inform” seems unparalleled prior to the fifth century CE; see on 1:6
- πόθεν καὶ ἐκ ποίας has precise parallels only in patristic sources; see on 2:5
- προσπίπτω + οἰκτιρμοῖς + genitive pronoun has late patristic analogies; see on 14:10
- προσυπαντάω is unattested before the third century CE but is common after that; see on 2:2
- σπλάγχνα + κινέω with figurative sense is common after the fourth century; see on 3:9
- στολὴν λαμπροτάτην has parallels in the *Gospel of Peter* and other Christian writings; see on 16:6
- ταλανίζω means “vex” in Chrysostom and the *Acts of Xanthippe*; see on 20:5
- τελείωσις meaning “death” is found in Lampe, s.v., and Sophocles, *Lex.*, s.v., but not LSJ, s.v.; see on 20:11
- τιμιώτατε πάτερ is a typical Christian idiom; see on 2:3
- τὸ τέλος ἐγγύς, καὶ φοβερὰ ἡ ἀπόφασις, καὶ ὁ λύων οὐδεὶς is a Christian proverb; see on 13:7
- τρισάγιον ὕμνον appears first in the fourth century; see on 20:12
- ὑφαπλόω, active, is first attested in the *Acts of John*; see on 4:2
- φωτοφόρος is a popular patristic word beginning in the fifth and sixth centuries; see on 7:3
- τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν ἀμαρτωλῶν occurs only in Christian texts; see on 10:15

The Christian contribution to RecLng. is not, against Delcor, “superficial.”⁴⁵ Christian scribes did not treat the work as though it closed with Rev 22:18–19.⁴⁶ Ginzberg was wrong to assert that “apart from some late Christological additions made in a few manuscripts by copyists, there is not a single Christian interpolation found in the whole book.”⁴⁷ One cannot delete a line or two here and there and suppose the remainder to be Jewish. There are indeed entire chapters, 11 and 20 for instance, where the Christian influence is so thoroughgoing that one has little hope of precisely reconstructing a Jewish original.

⁴⁵ Delcor, *Testament*, 66. Cf. Turner, “Biblical Greek,” 221: “superfluous and superficial.”

⁴⁶ There is even evidence of an original pseudepigraphon in the first person; see on 12:1.

⁴⁷ Ginzberg, “Testament,” 96. Cf. Coleman, “Phenomenon,” 332–33.

5. RecShrt. also contains some late words and ecclesiastical expressions; see, for example, p. 279. Christian hands have left neither recension alone.

6. One reason for supposing that RecLng., despite its later Greek, contains ancient material absent from RecShrt. is that the textual tradition of RecLng. shows a very strong tendency toward deliberate abbreviation. This same tendency is also visible in RecShrt. and in the versions; thus the long Romanian is an abridged version of RecLng. while the Bohairic and fam. BFG are shorter than RecShrt. fam. E. Significant additions, by contrast, are met with infrequently. Even RecLng. ms. A, which has the fullest text, sometimes abbreviates; see especially the textual notes to chap. 14. There are, to be sure, many mistakes and omissions that must be due to carelessness, such as *homoioleuton*. Time and again, however, words, phrases, sentences, and even whole sections are omitted, and yet the remaining text is intelligible. The inference is inevitable: scribes shortened our book. So a partial explanation for RecShrt. is to hand. The opposite view, that RecShrt. grew into RecLng., has no support from the textual tradition.

Schmidt, in his edition, offers an overview of major omissions common to different members of RecLng.; see the opposite page. Of these, only one—10:12–11:4—seems clearly accidental, for all the other omissions leave a comprehensible text. The omission at the end of chap. 13, moreover, begins where the RecShrt. parallel ends, and this may well imply that more than one scribe felt the last part of that section fit for excision. Similarly, the abbreviated ending in RecLng. ms. N recalls the sudden and rushed conclusion of RecShrt., and again one suspects that similar motives explain the parallel.

7. RecShrt. seems secondary vis-à-vis RecLng. in at least the following places:

- RecLng. 1:1 gives Abraham far more than the 175 years Genesis gives him; RecShrt., failing to appreciate that *TA* is humorous fiction, has removed the contradiction by not giving his age.⁴⁸ It thereby detracts from the set up: surely the man who has outlived everyone else should be willing to die.
- RecLng. 2:11 explains Michael's refusal to ride an animal; RecLng. offers no explanation; see p. 87.
- In RecLng. 3:2, the cypress sings, "Holy, holy, holy," which is almost certainly older than RecShrt. 3:3's single "Holy"; see p. 105.
- Abraham's premature knowledge of his own death in RecShrt. 3 diminishes both the dramatic tension and the humor of the first part of the book; see pp. 105–106.

⁴⁸ Cf. the marginal note at the beginning of RecLng. W: οὐ γὰρ ἔζησε 905.

Classification of the Manuscripts of the Long Recension

	A	I	G	H	N	K	B	Q	J	W	F	E	C	P	V	D	L	M	O	S	T	U	Rm
3:7-4:11	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	I	+	+	+	+
5:11-6:8	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	I	I	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	I	-	-	-	-
8:6-8	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	I	-	-	-	*	*	*	*	*
10:3-8	+	+	+	+	+	I	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	I	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+
10:12-11:4	+	+	+	+	+	I	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	I	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
13:10-14	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	I	-	-	-	I	-	-	-	*	*	*	*	*
14:11-12	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	I	I	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
17:4-8	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+
17:7-8	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	I	-	-	-	I	*	*	*	+	+	+	+	+
19:4-6	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	I	-	-	-	I	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
19:8-16	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	I	-	-	-	*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
19:14-20:5	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	I	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

- + sequence attested
- gap in sequence
- * witness presents a gap larger than that considered here
- I witness mutilated
- Rm Romanian version

- Although we see in RecShrt. 3:6–9 preparations for the washing of Michael’s feet, and while 6:13 refers to the act retrospectively, RecLng. alone recounts the actual foot washing.
- In RecLng. 4:5, Michael professes a need to urinate; in RecShrt. 4:4–5, he must leave to worship God. A pious hand has removed the irreverent humor; see p. 131.
- God tells Michael, in RecShrt. 4:15, to eat whatever Abraham serves, an imperative that links up with nothing before or after. In RecLng. 4 the archangel is concerned about the problem of eating human food, so the command has a context that gives it meaning; see p. 132.
- In RecLng. 6, Sarah figures out what is going on before her husband, whom she has to instruct. In RecShrt. 6 Abraham is not so clearly less astute than his wife; see p. 161.
- The inclusion of the general resurrection and 7,000 years of world history in Michael’s interpretation of Isaac’s dream in RecShrt. 7 is from a Christian hand; see p. 176–77.
- Abraham’s refusal in 7:12 and elsewhere to accept death must be original; RecShrt., in which the patriarch does not resist God’s decree, depicts a more conventional Abraham better suited to pious emulation. RecLng. alone explains why, in both recensions, Abraham fails to set his house in order or make his testament, as God orders him to do at the beginning; see p. 177.
- Abraham’s request to see the whole world is a scheme to put off death. In RecShrt. it serves no such purpose; cf. above, pp. 13–14.
- In RecLng. 10–14, Abraham slays sinners, then sees their judgment, then regrets his actions, then asks God to undo what he has done—a sensible sequence. In RecShrt. 8–12, Abraham first sees the judgment and then strikes down sinners, a sequence which fails to instruct either the reader or Abraham; and RecShrt. 12 has no real connection with what comes before or after. This is why the Coptic, a member of the RecShrt. family, omits chap. 12; see p. 14. Moreover, the failure to record the resurrection of sinners is theologically motivated: “it seemed imprudent to tell men that, though cut off in the bloom of their sin, they might yet escape punishment through the intercession whether of Abraham or of other righteous men.”⁴⁹
- While the introduction of the soul whose good and evil deeds are balanced in RecLng. 11 turns into a lesson on mercy, in RecShrt. there is no coherent link with the rest of the narrative, and RecShrt. 9:8’s reference to evenly balanced deeds links up only with the judgment scene in RecLng.; see p. 260.⁵⁰
- RecShrt. 12:14–16, which feels so abbreviated, harmonizes with the Bible in having Sarah die before Abraham; RecLng. 20, in which she is alive when her husband goes, contradicts Genesis; see p. 311.

⁴⁹ James, *Testament*, 47.

⁵⁰ Note also Nickelsburg, “Eschatology,” 56–57, 63.

- RecShrt. 14:2–4, which feels truncated, implies that Death has several heads, as RecLng. details, but RecShrt. describes only two; see p. 338.
- The advent of Death in RecLng. 16 makes sense, because Abraham has heretofore refused to co-operate with Michael. Death’s coming in RecShrt. has no motivation; cf. above, p. 14, and see below, p. 323.

RecShrt. seemingly reflects not only a desire to abbreviate but also a piety eager to polish Abraham’s character so that he is the obedient figure of Genesis. Some Christian scribes were further concerned to reduce contradictions with the Bible and did not appreciate, as Ludlow has shown, most of *TA*’s humor. One understands their pious mentality. *TA* was, as the works with which it is typically bound show, read as Christian hagiography, and leaders of such services could easily have seen parts of *TA* as potentially unedifying, especially as the text calls readers to emulate Abraham (RecLng. 20:15). How can one imitate a man who refuses to obey God? One recalls how the Chronicler polishes the images of David and Solomon. Some of the manuscripts, not unexpectedly, contain critical marginal comments from later ecclesiastics. A hand in the margin of RecLng. ms. A attributes the story to heretics (ἔστιν ὑπὸ αἰρετικῶν συντεθεῖσα, ἣν οὐκ ὀφείλεις ὁ ἀναγινώσκων πιστεῦειν). In ms. I we find the remark that *TA* is false, and a marginal note in Q declares the book to be nonsense (φλυαρία). The margins of W are full of negative comments—*TA* is mythical, heretical, unbiblical, nonsensical, etc. It is no mystery that *TA* does not exist in Latin and all but disappeared from the West: it was unable to overcome ecclesiastical censure.⁵¹

8. Despite the many places where RecShrt. seems secondary, there are a few instances where it *may* be more original. These instances make a shorter list than the previous one and are on the whole less significant, having to do with details here and there, not the basic structure or plot of the story:

- RecShrt. 8 has fewer points of contact with Matt 7:13–14 than does RecLng. 11; see p. 241.
- RecShrt. is less pessimistic than RecLng. 11:11, which allows only one in 7,000 to be saved, a numerical estimate out of accord with the spirit of the presumed Jewish original; see p. 241.

⁵¹ Robert A. Kraft, “The Pseudepigrapha in Christianity,” in *Tracing the Threads: Studies in the Vitality of Jewish Pseudepigrapha* (ed. John C. Reeves; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), p. 69: “Latin Christianity tended to oppose the (public) use of non-canonical religious literature and to identify it closely with heterodoxy.” He adds: “But as the threat of ‘the old heresies’ waned, and as hagiographical traditions became more and more important to orthodoxy, the Greek churches came to accept and rework certain types of pseudepigraphical literature in great quantity.”

- Only in RecShrt. 9 is Abraham anxious about whether he can pass through the narrow gate to heaven; this sort of comedic relief is characteristic of RecLng. and any presumed Jewish ancestor; see p. 259.
- Enoch's presence at the judgment as divine scribe in RecShrt. 9–11 might be original; see pp. 259–60.
- RecShrt. 14:6 has Abraham going to heaven in a chariot; see p. 388 for the possibility that this is ancient.

9. Three episodes in RecLng. but not RecShrt. seem to grow out of the Hebrew text of Genesis. See the commentary on 3:3 (the prophetic tree probably depends upon an exegesis of Gen 21:33); on 6:5 (the resurrection of the consumed calf can be found in Gen 18:8); and on 17:13 (Death's faces are likely inspired by Gen 23:3). The discovery of such dependence upon the MT is consistent with at least parts of RecLng. deriving from a Jewish environment.

10. As others have observed, there are fascinating parallels between RecLng. and traditions about the death of Moses. They may be catalogued as follows:

	<i>Abraham in RecLng.</i>	<i>Moses in Jewish sources</i>
God asks a heavenly being—in some texts Michael and then later (the Angel of) Death—to take the saint's soul to heaven	1:4–7; 16:1–6	<i>Sifre Deut.</i> 305; <i>Tanh.</i> Beraka 3; ARN A 12; ARN B 25; <i>Deut. Rab.</i> 11:10; <i>Petirat Moshe</i> (BHM 1:127–128; 6:75); cf. <i>Tanh.</i> B Beraka 2
saint is sitting when the heavenly being arrives	2:1; 16:7	<i>Deut. Rab.</i> 11:10; <i>Petirat Moshe</i> (BHM 6:75)
saint asks the heavenly being about his identity and who sent him	2:5; 7:10; 16:10, 14; 17:4; 19:4	<i>Deut. Rab.</i> 11:10; <i>Petirat Moshe</i> (BHM 1:127–128; 6:76)
a supernatural voice predicts the saint's death	3:3	<i>Petirat Moshe</i> (BHM 1:125, 128; 6:76–77; etc.); cf. <i>Deut. Rab.</i> 11:10
saint refuses to co-operate	7:10–12; 15:10; 16:16; 19:2–4; 20:4–5	<i>Sifre Deut.</i> 305; <i>Tanh.</i> B Beraka 2; ARN A 12; ARN B 25; <i>Deut. Rab.</i> 11:10; <i>Petirat Moshe</i> (BHM 1:127–128; 6:76–77)
declaration of saint's sinlessness	10:13	<i>Deut. Rab.</i> 11:10

the heavenly being returns to heaven to report on what has happened	4:6-11; 8:1-12; 15:11-15	<i>Sifre Deut.</i> 305; <i>ARN B</i> 25; <i>Deut. Rab.</i> 11:5, 10; <i>Petirat Moshe</i> (BHM 1:128; 6:76)
heavenly being is sent again	4:7-5:1; 8:4-9:1	<i>Sifre Deut.</i> 305; <i>Deut. Rab.</i> 11:5; <i>Petirat Moshe</i> (BHM 1:128; 6:76)
to take the saint's soul, heavenly being has a sword or sickle	4:11; 8:9, 10	<i>Deut. Rab.</i> 11:10; <i>Petirat Moshe</i> (BHM 1:127, 128; 6:75)
God instructs the saint that all human beings must die	8:9 n	<i>Sifre Deut.</i> 339; <i>Deut. Rab.</i> 10:8; <i>Petirat Moshe</i> (BHM 1:118)
the saint asks for a favor from God before he dies	9:3-6	<i>L.A.B.</i> 19:14; <i>Deut. Rab.</i> 11:8
saint has a vision of all the world and/or heaven before he dies	10:1-14:15	<i>L.A.B.</i> 19:10-16; <i>Sifre Deut.</i> 357; <i>Mek.</i> on <i>Exod</i> 17:14
saint protects himself from (the Angel of) Death by using the divine name	17:11	<i>Deut. Rab.</i> 11:5; <i>Petirat Moshe</i> (BHM 1:127, 128)
(the Angel of) Death puts on a fearful appearance	17:12-13	<i>Deut. Rab.</i> 11:10; <i>Petirat Moshe</i> (BHM 1:127, 128; 6:75).
saint's spirit is weak	17:19; 18:8; 20:7	<i>Petirat Moshe</i> (BHM 6:77)
saint dies by a kiss	20:8-9	<i>ARN A</i> 12; <i>b. B. Bat.</i> 17a; <i>Tg. Ps.-Jn.</i> on <i>Deut</i> 34:5; <i>Deut. Rab.</i> 11:10; <i>Petirat Moshe</i> (BHM 1:129; 6:77)
saint's soul goes to heaven	20:12	<i>Deut. Rab.</i> 11:10; <i>Petirat Moshe</i> (BHM 1:129)
angels bury his body	20:11	<i>Philo, Mos.</i> 2.291; <i>Tg. Ps.-Jn.</i> on <i>Deut</i> 34:6; <i>Deut. Rab.</i> 11:10
angelic praise after saint's death	20:12-13	<i>ARN B</i> 25; <i>Deut. Rab.</i> 11:5

That there is a relationship between *TA* and the complex of legends about Moses' death—particularly the version represented by *Deut. Rab.* 11:10 and *Petirat Moshe*—is obvious.⁵² The direction of dependence is also obvious. The relevant traditions about Moses are widespread and naturally grow out of biblical texts⁵³ whereas those about Abraham are mostly confined to *TA* and do not, for the most part, have any genesis in Scripture. Loewenstamm is correct: “the post-biblical legends concerning Moses' death are deeply rooted in ancient myth, whereas no such roots may be ascribed to the treatment of the patriarch's death in the Testament of Abraham”; again, the “traditions concerning Moses' death are more ancient and even more meaningful than their parallels in the Testament of Abraham.”⁵⁴

How does this bear upon the recensional problem? *RecShrt.* displays far fewer parallels to the traditions about Moses' death than does *RecLng.*, but its dependence upon those traditions remains patent. God's request that Michael get Abraham's soul, the subsequent giving of this same assignment to Death, Abraham's request to see the world before he dies, and his vision of heaven and earth in response to that request are clearly borrowed from Mosaic legend—just as the *Greek Apocalypse of Ezra* borrows from the same when it has its hero resist death.⁵⁵ Now we may in theory imagine *TA* gathering additional parallels to traditions about Moses as time passed, but

⁵² See esp. Chazon, “Moses' Struggle,” and Loewenstamm, “Testament,” 219–25. In his otherwise excellent study, Ludlow, *Abraham*, 50–54, underrated the parallels with Moses. Reducing them by observing certain differences does not persuade. One might as well pile up the dissimilarities between *TA* and Genesis 18—Abraham is near death in one case but not the other; three angels show up in Genesis but only one in *TA*; the angel cries in one scene but not the other, etc.—and then claim that *TA* does not replay Genesis 18. But it does.

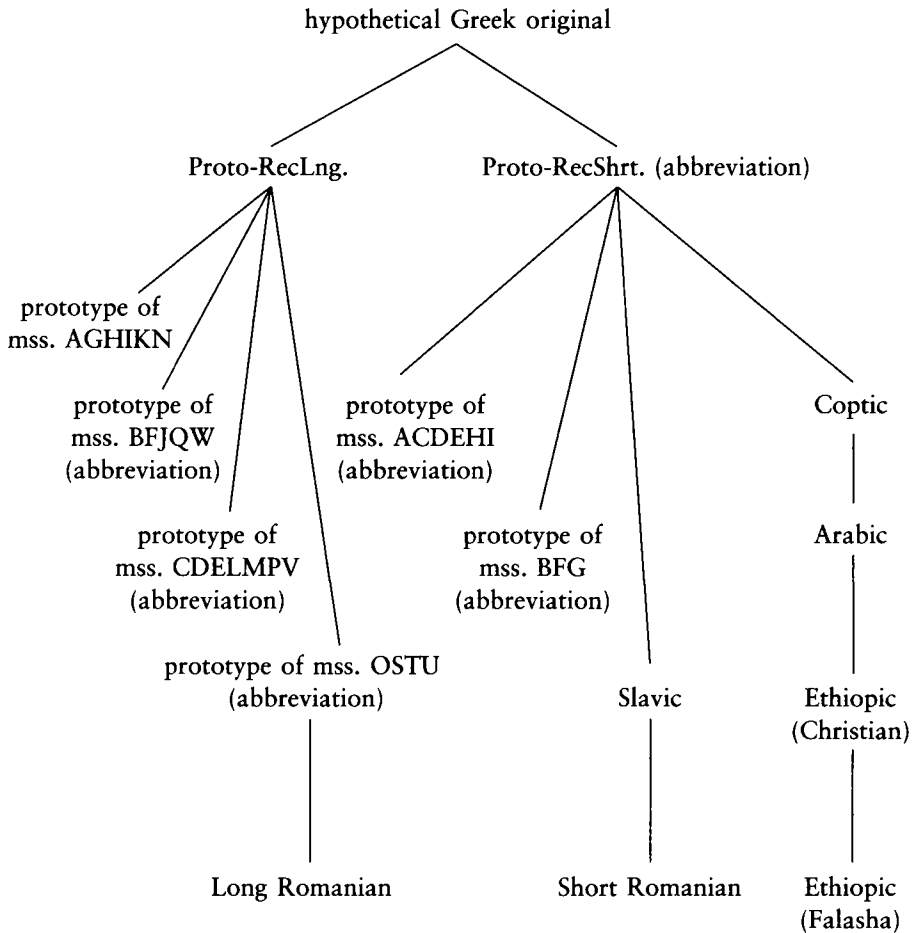
⁵³ E.g., *Deut* 3:23–29 records a disagreement between God and Moses regarding the lawgiver's future. Deuteronomy foretells Moses' death again and again (cf. *Deut. Rab.* 11:10; *Pesiq. Rab. Kah. Suppl.* 1:20; *Petirat Moshe* [*BHM* 1:120], counting ten instances), which might imply that Moses was stubborn in accepting the decree. *Deut* 34:1–4 gives Moses a vision right before he dies. *Deut* 34:6 (MT: “he buried him”; LXX: “they buried him”) lacks a subject and so opens itself to speculation about who buried Moses. *Deut* 34:5 (“Moses died there ... יְהוָה פִּי יְהוָה”) could be construed as death by a kiss. The antiquity of the dispute between Moses and God over the lawgiver's death is guaranteed if, as seems likely, the legend of the debate over his body, already attested in the first century (cf. *Jude* 9), grows out of it; see Kugel, *Traditions*, 886.

⁵⁴ Loewenstamm, “Testament,” 219 and 224 respectively. Contrast Kohler, “Apocalypse,” 592.

⁵⁵ See Allison, *New Moses*, 64–65, and Chazon, “Moses' Struggle,” 158–62.

the Mosaic elements in RecLng. alone do not strike one as secondary additions. They rather impress one as part and parcel of an organic whole which they largely structure and for which they supply details throughout. The upshot is that the Mosaic parallels are more than consistent with the primary character of RecLng.

11. While the complexities and ambiguities disallow constructing a definitive genealogy, perhaps the following is not too far from the truth:



IV. Jewish or Christian?⁵⁶

James characterized *TA*, which has come to us through Christian channels, as Christian. Craigie concurred, assigning the book “to a Jewish Christian, who for the substance of it drew partly on older legends, and partly on his own imagination.”⁵⁷ Few have agreed. Kohler and Ginzberg—the latter of whom felt “not the least room for doubt as to its Jewish origin”⁵⁸—argued long ago that the text is full of Jewish ideas, Jewish idioms, and Jewish lore and so must be Jewish.⁵⁹ Subsequent work has only added to the Jewish parallels. One nonetheless cannot establish the non-Christian origin of a text by showing how full of Jewish elements it is. The Gospel of Matthew contains many Semitisms, and most of the book has parallels of one sort or another in Jewish literature. Similarly, the rabbinic corpus often illumines the Pauline letters. Matthew and Paul, to be sure, are overtly Christian whereas *TA*, apart from obvious scribal additions, is not. But Christian compositions do not always wear their faith on their sleeves. The Epistle of James and the *Sentences of Sextus* are Christian texts, yet they are nearly void of plainly Christian elements.

The present writer’s judgment is that, while many have underestimated the Christian elements and too quickly assumed that there must have been a Jewish original behind the extant versions of *TA*, it nonetheless remains

⁵⁶ For the methodological issues involved with determining the Jewish or Christian character of texts see Marinus de Jonge, “The so-called Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament and Early Christianity,” in *The New Testament and Hellenistic Judaism* (ed. Peder Borgen and Søren Giversen; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997), 59–71; also Robert Kraft, “Setting the Stage and Framing some Central Questions,” *JSJ* 32 (2001), 371–95.

⁵⁷ Craigie, “Testament,” 183. Cf. Emil Schürer, review of James, *TLZ* 8 (1893), 281: “Es ist eine recht alberne christliche Dichtung, für welche eine jüdische Grundlage nicht nachweisbar ist.” He repeated this judgment in *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi* (4th ed.; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1909), 3:338. Contrast the updated volume of Schürer edited by Vermes, Millar, and Goodman, *History*, 3/2:763: “The work should be accepted as Jewish even though the more particular elements of Jewish piety are not stressed.”

⁵⁸ Ginzberg, “Testament,” 95. Cf. Kaufmann, “Testament.”

⁵⁹ Kohler, “Apocalypse”; Ginzberg, “Testament.”

overwhelmingly probable that a non-Christian Urtext underlines our two recensions. The telling point is not the overwhelming number of verses whose language or thought has Jewish parallels but rather the places that have no Christian parallels and indeed clash with what we otherwise know of Christian beliefs. The soteriological optimism that evidently characterized an earlier form of our work (see p. 239) does not seem at home in the church—which is presumably why the recensions have countered it and why the book was never popular in the West. Even universalists such as Origen and Gregory of Nyssa would have had trouble with a prayer that brings unbaptized sinners into eternal life in an instant, without some purgation through post-mortem suffering (see p. 300). One further fails to find any Christian parallel for the idea, expressed in 14:15, that retribution in this life can cancel retribution in the next. Some Jews, by contrast, did teach that earthly suffering atones and brings redemption in the world to come.

Two further considerations encourage positing a Jewish exemplar. First, given that the LXX was the Bible of the early church, one may doubt the Christian origin of a book containing legends, wholly unattested in Christian writings, which derive from reflection upon the Hebrew Bible (see above, p. 24). Second, it is suggestive that a book concerned above all with death and the life thereafter nowhere even so much as alludes to the resurrection of Jesus or his salvific descent into hell.

As to the sort of Judaism *TA* might represent, the book, unlike *3 Maccabees* and *Joseph and Aseneth*, fails to take a defensive stand over against pagan society or to speak against assimilation to the pagan world. It neither indicts idolatry nor teaches the superiority of Judaism. It is rather, as Kohler noted, consistently cosmopolitan.⁶⁰ Despite its focus on Abraham, the book has almost nothing to say, even indirectly, about the Jewish people. Apart from 13:6, which may be from a Christian hand, Israel plays no role. Indeed, the reformulation of God's foundational promise in Gen 22:17 has no reference to the land; nor do the stars and sand represent the number of Abraham's descendants, that is, the multitude that is Israel, but his own physical possessions and wealth, which are beyond counting (1:5; 4:11; 8:5). The soul's destiny in the afterlife, moreover, appears to be wholly independent of one's religious affiliation (chaps. 11–14). Descent from Abraham and membership in the covenant made with him are unrelated to the salvific scheme. There is further no interest in Jewish law, only generalized ethics. While Wills goes too far when he

⁶⁰ K. Kohler, "Apocalypse," 603.

urges that *TA* satirizes traditional Jewish values, from which it is alienated,⁶¹ one could nonetheless ask of the book, “Then what advantage has the Jew” (Rom 3:1)? There is no Sabbath, no circumcision, no Torah observance.⁶²

That *TA* does not exalt Judaism over its pagan rivals is consistent with the book borrowing from Greco-Roman mythology and betraying no anxiety in doing so; see on 3:11 and 6:6–7. It is also consistent with the borrowed materials not serving any obvious theological or apologetical agenda. They are not woven into the story in order to demonstrate that Homer plagiarized from the Pentateuch and so to prove, in the manner of Aristobulus, that the Jewish tradition is more ancient, more authentic. There is also no sign that they are self-consciously inserted to show off the author’s knowledge of the non-Jewish world, or to encourage some sort of dialogue with it. They rather seem to be there simply because they help make a good story even better. The synthesis of traditions—Turner rightly thinks that “tolerance and syncretism” characterize our work⁶³—is evidently not the product of an attempt to integrate two separate worlds, as though our author were akin to Ezekiel the Tragedian. They instead seem to reflect an environment in which the biblical world and Greco-Roman mythology had already been integrated. John Barclay’s characterization of Philo equally suits *TA*: “There is no hint of a tension between ‘Greek’ and ‘Jewish’ values, no fundamental struggle to reconcile the Jew and the Greek within him.”⁶⁴ Gruen is right: *TA* reflects “an attitude that transcends sectarianism and dismisses barriers between Jews dwelling abroad and their pagan neighbors.”⁶⁵

None of this, it should be emphasized, is to deny that RecLng. and RecShrt. are, in their present forms, Christian. Indeed, the writing of a verse-by-verse commentary has brought home to the writer just how much Christian hands have revised the language and content. To illustrate: against many, removing 20:15 or 20:14–15 as secondary does not eliminate the ecclesiastical contributions to chap. 20, which is rather Christian from beginning to end. One can certainly make an educated guess about the older Jewish ending, but we cannot recover it. The situation here as

⁶¹ Wills, *Novel*, pp. 245–56.

⁶² This by itself is reason to doubt, against Kohler, Delcor, Schmidt, and others, that *TA* is close to Essene circles. Other objections in Sanders, “Testament,” 875–76; Turner, “Testament,” 167–75.

⁶³ Turner, “Biblical Greek,” 221.

⁶⁴ Barclay, *Mediterranean Diaspora*, 161.

⁶⁵ Gruen, *Diaspora*, 193.

throughout *TA* is reminiscent of the *Testimonium Flavianum* or the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*: one senses both a Jewish original and a Christian revision, but it is often impossible to know exactly what belongs to which. The scribes that passed down *TA* felt perfectly free to add, subtract, and rewrite, and they did this over hundreds of years. We do not have the knowledge or ability to undo their work. What they started with is gone. The upshot is that the texts in our hands are Christian, and any use of them to add to our knowledge about ancient Judaism must proceed with caution.

V. Local Origin

James, in his critical edition, succinctly offered eight arguments for an Egyptian origin:⁶⁶

1. Origen is the first to mention *TA*.

2. *TA*'s Michael resembles Tobit's Raphael, and Tobit was probably written in Egypt.

3. The depiction of Death has its closest parallels in Christian writings from Egypt.

4. Abraham's tour of the world has parallels in *4 Ezra*, *Pistis Sophia*, the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, and a homily wrongly attributed to Macarius, and the latter three are from Egypt.

5. The wrapping of Abraham's soul in a cloth has a close parallel in the *History of Joseph the Carpenter*, an Egyptian work.

6. The weighing of souls, which our book features, is prominent in Egyptian mythology.

7. The idea of recording angels also appears in the Coptic *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*; more importantly, there are parallels in the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, where souls are weighed.

8. *TA* was translated into Arabic in Egypt.

Most of these arguments are feeble. James did not show that Origen knew our book, and modern scholarship commonly assigns Tobit not to Egypt but to Palestine. Abraham's tour of the world does not have a specifically Egyptian background but grows out of the lore surrounding Moses (see p. 210), while the wrapping of Abraham's soul has parallels in numerous Christian works, many of them not from Egypt (see p. 399). And the place of translation need not, obviously, be the place of composition.

James' third point does, however, carry some weight, for while the personification of death points to no particular region, Abraham's vision of Death's faces does indeed have close relatives in Egyptian texts. But James' strongest points are 6–7, which together amount to this: the closest parallels to the post-mortem judgment as *TA* depicts it are in Egyptian

⁶⁶ James, *Testament*, 76. Cf. Turner, "Testament," 177–85, with the same conclusion. Rosso Ubigli, "Testamento," 41, rightly states that scholarly opinion is nearly unanimous on this issue.

sources. This is indeed the case. As one works through chaps. 12–13, again and again one comes back to Egyptian ideas and Egyptian texts; see the commentary on 12:6–7, 8, 9, 10, 12; and 13:2. It is probably this fact that has moved so many to suspect that *TA* originally comes from Egypt.⁶⁷

One can add to James' list several additional facts consistent with an Egyptian origin:

- The strange tale of the prophesying tree in RecLng. 3:1–3 recalls above all Ps.-Callisthenes, *Hist. Alex. Magn.* rec. α 3.17, according to which two large cypress-like trees, speaking in a human voice, foretold the death of Alexander the Great. Ps.-Callisthenes may come from Egypt. It certainly underwent revision and was popular there.
- The only other ancient text in addition to *TA* 3:1–3 to associate Abraham with a plant of praise is Philo the Epic poet in Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9.20.1, and Philo wrote in Egypt.
- *TA* represents, as argued above, a cosmopolitan Judaism happy to make good use of Greco-Roman myths, and just such a Judaism did exist in Egypt.⁶⁸
- Egyptian Christians in particular were fond of “the bosom of Abraham (and Isaac and Jacob),” an expression that appears at the end of *TA*; see on 20:14.
- Erich Gruen has observed the many similarities *TA* shares with the *Testament of Job* and the fragments of Artapanus.⁶⁹ All three are Greek diaspora texts that entertain with humor, wit, and irony, and they do not expound the biblical text but rather find in it inspiration for their own fictional creations. Although his case cannot be presented in detail here, the present writer finds it convincing: the three texts do show similar rhetorical postures. This matters for us because Artapanus almost certainly wrote in Egypt, and the *Testament of Job* is most often assigned to the same place. So perhaps the literary similarities reflect the same diaspora environment, namely, the Jewish community in Egypt, and perhaps Alexandria in particular.
- Turner's dissertation, with its extensive word statistics, shows that, despite the presence of later Greek, both recensions share much vocabulary with several books often reckoned to come from Egypt, including *Wisdom*, *2 Maccabees*, *3 Maccabees*, and *4 Maccabees*.⁷⁰

While it is going too far to affirm that “everything points to Egypt as the probable provenance of the book,”⁷¹ it is true that at least several things point suggestively in that direction. Furthermore, *TA* was, as the following pages show, particularly popular among Coptic Christians.

⁶⁷ Janssen, “Testament,” 198–200, is idiosyncratic in urging a Palestinian provenance.

⁶⁸ Barclay, *Mediterranean Diaspora*, 103–80.

⁶⁹ Gruen, *Diaspora*, 182–212.

⁷⁰ Turner, “Testament,” 205–49.

⁷¹ Turner, “Biblical Greek,” 221.

VI. Date

Given the fifth-century dating of the Sahidic, a Greek version of *TA* must have been in circulation in Egypt before then. There are, however, very few references to it in early times. The *Synopsis sacrae scripturae* 75 of Ps.-Athanasius, from perhaps ca. 500, lists a book known as “Abraham” (PG 28.432B).⁷² But this could be the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, which was certainly in circulation by then, or some other lost work associated with the patriarch. More promising is *Apoc. Con.* 6:16:3, which speaks of an apocryphal book or books τῶν τριῶν πατριρχῶν. The three patriarchs must be Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and as the testaments assigned to them circulated as one collection at some point in time (as in the Coptic, Arabic, and Ethiopic), one guesses this was already true in some quarters when the *Apostolic Constitutions* was compiled in the latter quarter of the fourth century. It is also possible to find allusive references to *TA* in Priscillian, *Fide et de Apoc.*, ed. Schepss, pp. 45–46,⁷³ and Epiphanius, *Pan.* 39.5,⁷⁴ as did James, but the evidence is dubious.⁷⁵

⁷² On the *Stichometry* of Nicephorus, which follows Ps.-Athanasius, see James, *Testament*, 7–11.

⁷³ “Quid est quod Tobi sanctus futurae vitae ad filium praecepta dispones, cum quid custodiret ediceret, ait: nos filii prophetarum sumus; Noe profeta fuit et Abraham et Isac et Iacob et omnes patres nostri qui ab initio saeculi profetaverunt? Quando in canone profetae Noe liber lectus est? quis inter profetas dispositi canonis Abrahae librum legit? quis quod aliquando Isac profetasset edocuit? quis profetiam Iacob quod in canone poneretur audivit? Quos si Tobia legit et testimonium prophetiae in canone promeruit, qualiter, quod illi ad testimonium emeritae virtutis datur, alteris ad occasionem iustae damnationis adscribitur?” Even if this assumes knowledge of a book connected with Abraham, nothing points to *TA* in particular.

⁷⁴ βίβλους δὲ τινὰς συγγράφοντες ἐξ ὀνόματος μεγάλων ἀνδρῶν, ἐξ ὀνόματος μὲν Σηθ ἑπτὰ λέγοντες εἶναι βίβλους. ἄλλας δὲ βίβλους ἑτέρας ἀλλογενεῖς οὕτω καλοῦσιν. ἄλλην δὲ ἐξ ὀνόματος Ἀβραάμ, ἣν καὶ ἀποκάλυψιν φάσκουσιν εἶναι, πάσης κακίας ἐμπλεων.

⁷⁵ See James, *Testament*, 12–28. Delcor, *Testament*, 74–76, also finds in Priscillian a witness to *TA*, but he doubts James’ conclusions regarding Epiphanius. Delcor further suggests a reference to *TA* in the prefatory letter to Palladius, *Hist. Laus.*, Preface 7:2: “Even those who wrote down the lives of the fathers, Abraham and those in succession, Moses, Elijah, and John, wrote not to glorify them, but to help their readers.” It is unlikely that the *Koran*’s two mentions of a book of Abraham (53:36; 87:18–19) concern *TA*; see Bowley, “Compositions of Abraham,” 218–19.

If the explicit testimony is disappointing, we can learn more from the ancient texts that appear to depend upon *TA*:

– According to Birger Pearson, the *Coptic Enoch Apocryphon* catalogued as “Pierpont Morgan Library. Coptic Theological Texts 3,” which Pearson assigns to fifth-century Egypt, “seems definitely to be influenced by [TA] Rec. B, but also shows some lesser degree of influence from Rec. A.”⁷⁶ Parallels include a continuous post-mortem judgment, Enoch’s role as scribe, and the weighing of good and evil deeds.

– Scholars have regularly dated the *History of Joseph the Carpenter* to the fourth or fifth century, and an Egyptian origin seems overwhelmingly probable, even if the Sahidic and Bohairic go back to a Greek edition.⁷⁷ The text reminds one of *TA* in numerous ways. There is an angelic announcement of death (12). Michael escorts souls to heaven (13, 23). Personified Death and his minions bear a frightful appearance (13, 21). Joseph, like Abraham, is distressed and anxious about death (13, 17). Joseph’s soul exits through his mouth (19). When the saint dies, a multitude of angels appears, and his soul is wrapped in shining garments (25). And there is a book with his sins in it (26). Not one of these motifs in and of itself suggests a literary relationship; but their high number does.⁷⁸

– The *Discourse on Abbaton*, which Budge edited, attributes itself to Apa Timothy of Rakote, a fourth-century Archbishop. Among its numerous parallels to *TA* are Abraham’s hospitality (fol. 4b), Death’s hideous appearance (fol. 5a), Adam seated on a throne (fol. 13a), the seven heads of Death that continually change shape (fols. 22b–23a), and Death’s hideous appearance to sinners but pleasing appearance to saints (fols. 24b, 27a–b). Dependence upon *TA* seems inescapable.

– A. Henrichs, one of the editors of the *Cologne Mani Codex*, has raised the question of whether a contributor to *CMC* knew a Syriac version of *TA*. See the commentary on 3:4. Even if one agrees with Henrichs, the dating of the materials *CMC* incorporates is a vexed issue. Beyond that, one fails to see how, if there is literary dependence, we can establish its direction. Perhaps *TA* knows *CMC* or a miracle story that went into it.

– The *Apocalypse of Sedrach* draws heavily upon both 4 *Ezra* and legends about Moses’ death. In chap. 14, however, Sedrach, for whose soul

⁷⁶ Pearson, “Pierpont Morgan Fragments,” 255.

⁷⁷ Morenz, *Geschichte*, 108–12.

⁷⁸ James, *Testament*, 34, further observes that there are numerous parallels between the *History of Joseph the Carpenter* and the *Testament of Isaac*. This is consistent with the two testaments circulating together from an early time and the *History* drawing upon them both.

the Son of God has come, entreats Michael to pray with him that God will have mercy upon the world. The scene strongly recalls chaps. 14–15 of *TA*, where Abraham asks Michael to pray with him for sinners. One suspects the one was the inspiration for the other. This does not, however, help us much in dating *TA*, for the *Apocalypse of Sedrach* could have been composed anywhere between the second and sixth centuries CE.

– Nag Hammadi’s *Apocalypse of Paul* (V,2 17:19–24:9) “almost certainly,” according to George MacRae, depends upon *TA* or a source common to both: “Among the main points of contact between the two, comparing especially the Coptic version of T Abr, are the following: the role of the angels, the whipping of the soul, the singling out of one soul, the soul’s protest, the mention of the book, three witnesses who speak in turn, the charge of murder, the mention of night by the third witness, the casting down of the soul.”⁷⁹ These are impressive parallels, and when one also adds, which MacRae did not, that both judgment scenes follow an account of the seer having a vision of the whole world, it seems that the *Apocalypse of Paul* may indeed presuppose *TA*. Given, moreover, that the Nag Hammadi library is dated to the mid-fourth century, there is reason to suspect that either a Coptic version of *TA* or a Greek ancestor of the Coptic was in circulation by the third century.

– The *Testament of Isaac* and the *Testament of Jacob*, both of which circulated in Coptic, are relevant. The latter, which seems to be thoroughly Christian, imitates the former, which may go back to a Jewish original; and the latter shows definite knowledge of *TA*. 2:1, for example, speaks of Michael as the one sent to take Abraham’s soul, and 2:13 (Isaac will upon death go “from confinement to spaciousness”) matches RecShrt. 7:11 (Abraham will upon dying be taken “from a narrow place to a wide place”). Further, *T. Isaac* 6:12–13 broaches the issue of what happens when one does not write a testament, as happens to Abraham in our book.⁸⁰ Unfortunately, scholarship does not appear very confident in dating the two later testaments. It is possible that both are as late as the fourth century and depend not upon a Greek version of *TA* but upon a Coptic translation. Yet it is perhaps a bit more likely that at least the *Testament of Isaac* goes back to a Greek text composed no later than the third century.⁸¹

⁷⁹ MacRae, “Judgment Scene,” 285.

⁸⁰ See further Delcor, *Testament*, 78–79. Note esp. *T. Isaac* 6:12–13.

⁸¹ See further H. F. D. Sparks, “1 Kor 2 9 a Quotation from the Coptic Testament of Jacob?,” *ZNW* 67 (1976), 269–76; also Delcor, *Testament*, 42–47.

– James thought that Origen knew *TA*. His complex and circuitous reasoning led him to propose that when Origen, *Hom. Luc.* 35, speaks of good and evil angels contending for the soul of Abraham, he is confusing something from *TA* with something from the lost ending of the *Assumption of Moses*.⁸² The argument, to my knowledge, has convinced no one.⁸³ Perhaps Origen knew a story from a book now lost. Or perhaps he wrote “Abraham” when he should have written “Moses” or “Amram.” There is scarcely need to posit knowledge of *TA*.

– The *Visio Pauli* likely depends upon the *Testament of Abraham*. This book, which first appeared in some form in the third century or even late second century,⁸⁴ opens with Paul, raised to heaven, reporting creation’s complaint against humanity. The sun, the moon, the stars, the sea, the waters, and the earth in turn confess how offended they are at the ungodliness they behold, and they implore God to let them execute judgment (3–7). In each case a voice comes and declares, “All these things do I know, for my eye sees and my ear hears; but my long-suffering bears with them until they turn and repent. But if they return not to me, then I will judge them all” (4; variations in 5–6). Although the vindictive, violent judgments of Moses, Elijah, and Elisha play no role here, the *Apocalypse* begins with a bird’s eye view of human sins (including theft, murder, and adultery) very reminiscent of *TA* 10. This is followed in turn by a request for judgment, which is answered by a divine voice declaring God’s long-suffering desire that the wicked change. The narrative’s structure seems to derive from *TA* (although there is also influence from *Apoc. Elijah [C]* 1:3–7). Further, “until they turn and repent” (Arnh 4: *quoadusque conuertantur et peniteant*; P 4: *adusque conuertentes peniteantur*; cf. 5–6) echoes “until he turns and lives” (RecLng. 10:13: ἕως οὗ ἐπιστρέψαι καὶ ζῆσαι; the abbreviated Greek version of the *Visio* [ed. Tischendorf, p. 36] has: ὅπως ἐπιστρέψωσιν). Additional parallels—angelic ascension for prayer at sunset (*Vis. Paul* 7–8; RecShrt. 4:4–5), newly-departed souls worshipping God (*Vis. Paul* 14; RecLng. 20:12), a soul protesting its innocence convicted by an angel reading its sins in a book (*Vis. Paul* 17; RecShrt. 10:4–16), “Enoch the scribe of righteousness” (*Vis. Paul* 20; RecShrt. 11:3), “the river Ocean” in heaven (*Vis. Paul* 21, 31; RecShrt. 8:3)—entail that the *Apocalypse* was familiar with something closer to RecShrt. than RecLng.

⁸² James, *Testament*, 14–26.

⁸³ Cf. its early rejection by Emil Schürer, review of James, *TLZ* 8 (1893), 279–81.

⁸⁴ J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 617, suggests that Origen already knew it.

– Some have suggested that the New Testament betrays knowledge of *TA*. Kohler took *TA* to be the source of Matt 7:13–14.⁸⁵ E. M. Sidebottom claimed that John 5:27 (God “has given to him authority to execute judgment because he is the Son of man”) depends upon Abel’s role as judge in *TA* 12–13.⁸⁶ Fishburne argued that 1 Cor 3:10–15 reflects the judgment scene in *TA*.⁸⁷ But it is *TA* that depends upon Matthew, not vice versa (see pp. 239–41), and the parallel with John 5:27 amounts to little. The similarities between 1 Corinthians 3 and *TA* RecLng. 13 are due to Christian contributors to the latter; see on 13:12–13. More interesting is the argument of Troy Martin regarding 1 Pet 3:6: “Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him lord. You have become her daughters as long as you do what is good and never let fears alarm you.”⁸⁸ Martin observes that Sarah calls Abraham “lord” again and again in *TA* but only once in Genesis, where the term does not connote obedience (18:12); that Sarah is in *TA* the mother of the elect (RecLng. 3:6 and chap. 7 in both recensions); and that fearlessness is a major theme of *TA*. Yet Genesis also depicts an obedient Sarah (cf. esp. 12:10–20, where she sleeps with Pharaoh at her husband’s command); and Sarah’s status as the mother of the elect, so commonplace for the rabbis (e.g. Tg. Neof. 1 on Deut 33:15), already appears in Isa 51:1–2; and while the characters in *TA* should not fear death, they hardly do so (7:12; 15:4–5, 10; 16:16; 19:2; 20:4–7). So Martin’s case is uncertain. The New Testament shows no clear trace of *TA*.⁸⁹

The external evidence strongly suggests that some form of *TA* was already in circulation by the third century. Is there any way to establish how far before that it came into existence? The document alludes to no external political or religious event. Yet if, as already argued, the book originated among Egyptian Jews, then one should date it before A.D. 115–117. This is because the revolt of those years left Egyptian Jewry, especially in Alexandria, decimated, and thereafter Egyptian Jewish literature almost dries up.⁹⁰ It is “only at the very end of the third century or the beginning

⁸⁵ Kaufmann Kohler, *Heaven and Hell in Comparative Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1928), 80.

⁸⁶ E. M. Sidebottom, *The Christ of the Fourth Gospel* (London: SPCK, 1961), 94–95.

⁸⁷ Fishburne, “I Corinthians III.10–15.”

⁸⁸ Martin, “1 Pet 3,6.”

⁸⁹ Against Chrys C. Caragounis, *The Son of Man: Vision and Interpretation* (WUNT 38; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1986), 91–92, there is no reason to suppose that *TA* polemicalizes against Paul’s doctrine of justification by faith or that Abel’s place at the judgment is a deliberate Jewish counter to Jesus.

⁹⁰ The papyri also reflect great changes: “CPJ has some 50 documents of the period 117–337, as against nearly 450 for the Hellenistic and Roman periods to A.D. 117.”

of the fourth that the first new burgeonings of Jewish life were to appear in the provincial cities of Egypt.”⁹¹ The conclusion is all the more sure because *TA*, which “is pervaded by a broad, philanthropic and humanitarian spirit,”⁹² reflects no hostility between the Jewish and Gentile worlds. In the words of Gruen, “only ethics, not ethnics, matter”; *TA* suggests “self-assurance and comfort” in the Greek-speaking world as well as “a secure confidence” in its own traditions that “allowed for manipulation, merriment, and mockery.”⁹³ This is hard to imagine after the revolt in the early second century.

Two final considerations support a relatively early date. First, Jewish books that Christians adopted are, as a rule, no later than the second century CE.⁹⁴ Second, Turner’s linguistic researches show that both recensions of *TA*, despite their late features, bear “a strong syntactical and lexical resemblance to the language of the Septuagint and the New Testament.”⁹⁵ This is more than consistent with positing an original composed somewhere near the turn of the era.

As for a *terminus a quo*, RecLng. knows the LXX, as this commentary reveals throughout.⁹⁶ So RecLng. in anything like its present form must have come into existence after the LXX established itself, which means one cannot hazard a date before the second century BCE. The same conclusion holds for the prototype of RecShrt., as RecShrt. too depends upon the LXX, as one can see at a glance:

So E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule: From Pompey to Diocletian* (SJLA; Leiden: Brill, 1976), 406, n. 66. If William Adler, “Apion’s ‘Encomium of Adultery’: A Jewish Satire of Greek Paideia in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies,” *HUCA* 64 (1993), 15–49, is correct to assign the Apion section of the Ps.-Clementine Homilies to a second-century Jew of Alexandria, then its controversial tone reflects a time later than *TA*.

⁹¹ Joseph Méléze Modrzejewski, *The Jews of Egypt: From Rameses II to Emperor Hadrian* (Philadelphia and Jerusalem: Jewish Publication Society, 1995), 217. See further Christopher Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins, 1997), pp. 91–127.

⁹² Box, *Testament*, xx.

⁹³ Gruen, *Diaspora*, 222. Josef Schreiner, *Alttestamentlich-jüdische Apokalyptik: Eine Einführung* (Munich: Kösel, 1969), 72, thinks that the emphasis upon hospitality reflects a time of peace.

⁹⁴ So Denis, *Introduction*, 36. Cf. Schürer, *History*, 3/2:764. Although Delcor, *Testament*, 47–51, has argued that *TA* polemicizes against the *Testament of Job* and so must be later, his case is unmade.

⁹⁵ Turner, “Biblical Greek,” 220.

⁹⁶ See also Turner, “Testament,” 195–204.