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Earliest Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham

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EARLIEST TRADITIONS ABOUT THE EARLY LIFE OF ABRAHAM

SECTION 1



AN EXTRACT FROM HECATAEUS

Hecataeus of Abdera lived in the time of the Egyptian king Ptolemy I, ca. 300 B.C. When Ptolemy I controlled Abdera, Hecataeus made a trip to Egypt, traveling as far south as Thebes and, as indicated in the text below, he apparently wrote a book on Abraham and Egypt. In *Antiquities of the Jews* 1.7.2, Josephus also indicates that Hecataeus wrote a book on Abraham. The selection here is taken from Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis*, who credits Hecataeus with recording these words of Sophocles. Though thought by most scholars to be inauthentic, the text is of sufficient antiquity to be included here. The following is a translation by R. Doran in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:912. Doran notes that these verses were cited by subsequent Christian writers: Athenagoras, *Supplicatio pro Christianis* 5; Pseudo-Justin, *Cohortatio ad Graecos* 18; *De Monarchia* 2; Theodoret, *Graecarum Affectionum Curatio*, sermo 7; and Cyril of Alexandria, *Adversus Julianum* 1.

Stromateis 5.113

As Hecataeus the historian states in his "On Abraham and the Egyptians," Sophocles cried out openly on the stage: One, truly one is God who made both heaven and the wide earth, the blue-gray swell of the sea and the buffeting winds. We throngs of men go astray in our hearts when, to gain solace from misery, we set up as statues of gods figures worked from wood, or images of copper, gold or ivory.¹ We imagine we are religious when we enjoin in their honor sacrifices and evil festivals.²

1. Cf. Abraham 1:11.

2. Note that in the translation, Sophocles' statements are set in verse.

EXTRACTS FROM JUDITH

The book of Judith is part of the Apocrypha, books that were included in the third- (or second-) century B.C. Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint. Because these books were unknown in Hebrew or Aramaic, the church fathers of the fourth century separated them from the other Old Testament books, although they remained in the Bible. When Martin Luther and other sixteenth-century Protestant Reformers again raised doubts about the Apocrypha, the Catholic Church in the Council of Trent reaffirmed their canonicity. The first edition of the King James Bible (1611) included the Apocrypha; however, in 1816, the American Bible Society condemned the books and in 1826, the British and Foreign Bible Society also excluded them. The original objection to the apocryphal books (that they did not exist in Hebrew or Aramaic versions) became moot in 1947 when some Hebrew versions of the Apocrypha showed up among the scrolls found near the Dead Sea. The extant text of Judith contains historical elements from the sixth century B.C.; however, most scholars date the composition of the text to the Maccabean period in the second century B.C. Our selections are from the King James Version of the Apocrypha.

Chapter 5

6. This people are descended of the Chaldeans:

7. and they sojourned heretofore in Mesopotamia, because they would not follow the gods of their fathers,¹ which were in the land of Chaldea.

8. For they left the way of their ancestors, and worshipped the God of heaven, the God whom they knew: so they cast them out from the face of their gods, and they fled into Mesopotamia, and sojourned there many days.

9. Then their God commanded them to depart from the place where they sojourned, and to go into the land of Canaan: where they dwelt, and were increased with gold and silver, and with very much cattle.

1. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6, 16–17, 27.

Chapter 8

25. Moreover let us give thanks to the Lord our God, which trieth us, even as he did our fathers.

26. Remember what things he did to Abraham, and how he tried Isaac, and what happened to Jacob in Mesopotamia of Syria, when he kept the sheep of Laban his mother's brother.

27. For he hath not tried us in the fire,² as he did them, for the examination of their hearts, neither hath he taken vengeance on us: but the Lord doth scourge them that come near unto him, to admonish them.

2. The passage may have reference to the attempted sacrifice of Abraham in the fire (as Jewish commentators read *Ur*) of the Chaldees. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

AN EXTRACT FROM PHILO THE EPIC POET

The Jewish epic poet Philo lived in the third or second century B.C.; he probably lived in a Greek center of culture such as Alexandria. His work is preserved only by the Christian historian Eusebius (see Artapanus and Eupolemus, below), who cites extracts from Philo's *On Jerusalem* in *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9.20.1, which was first published in Latin in 1470. The original Greek text of *Praeparatio* was first published in 1544, along with a French translation. This English translation from the Greek is by H. Attridge in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:783. Note that the next few extracts also come from quotations in Eusebius's *Praeparatio Evangelica*.

A thousand times have I heard in the ancient laws how once (when you achieved something) marvelous with the bonds' knot,¹ O far-famed Abraham, resplendently did your God-beloved prayers abound in wonderous counsels.² For when you left the beautiful garden of dread plants,³ the praiseworthy thunderer quenched the pyre⁴ and made his promise immortal.

1. Cf. Abraham 1:15; Facsimile 1, figure 2.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:15.

3. The translator thought this garden might refer to the wood with which Abraham intended to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22:3–6), but in view of other Jewish and Muslim traditions included in this collection, we suggest that it refers to the tradition that God changed the flames of the fire into blossoming trees so Abraham would not be burned: note the reference to the quenching of the pyre.

4. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

AN EXTRACT FROM ARTAPANUS

There is some disagreement on when the Jewish writer Artapanus lived, but it must have been before the first century B.C. when the Greek historian Alexander Polyhistor, who quoted him, lived. None of Artapanus's original Greek work, written in Egypt, is extant, but other writers have preserved fragments of his work. For example, a fourth-century bishop of Caesarea, Eusebius, quotes Alexander Polyhistor, who is in turn quoting Artapanus. The fragment below comes from Eusebius's *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9.18.1, which was first published in Latin in 1470. The bishop's original Greek text was first published in 1544, along with a French translation. The translation below is by J. J. Collins in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:897.

Abraham in Egypt

Artapanus says in his *Judaica* that the Jews are named "Hermiouth," which, translated into Greek, is "Jews." They were called Hebrews after Abraham. He says that the latter *came to Egypt* with all his household to the Egyptian king Pharethothes, and *taught him astrology*,¹ that he remained there twenty years and then departed again for the regions of Syria, but that many of those who came with him remained in Egypt on account of the prosperity of the land.

1. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 3. There was no difference in the ancient world between astronomy and astrology; the same term referred to both.

EXTRACTS FROM EUPOLEMUS

Several times in *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9.17.2–9, Eusebius cites Eupolemus, who may have been a Jew or Samaritan who lived in the mid-second century B.C. in Palestine. *Praeparatio* was first published in Latin in 1470. The original Greek text was first published in 1544, along with a French translation. This English translation is by R. Doran in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:880–82.

3. Eupolemus holds that Abraham was born in the tenth generation in the Babylonian city Camarina, although others state that the city was named Ourie (which means “city of the Chaldeans”) and that Abraham was born in the thirteenth generation. Abraham excelled all in nobility and wisdom; he sought and obtained the knowledge of astrology and the Chaldean craft,¹ and pleased God because he eagerly sought to be reverent.

4. At God’s command, he traveled to Phoenicia [Canaan]² and dwelt there. He pleased the Phoenician king by teaching the Phoenicians the cycles of the sun and moon, and everything else as well.³ . . .

[Here follows the story of Abraham’s rescue of Lot and his encounter with Melchizedek, recorded in Genesis 14.]

6. When famine came on the land, Abraham moved to Egypt with his whole household and dwelt there. The king of the Egyptians married Abraham’s wife, since Abraham had said that she was his sister.

7. Furthermore, Eupolemus relates that the king was not able to have intercourse with Abraham’s wife and that his people and household were wasting away. When he summoned his diviners, they said, “Let the woman not be parted from her husband.” In this way, the king of the Egyptians realized that she was the wife of Abraham, and he returned her to her husband.

8. Abraham lived in Heliopolis with the Egyptian priests and taught them much: He explained astrology and the other sciences to them,⁴ saying that the Babylonians and he

1. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

2. Our insertion.

3. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 3.

4. Ibid.

himself had obtained this knowledge. However, he attributed the discovery of them to Enoch.⁵ Enoch first discovered astrology, not the Egyptians.

9. For the Babylonians hold that Belos, who is son of Kronos, lived first. Kronos begot sons named Belos and Canaan.⁶ This Canaan fathered the ancestor of the Phoenicians, whose son was Chus, called by the Greeks Asbolus. Chus was the ancestor of the Ethiopians and the brother of Mitsraim, the ancestor of the Egyptians.⁷

5. Cf. Abraham 1:28, 31.

6. Belos is Bel or Marduk, the principal god of Babylon, whose name is paralleled by the Canaanite Baal. Kronos is the father of the Greek god Zeus. If Canaan is the son of Belos, then Belos would correspond to the biblical Ham.

7. Mitsraim corresponds with the biblical Mizraim, eponymous ancestor of the Egyptians who is, indeed, the brother of Cush (here given in the Greek as Chus). While the Bible makes both of them brothers to Canaan, here they are his sons. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27.

AN EXTRACT FROM AN ANONYMOUS WORK

In *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9.18.2, Eusebius cites the following item about Abraham from an anonymous work in conjunction with quotations from Artapanus and Eupolemus. From this we suppose that it is related, perhaps chronologically, to those works and thus include it here even though it may date as late as the third century A.D. The *Praeparatio* was first published in Latin in 1470; the original Greek text was published along with a French translation in 1544. This translation is that of R. Doran in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:882.

In anonymous works, we find that Abraham traced his ancestry to the giants. These dwelt in the land of Babylonia. Because of their impiety, they were destroyed by the gods. One of them, Belos, escaped death and settled in Babylon. He built a tower and lived in it; the tower was called Belos after its builder. After Abraham had learned astrology, he first went to Phoenicia and taught it to the Phoenicians; later he went to Egypt.¹

1. Cf. Abraham Facsimile 3.

AN EXTRACT FROM THE SIBYLLINE ORACLES

The third book of the *Sibylline Oracles* is thought to have been written by someone from the Jewish community of Alexandria, Egypt, sometime between 163 and 145 B.C., though it purports to be an oracle uttered by the Sibyl (a legendary Greek prophetess) centuries before that. Jews and Christians alike saw events of the Bible and other important historical events foretold in this Greek text, and the church fathers quote the *Oracles* extensively. The work thus has been preserved in several complete manuscripts (although with some lacunae) dating from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries. The *Oracles* were first published in English in 1890; the translation used here is by J. J. Collins in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 1:367.

Book 3

218. There is a city . . .¹ in the land of Ur of the Chaldeans,
219. whence comes a race of most righteous men.
220. They are always concerned with good counsel and noble works
221. for they do not worry about the cyclic course of the sun
222. or the moon. . . .
227. Neither do they practice the astrological predictions of the Chaldeans
228. nor astronomy. For all these things are erroneous,²
229. such as foolish men inquire into day by day,
230. exercising themselves at a profitless task.

1. The ellipsis is part of the translation; it apparently represents a lacuna.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

EXTRACTS FROM THE ORPHICA

The group of poetic texts known as the Orphica was probably written in Greek sometime between 150 B.C. and A.D. 50 and contains a discourse addressed by Orpheus to his pupil Musaeus.¹ Several versions are known from early Christian writers, including one of the longer versions cited by the Christian historian Eusebius (A.D. 263–340) in *Praeparatio Evangelica* 13.12.5, which he said he drew from Aristobulus, who wrote sometime between 155 and 145 B.C. *Praeparatio* was first published in Latin in 1470, and the original Greek was published with a French translation in 1544. Another long version of the Orphica is included in a fifth-century Theosophical text, published in Leipzig in 1899 and in Hamburg in 1941. The two long versions have been combined in the translation used here, by M. LaFargue in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:799–800. This text is also found in the section on Aristobulus, 2:840.

6. But look to the divine word, study it closely,
7. [So] guiding your heart, that knowing vessel. Set out firmly
8. On the path, and look only at the undying shaper of the universe.
9. There is an ancient saying about him:
10. "He is one"²—self-completing, and all things completed by him, . . .
16. "And there is no other."³

25. And no one has seen the ruler of mortal men,
26. Except a certain unique man [Abraham],⁴ an offshoot from far back of the race
27. Of the Chaldeans. For he was knowledgeable about the path of the Star,⁵
28. And how the movement of the Sphere goes around the earth,

1. Note that Firmicus Maternus, extracts of whose work are included in this collection, names Orpheus with Abraham as one who was skilled in astronomy (*Mathesis* 4, *Proem* 5).
2. Probably an allusion to Deuteronomy 6:4.
3. Perhaps an allusion to Exodus 20:3. We include lines 10 and 16 because they reflect sayings about God that are attributed to Abraham in the medieval Jewish literature included in this volume.
4. Our addition.
5. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

29. Both in circular fashion, but each on its own axis.
30. He rides in spirit through the air and through the water
31. Of the stream. A comet makes manifest these events—he had a mighty birth.⁶
32. Yes he after this is established in the great heaven
33. On a golden throne.⁷

6. While some of the stories have Abraham's birth declared by the appearance of a star that swallows up four other stars, the Orphica has his birth heralded by the appearance of a comet.

7. Cf. Abraham 3:2 and Doctrine and Covenants 132:29.

EXTRACTS FROM JUBILEES

The book of *Jubilees*, sometimes called *Little Genesis*, is an ancient Jewish text that parallels Genesis. *Jubilees* was known in Greek, Syriac, Latin, and Ethiopic translations, but not until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls did fragments of a Hebrew version come to light. The oldest fragments date to the late second or early first century B.C., but because some of the other Dead Sea Scrolls borrow from *Jubilees*, the book was likely written no later than the mid-second century B.C. The first publication of *Jubilees* was the Latin version, printed in 1861. The text used here is from O. S. Wintermute's English translation of the Ethiopic in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:78–84, 93–99, 129.

Chapter 11

3. And Ur, the son of Kesed, built the city of Ur of the Chaldees and he named it after his name and his father's name.

4. And they made for themselves molten images, and everyone worshiped the icon which they made for themselves as a molten image. And they began making graven images and polluted likenesses.¹ And cruel spirits assisted them and led them astray so that they might commit sin and pollution.

5. And the prince, Mastema,² acted forcefully to do all of this. And he sent other spirits to those who were set under his hand to practice all error and sin and all transgression, to destroy, to cause to perish and to pour out blood upon the earth.

6. Therefore he called the name of Seroh, "Serug," because everyone had turned back to commit all sin and transgression.

7. And he grew up and dwelt in Ur of the Chaldees near the father of his wife's mother. And he used to worship idols.³ And he took a wife in the thirty-sixth jubilee, in the fifth week, in the first year thereof.⁴ And her name was Melka, daughter of Kaber, daughter of his father's brother.

1. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

2. Mastema is a title that the writers of *Jubilees* and the Dead Sea Scrolls use for the devil.

3. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

4. In the law of Moses, the seventh year was a sabbatical year. After seven such "weeks" (i.e., forty-nine years) came the fiftieth year, termed a *jubilee*. *Jubilees* draws its name from the fact that it uses this counting method.

8. And she bore for him Nahor in the first year of that week. And he grew up and he dwelt in Ur among the Chaldeans, and his father taught him the researches of the Chaldeans in order to practice divination and astrology according to the signs of heaven.⁵

9. And in the thirty-seventh jubilee, in the sixth week, in the first year thereof, he took a wife. And her name was Iyaska, daughter of Nestag of the Chaldees.

10. And she bore for him Terah in the seventh year of that week.

11. And Prince Mastema sent crows and birds so that they might eat the seed which was being sown in the earth in order to spoil the earth so that they might rob mankind of their labors. Before they plowed in the seed, the crows picked it off the surface of the earth.

12. And therefore he called him Terah because the crows and birds were impoverishing them. And they ate their seed.

13. And the years began being barren because of the birds. And they ate all of the fruit of the trees from the groves. If ever they were able to save a little from all the fruit of the earth in their days, it was with great effort.⁶

14. And in this thirty-ninth jubilee, in the second week, in the first year, Terah took a wife and her name was 'Edna, daughter of 'Abram, daughter of his father's sister.

15. And in the seventh year of that week, she bore a son for him, and he called him Abram, after the name of his mother's father because he died before his daughter conceived a son.

16. And the lad began understanding the straying of the land, that everyone went astray after graven images and after pollution.⁷ And his father taught him writing.⁸ And he was two weeks of years old. And he separated from his father so that he might not worship the idols with him.⁹

17. And he began to pray to the Creator of all so that he might save him from the straying of the sons of men,¹⁰ and so that his portion might not fall into straying after the pollution and scorn.

18. And the seed time arrived for sowing in the land. And they all went out together so that they might guard their seed from before the crows. And Abraham went out with those who went out. And the lad was fourteen years old.¹¹

19. And a cloud of crows came so that they might eat the seed, and Abram used to run up to them before they settled upon the earth. And he would call out to them before they settled upon the earth to eat seed, and he said, "Don't come down. Return to the place whence you came." And they turned back.

5. Cf. Abraham 1:31. Some of the texts included in this collection indicate that God weaned Abraham from astrology by showing him the true order of the heavens. Cf. Abraham 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

6. Cf. Abraham 1:29–30; 2:1, 5.

7. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

8. Cf. Abraham 1:28, 31.

9. Cf. Abraham 1:16–17.

10. Cf. Abraham 2:12.

11. Various traditions make Abraham three, fourteen, or forty-eight years old when he came to know God.

20. And he caused the cloud of crows to turn back seventy times in that day. And none of the crows settled on any of the fields where Abram was, not one.

21. And all who were with him in all of the fields saw him as he was calling out. And all of the crows turned away.¹² And his reputation was great in all the land of Chaldea.

22. And all who would sow came to him during that year. And he used to go with them until the seed time passed. And they sowed their land and harvested in that year enough food, and they ate and were satisfied.

23. And in the first year of the fifth week, Abram taught those who were making the implements for oxen, the skilled carpenters. And they made implements above the ground facing the handle of the plow so that they might place seed upon it. And the seed would go down from within it onto the point of the plow, and it would be hidden in the earth.¹³ And therefore they were not afraid of the crows.

24. And they did likewise upon all of the plow handles above the ground. And they sowed and tilled all of the earth just as Abram commanded them. And therefore they were not afraid of the birds.

Chapter 12

1. And it came to pass in the sixth week, in its seventh year, that Abram spoke to Terah, his father, saying, "O father." And he said, "Behold, here I am, my son."

2. And he said: "What help or advantage do we have from these idols before which you worship and bow down?"¹⁴

3. Because there is not any spirit in them, for they are mute, and they are the misleading of the heart. Do not worship them.

4. Worship the God of heaven, who sends down rain and dew upon the earth, and who makes everything upon the earth, and created everything by his word, and all life is in his presence.

5. Why do you worship those who have no spirit in them? Because they are works of the hands, and you are carrying them upon your shoulders, and there is no help from them for you, except great shame for those who made them and the misleading of the heart for those who worship them. Do not worship them."

6. And his father said to him, "I also know (that), my son, but what shall I do to the people who have made me minister before them?"

7. And if I speak to them in righteousness, they will kill me because their souls cleave to them so that they might worship them and praise them. Be silent, my son, lest they kill you."

8. And he told this matter to two of his brothers, and they were angry with him, and he kept quiet.

12. Cf. Abraham 2:17.

13. Seeder plows (Sumerian *apin*, Akkadian *apinnu*) were attested in Mesopotamia at least as early as the Ur III period, before Abraham.

14. The translator has used lines and stanzas here and in other verses. We have chosen to use paragraphs throughout.

9. And in the fortieth jubilee, in the second week, in its seventh year, Abram took a wife and her name was Sarai, daughter of his father, and she became a wife for him.

10. And Haran, his brother, took a wife in the third year of the third week, and she bore a son for him in the seventh year of that week. And he called him Lot.

11. And Nahor, his brother, took a wife.

12. In the sixtieth year of the life of Abram, i.e. the fourth week, in its fourth year, Abram arose in the night and burned the house of idols.¹⁵ And he burned everything in the house. And there was no man who knew.

13. And they rose up in the night, and they wanted to save their gods from the midst of the fire.

14. And Haran rushed to save them, and the fire flared up over him. And he was burned in the fire and died in Ur of the Chaldees before Terah, his father.¹⁶ And they buried him in Ur of the Chaldees.

15. And Terah went out of Ur of the Chaldees, he and his sons, so that they might come into the land of Lebanon and into the land of Canaan. And he dwelt in Haran. And Abram dwelt with Terah, his father, in Haran two weeks of years.

16. And in the sixth week, in its fifth year, Abram sat up during the night on the first of the seventh month, so that he might observe the stars¹⁷ from evening until daybreak¹⁸ so that he might see what the nature of the year would be with respect to rain. And he was sitting alone and making observations;

17. And a word came into his heart, saying, "All of the signs of the stars and the signs of the sun and the moon are all in the hand of the LORD.¹⁹ Why am I seeking?"

18. If he desires, he will make it rain morning and evening, and if he desires he will not send (it) down; and everything is in his hand."

19. And he prayed on that night, saying: "My God, the Most High God, you alone are God to me. And you created everything, and everything which is was the work of your hands,²⁰ and you and your kingdom I have chosen.

20. Save me from the hands of evil spirits which rule over the thought of the heart of man, and do not let them lead me astray from following you, O my God; but establish me and my seed forever, and let us not go astray henceforth and forever."

21. And he said, "Shall I return unto Ur of the Chaldees who seek my face so that I should return to them? Or shall I dwell here in this place? Make the straight path prosper before you in the hand of your servant that he might serve. And do not let me walk in the error of my heart, O my God."

22. And he finished talking and praying and behold, the word of the LORD was sent to him by my hand, saying, "Come forth from your land and from your kin and from

15. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

16. Cf. Abraham 2:1.

17. Cf. Abraham 3:1–2.

18. Cf. Abraham 3:14.

19. Cf. Abraham 3:11–12.

20. Cf. Abraham 3:11.

your father's house into the land which I shall show you, and I shall establish you as a great and numerous people.

23. And I shall bless you and I shall make your name great, and you will be blessed in the land and all the nations of the earth will bless themselves by you. And whoever blesses you I shall bless and whoever curses you I shall curse.²¹

24. And I shall be God for you and your son and for the son of your son and for all of your seed. Do not fear henceforth and for all the generations of the earth. I am your God."

25. And the LORD God said to me, "Open his mouth and his ears so that he might hear and speak with his mouth in the language which is revealed because it ceased from the mouth of all of the sons of men from the day of the Fall."

26. And I opened his mouth and his ears and his lips and I began to speak with him in Hebrew, in the tongue of creation.

27. And he took his father's books—and they were written in Hebrew—and he copied them. And he began studying them thereafter.²² And I caused him to know everything which he was unable (to understand). And he studied them (in) the six months of rain.

[Here follows Terah's blessing of Abraham and Abraham's migration to the land of Canaan, which is also found in Genesis 12.]

Chapter 13

10. . . . And there was a famine in the land.

11. And Abram went into Egypt in the third year of the week and he stayed in Egypt five years before his wife was taken from him.

12. And Tanis of Egypt was built then, seven years after Hebron.

13. And it came to pass when Pharaoh took Sarai, the wife of Abraham, that the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues on account of Sarai, the wife of Abram.

14. And Abram was honored with many possessions: sheep and oxen and asses and horses and camels and male and female servants and silver and much gold. And Lot, his brother's son, also had possessions.

15. And Pharaoh returned Sarai, the wife of Abram. And he sent him out from the land of Egypt.

[Here follows the story of Abraham's return to Canaan, his rescue of Lot and his encounter with Melchizedek, followed by the covenant the Lord made with him, all found in Genesis 13–15. We include a brief extract that is relevant to the Book of Abraham account (the Lord is speaking in the next selection)].

21. Citing Genesis 12:1–3; cf. Abraham 2:11.

22. Cf. Abraham 1:28, 31.

Chapter 14

4. And he took him outside and he said to him, "Look into heaven and count the stars if you are able to count them."²³

5. And he looked at the heaven and he saw the stars. And he said to him, "Thus shall your seed be."

[The chapters that follow contain the rest of the story of Abraham, much as it is found in Genesis 15–25. But his farewell blessing and exhortation to his posterity are unique to *Jubilees*, and we extract therefrom the following items that are relevant to a study of the Book of Abraham.]

Chapter 20

[Abraham speaking to his sons:]

7. I exhort you, my sons, love the God of heaven, and be joined to all of his commands. And do not go after their idols and after their defilement.

8. And do not make gods of molten or carved images for yourself, because it is vain and they have no spirit. Because they are the work of hands, and all those who trust in them trust in nothing. Do not worship them and do not bow down to them.

9. But worship the Most High God, and bow down to him continually.

Chapter 21

[From Abraham's blessing of his son Isaac:]

2. "Behold I am one hundred and seventy-five years old, and throughout all of the days of my life I have been remembering the LORD and sought with all my heart to do his will and walk uprightly in all his ways.

3. I hated idols, and those who serve them I have rejected. And I have offered my heart and spirit so that I might be careful to do the will of the one who created me

4. because he is the living God. And he is holy, and faithful, and he is more righteous than all (others). . . .

10. Because thus I have found written in the books of my forefathers²⁴ and in the words of Enoch and in the words of Noah."²⁵

Chapter 22

[From Abraham's blessing of his grandson Jacob:]

16. "And you also, my son, Jacob, remember my words, and keep the commandments of Abraham, your father. Separate yourself from the gentiles, and do not eat with them, and do not perform deeds like theirs. And do not become associates of theirs. Because their deeds are defiled, and all of their ways are contaminated, and despicable, and abominable.

23. Cf. Genesis 15:5; Abraham 3:1–2.

24. Cf. Abraham 1:28, 31.

25. Cf. Abraham 1:19; Facsimile 2, figure 3.

17. They slaughter their sacrifices to the dead, and to the demons they bow down. And they eat in tombs. And all their deeds are worthless and vain.

18. And they have no heart to perceive, and they have no eyes to see what their deeds are, and where they wander astray, saying to the tree 'you are my god,' and to a stone 'you are my lord, and you are my savior'; and they have no heart.²⁶

19. But (as for) you, my son, Jacob, may God Most High help you, and the God of heaven bless you. And may he turn you from their defilement, and from all their errors.

20. Be careful, my son, Jacob, that you do not take a wife from any of the seed of the daughters of Canaan, because all of his seed is (destined) for uprooting from the earth;

21. because through the sin of Ham, Canaan sinned, and all of his seed will be blotted out from the earth, and all his remnant, and there is none of his who will be saved.²⁷

22. And for all of those who worship idols and for the hated ones, there is no hope in the land of the living; because they will go down into Sheol. And in the place of judgment will they walk, and they will have no memory upon the earth. Just as the sons of Sodom were taken from the earth, so (too) all of those who worship idols shall be taken away."²⁸

Chapter 39

6. He [Joseph]²⁹ remembered the LORD and the words which Jacob, his father, used to read, which were from the words of Abraham.³⁰

26. Cf. Deuteronomy 4:28; 28:36, 64; 29:17; 2 Kings 19:18; Isaiah 37:19; Ezekiel 20:32; Daniel 5:4, 23; Habakkuk 2:18–19; Revelation 9:20; Abraham 1:11.

27. Contrast Abraham 1:21–22.

28. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

29. Our insertion.

30. Cf. Abraham 1:31.

EXTRACTS FROM PSEUDO-PHILO

The *Biblical Antiquities* of Pseudo-Philo (*Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*) is a creative retelling of the biblical story from Adam to David. The text may have been composed as early as the late second century B.C. or as late as the latter part of the first century A.D.; around the time of Christ seems the most plausible date. Pseudo-Philo exists in several complete Latin manuscripts and three fragments, dating from the eleventh to the fourteenth century. Hebraisms in the text suggest that the original was composed in Hebrew, in the Palestine area, and the work is thought to have been translated into Greek and then into the Latin now extant. Although the text attributes itself to Philo, his authorship is doubtful because (1) Philo wrote in Greek, not Hebrew, and (2) he interpreted biblical texts allegorically, and this work does not. The text differs from standard midrashic commentary because it interweaves scripture and commentary, a practice that later became standard in the Christian tradition; it was the Christians who preserved this text. The Latin text was first published in 1898. In 1917, M. R. James made the first English translation of this work. Here we employ the translation of D. J. Harrington in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:309, 310–12, 332–33, 345.

Chapter 4

16. Then those who inhabited the earth began to observe the stars and started to reckon by them and to make predictions and to have their sons and daughters pass through the fire.¹ But Serug and his sons did not act as these did.

Chapter 6

1. Then all those who had been separated and were inhabiting the earth gathered and dwelt together. *And migrating from the east, they found a plain in the land of Babylon; and settling there, each one said to his neighbor;*² “Behold it will happen that we will be scattered every man from his brother and in the last days we will be fighting one another. Now come, let us build for ourselves a tower whose top will reach the heavens, and we will make a name for ourselves and a glory upon the earth.”³

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1. Cf. Abraham 1:7–8, 10–11.
 2. Citing Genesis 11:2–3.
 3. Citing Genesis 11:4.

2. *And they said, each to his neighbor, "Let us take bricks and let each of us write our names on the bricks and burn them with fire;⁴ and whatever will be burned through and through will be used for mortar and brick."*

3. *And they took their bricks, all of them except twelve men who would not take them. And these are their names: Abram, Nahor, Lot, Ruge, Tenute, Zaba, Armodat, Jobab, Esar, Abimahel, Saba, Augin.*

4. *And the people of that land laid hold of them and brought them to their chiefs and said, "These are the men who have gone against our plans and would not walk in our ways." And the leaders said to them, "Why were each of you not willing to cast in bricks along with the people of the land?" And those men answered saying, "We are not casting in bricks, nor are we joining in your scheme. We know the one LORD, and him we worship. Even if you throw us into the fire with your bricks, we will not join you."*

5. *And the leaders were angered and said, "As they have spoken, so do to them. And unless they take part with us in throwing in the bricks, you will have the fire devour them along with your bricks."*

6. *And Joktan, who was chief of the leaders, answered, "No, but let them be given a period of seven days, and if they repent of their evil plans and are willing to cast in bricks with you, they may live. If not, let it be done and let them be burned then in accord with your judgment." He, however, sought how he might save them from the hands of the people, because he was of their tribe and served God.*

7. *When this was said, he took them and locked them in the royal household. And when it was evening, the leader commanded that fifty men of might be summoned to him, and he said to them, "Go forth and tonight take those men who are locked in my house, and put supplies for them from my household on ten beasts of burden. And bring those men to me, and bring their supplies along with the beasts of burden to the mountains and take care of them there. And know that, if anyone learns what I have said to you, I will burn you in the fire."*

8. *And the men went forth and did everything that their chief commanded them. And they brought the men to his house by night, and they took their supplies and put them on the beasts of burden and led them into the mountains as he had commanded them.*

9. *And the chief summoned to himself those twelve men and said to them, "Be confident and do not fear, for you will not die. For the God in whom you trust is powerful, and therefore be steadfast in him because he will free you and save you.⁵ And behold now I have commanded the fifty men who have brought you out here; supplies have already been taken from my household. And they have gone forth into the mountains and are waiting for you in the valley, and I will give you another fifty men who will escort you there. And go, hide yourselves there in the valley; you will have drinking water that flows from the rocks. And stay there for thirty days, until the hatred of the people of this*

4. Citing Genesis 11:3.

5. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

land subsides and until God sends his wrath upon them and destroys them.⁶ For I know that the evil plan that they have agreed to carry out will not stand, because their plot is foolish. And when seven days have passed and they seek you out, I will say to them, 'The door of the jail in which they were locked up was broken down. They went out and escaped by night. And I have sent a hundred men to search after them.' And I will distract them from the anger that is upon them."

10. And eleven of the men answered him and said, "Your servants have found favor in your eyes, because we are rescued from the hands of these arrogant men."

11. But Abram alone was silent. And the leader said to him, "Why do you not answer me, Abram servant of God?" Abram answered and said, "Behold, today I flee to the mountains. And if I escape the fire, wild beasts will come out of the mountains and devour us; or we will lack food and die of famine; and we will be found fleeing from the people of this land but falling in our sins. And now as he in whom I trust lives, I will not be moved from my place where they have put me. If there be any sin of mine so flagrant that I should be burned up, let the will of God be done." And the leader said to him, "May your blood be upon your own head if you are not willing to go forth with these men. Now if you are willing to do so, you will be freed; but if you wish to stay, stay as you wish." And Abram said, "I will not go forth, but I will stay here."

12. And the leader took those eleven men and sent another fifty with them and commanded them, saying, "You also, wait in the mountains for fifteen days with those fifty who were sent on ahead; and afterward come back and say, 'We have not found them,' as I told the former group. And know that if anyone disregards any of these words that I have spoken to you, he will be burned in the fire." And the men went forth. And he took Abram by himself and locked him up again where he had been confined.

13. And after seven days had passed, the people gathered together and said to their leader, "Give us back the men who were unwilling to join in our plan, and we will burn them in the fire." And they sent the leaders to bring them out, and they found no one but Abram. And they gathered together with their leaders and said, "The men whom you locked up have fled; they have evaded our scheme."

14. And Fenech and Nimrod said to Joktan, "Where are the men whom you locked up?" But that man said, "They have broken out by night. But I have sent a hundred men to search for them and commanded them that, if they find them, not only should they burn them in the fire but also give their corpses to the birds of the heavens, and so let them destroy them."

15. And then those men said, "This fellow who alone has been found, we will burn him." And they took Abram and brought him to their leaders. And they said to him, "Where are those who were with you?" And he said, "I was sleeping during the night; when I awoke, I did not find them."

6. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

7. A similar idea is found in other versions of the Abraham story: the patriarch refuses to be rescued by the angels but trusts that God himself will save him.

16. And they took him and built a furnace and lit it. And they threw bricks burned with fire into the furnace. And then the leader Joktan with great emotion took Abram and threw him along with the bricks into the fiery furnace.⁸

17. But God caused a great earthquake, and the fire gushing out of the furnace leaped forth in flames and sparks of flame. And it burned all those standing around in sight of the furnace.⁹ And all those who were burned in that day were 83,500. But there was not the least injury to Abram from the burning of the fire.

18. And Abram came up out of the furnace, and the fiery furnace collapsed.¹⁰ And Abram was saved and went away to the eleven men who were hidden in the mountains, and he reported to them everything that had happened to him. And they came down with him from the mountains, rejoicing in the name of the LORD. And no one who met them frightened them that day. And they named that place by the name of Abram and in the language of the Chaldeans "Deli," which means "God."

Chapter 18

[God speaking to Balaam:]

5. And he [God]¹¹ said to him, "Is it not regarding this people [Israel] that I spoke to Abraham in a vision, saying, 'Your seed will be like the stars of heaven,' when I lifted him above the firmament and showed him the arrangements of all the stars?"¹²

Chapter 23

4. And Joshua rose up in the morning and gathered all the people and said to them, "The LORD says this: 'There was one rock from which I quarried out your father. And the cutting of that rock bore two men whose names are Abraham and Nahor, and out of the chiseling of that place were born two women whose names are Sarah and Melcha, and they lived together across the river.'¹³ And Abraham took Sarah as a wife, and Nahor took Melcha.

5. And when all those inhabiting the land were being led astray after their own devices,¹⁴ Abraham believed in me and was not led astray with them. And I rescued him from the flame¹⁵ and took him and brought him over all the land of Canaan and said to him in a vision, 'To your seed I will give this land.'¹⁶

Chapter 32

1. Then Deborah and Barak the son of Abino and all the people together sang a hymn to the LORD on that day, saying,¹⁷ "Behold the LORD has shown us his glory from on high, as he

8. Cf. Abraham 1:7, 12, 15; Facsimile 1, figure 3.

9. Cf. Abraham 1:20, 29.

10. Cf. Abraham 1:20.

11. These brackets and the next are our insertions.

12. Citing Genesis 22:17. Cf. Abraham 1:31; 3:1–18; Facsimiles 2 and 3.

13. Citing Joshua 24:2.

14. The wording is evidently based on Joshua 24:2, which makes Abraham's fathers idolators.

15. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

16. Citing Genesis 12:7.

17. Citing Judges 5:1.

did in the height of the heavenly places when he sent forth his voice to confuse the languages of men. And he chose our nation and took Abraham our father out of the fire¹⁸ and chose him over all his brothers and kept him from the fire and freed him from the bricks destined for building the tower.”

18. Cf. Abraham 1:16; 3:20.

EXTRACTS FROM THE GENESIS APOCRYPHON

The *Genesis Apocryphon* is one of the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in caves above the western shore of the Dead Sea beginning in 1947. They vary in date from the third century B.C. to the first century A.D. The *Genesis Apocryphon* is essentially a midrashic version of the biblical book of Genesis in Aramaic. The first edition was published in 1956 and included both the Aramaic text and an English translation. The following English translation of columns XIX–XX appears in Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 232–34. The numbers refer to lines in the original text. As is evident below, the manuscript contains many lacunae. For an explanation of the sigla used below, see *ibid.*, xxvi.

Column XIX

10. . . . However, a famine occurred in this whole country. I heard that there was grain in Egypt, and left

11. to [enter] the land of Egypt [. . .] I reached the river Carmon, one of the

12. branches of the river [Nile]¹ now we [. . .] our land. And I crossed the seven branches of this river which [. . .]

13. [. . .] Then we crossed our land and we entered the land of the sons of Ham in the land of Egypt.²

14. *Blank I*, Abram, dreamt a dream, on the night of my entry into Egypt. And in my dream I saw a cedar and a palm-tree.³

1. We have supplied the name missing from the damaged portion of the manuscript, which the translator did not restore. It seems clear from the “seven branches” of the river mentioned in the text that we are dealing with the Nile, whose seven branches have been renowned throughout history. Other translators have restored the name as the “river [of Egypt],” but this restoration is to be rejected because the biblical river of that name (Genesis 15:18; Numbers 34:5; Joshua 15:4, 47; 1 Kings 8:65; 2 Kings 24:7; 2 Chronicles 7:8) is a seasonal stream, the Wadi Arish, that marked the ancient border with Egypt and is more accurately rendered “the stream of Egypt” in Isaiah 27:12.

2. Cf. Abraham 1:21–27.

3. The imagery of the palm and cedar in connection with Abram and Sarai going into Egypt is also found in *Midrash Rabbah* Genesis 41:1 and *Zohar* Genesis 82a, as noted later in this collection. See also *Targum Neofiti* and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, where we read in Numbers 21:34 that the giant Og had mocked Abraham and Sarah as “beautiful trees standing beside springs of water, but produc-

15. [. . .] Some men arrived intending to cut and uproot the cedar, leaving the palm-tree alone.

16. But the palm-tree shouted and said: Do not hew down the cedar, because both of us are of the same family. And the cedar was saved thanks to the palm-tree,

17. and was not hewn down. *Blank* I woke up from my slumber during the night and said to Sarai, my wife: I have had

18. a nightmare [. . . and] I am alarmed by this dream. She said to me: Tell me your dream so that I may know it. And I began to tell her the dream.

19. [And I let her know the interpretation] of the dream. I said: [. . .] they want to kill me and leave you alone. This favour only

20. [must you do for me]: every time we [reach a place, say] about me: He is my brother. And I shall live under your protection and my life will be spared because of you.

21. [. . .] they will try to separate you from me and kill me. Sarai wept because of my words that night.⁴

22. [. . .] the Pharaoh [Zoan . . . so that] Sarai [did not wish] to go to Zoan

23. [with me, because she greatly feared] within herself that anybody could see her. After these five years

24. three men of the princes of Egypt [came . . .] from Pharaoh Zoan on account of my [words] and of my wife. They gave me

25. [many presents expecting from me] goodness, wisdom and truth. I read in front of them the [book] of the words of Enoch⁵

26. [. . .] concerning the famine which [. . .] and not [. . .] and they arrived, urging until [. . .] to her [. . .] the words of [. . .]

27. [. . .] with much eating and drinking [. . .] wine [. . .]

Column XX

1. [. . .] . . . [. . .]

2. [. . .] How dazzling and pretty is the shape of her face, and how [. . .]

3. [. . . ,] how smooth the hair of her head! How lovely are her eyes; how pleasant her nose and all the animation

4. of her face [. . .] How graceful is her breast and how lovely all her whiteness! How beautiful are her arms! And her hands, how

5. perfect! How alluring is the whole appearance of her hands! How pretty are the palms of her hands and how long and supple all the fingers of her hands! Her feet,

ing no fruit." Cited from Martin McNamara and Ernest G. Clarke, trans., *Targum Neofiti I: Numbers, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Numbers* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1995), 123; see also 250–51. Note also that Zohar Numbers 203a says that the three cedars of Lebanon are "the emblem of the Patriarchs." *The Zohar*, trans. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon (New York: Bennet, 1958), 5:299. The imagery evidently derives from Psalm 92:12, 14, where we read that "the righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. . . . They shall still bring forth fruit in old age."

4. Cf. Abraham 2:22–25.

5. Cf. Abraham 1:28, 31.

6. how lovely! How perfect her legs! No virgin or wife who enters the bridal chamber is more beautiful than her. Above all

7. women her beauty stands out; her loveliness is far above them all. And with all this beauty there is in her great wisdom. And everything she does with her hands

8. is perfect. When the king heard the words of HRKNWS⁶ and the words of his two companions, since the three of them spoke in unison, he desired her greatly and sent

9. with all speed for them to fetch her. He saw her and was amazed at all her beauty, and took her for himself as a wife. He tried to kill me, but Sarai said

10. to the king: He is my brother, so that I could profit at her expense. I, Abram, was forgiven on her account and I was not killed. But I wept

11. bitterly that night, I, Abram and my nephew Lot with me, because Sarai had been taken away from me by force. *Blank*

12. That night I prayed, pleaded and entreated and said in my distress, while my tears flowed: Blessed are you, O God Most High, my Lord, through all the

13. universe. For you are Lord and Master of everything and rule all the kings of the earth, to judge them all. Now

14. I lodge a complaint before you, my Lord, against Pharaoh Zoan, king of Egypt, because my wife has been taken away from me by force. Do justice for me against him and show your mighty arm

15. against him, and against all his house. During this night, may he not be able to sully my wife, separated from me; and so they shall know you, my Lord. For you are the Lord of all the kings

16. of the earth. And I wept and stayed silent. That night, the God Most High sent him a chastising spirit, to afflict him and all the members of his household, an evil spirit

17. that kept afflicting him and all the members of his household. And he was unable to approach her, much less have sexual intercourse with her, in spite of being with her

18. for two years. At the end of two years, the punishments and plagues, against him and against all the members of his household, increased and intensified. And he sent

19. for all [the wise men] of Egypt to be called, and all the wizards as well as all the healers of Egypt, (to see) whether they could heal him of that disease, [him] and the members

20. of his household. However, all the healers and wizards and all the wise men were unable to rise up and heal him. For the spirit attacked all of them and

21. they fled. *Blank* Then HRKNWS came to me and asked me to come and pray for

22. the king, and lay my hands upon him so that he would live. For [he had seen me] in a dream. But Lot said to him: Abram, my uncle, cannot pray for

23. the king while Sarai, his wife, is with him. Go, now, and tell the king to send back his wife to her own husband and he will pray for him and he will live.

6. While there are possible Egyptian etymologies for this name, it closely resembles the Greek Hyrkanos, a name relatively common among the Jews beginning in the second century B.C.

24. *Blank* When HRKNWS heard Lot's words, he went and said to the king: All these plagues and punishments

25. with which the king my Lord is afflicted and punished are on account of Sarai, Abram's wife. They should return Sarai, then, I beg you to Abram, her husband,

26. and this plague and the spirit of purulent evils will cease to afflict you. (The Pharaoh) called me to him and said to me: What have you done to me with regard to Sarai? You told me:

27. She is my sister, when she is your wife; so that I took her for myself for a consort. Here is your wife; take her away! Go! Depart from

28. all the cities of Egypt! But now pray for me and for my household so that this evil spirit will be banished from us. I prayed for [. . .]

29. and laid my hands upon his head. The plague was removed from him; [the evil spirit] was banished [from him] and he lived.

30. The king got up and informed me [. . .] The king swore an oath to me that not [. . .] Then, they [brought to] me

31. Sarai. The king gave her much gold [and silver] and many clothes of fine linen and purple [. . .]

32. in front of her and also Hagar. He handed her to me, and appointed men to escort me out [of Egypt.]

33. I, Abram, walked with much cattle and also with silver and gold. I left [Egypt . . . Lot],

34. my brother's son, [was] with me. Lot, too, had acquired many flocks and had taken for himself a wife from among the daughters [of Egypt. I camped with him].

AN EXTRACT FROM THE DAMASCUS DOCUMENT

The *Damascus Document* (CD) was first discovered in the 1890s in the Cairo Genizah. Other copies were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls in caves above the western shore of the Dead Sea beginning in 1947. Because the Dead Sea Scrolls date from the third century B.C. to the first century A.D., the *Damascus Document* must date to no later than that period. The English translation of the Hebrew text is from Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 34.

Column III

1. *Blank* Through it, the sons of Noah and their families strayed, through it, they were cut off.¹
2. Abraham did not walk in it, and was counted as a friend for keeping God's precepts and not following
3. the desire of his spirit. And he passed (them) on to Isaac and to Jacob.

1. Cf. Abraham 1:5–6.

AN EXTRACT FROM A
GENESIS COMMENTARY: 4QCOMMGEN A
(4QPGEN^a OR 4Q252)

The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in caves above the western shore of the Dead Sea beginning in 1947. The scrolls date from the third century B.C. to the first century A.D. The extract below is from a Genesis commentary called 4Q252 or 4QpGen^a, which was first published in 1956 along with an English translation. The scroll is fragmentary with several lacunae. This translation of the Hebrew text is from Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 214.

Column II

8. He gave the land to Abraham, his beloved. *Blank* Terah was one hundred and [for]ty years old when he left

9. Ur of the Chaldees and came to Haran, and Ab[ram was se]venty years old. Abram lived five years

10. in Haran, and afterwards [Abram] went [to] the land of Canaan. Six[ty five years (?).]¹

1. While Genesis 12:4 makes Abraham seventy-five years of age when he went to the land of Canaan, Abraham 2:14 makes him sixty-two. The present document may support the Book of Abraham's figure as the word *five* is García Martínez's conjecture. *Jasher* has Abraham leaving Haran several times, at different ages. See the note to *Jasher* 13:5.