TESTAMENT OF ABRAHAM

Recension A

Abraham lived the measure of his life, 995 years. All the years of his life he lived in quietness, gentleness, and righteousness, and the righteous man was very hospitable: "For he pitched his tent at the crossroads of the oak of Mamre and welcomed everyone—rich and poor, kings and rulers, the crippled and the helpless, friends and strangers, neighbors and passersby—(all) on equal terms did the pious, entirely holy, righteous, and hospitable Abraham welcome. But even to him came the common and inexorable bitter cup of death and the unforeseen end of life. Therefore the Master God called his archangel Michael and said to him, "Commander-in-chief" Michael, go down to Abraham and tell him about his death, so that he may arrange for the disposition of his possessions. For I have blessed him as the stars of heaven and as the sand by the seashore, and he lives in abundance, (having) a large livelihood and many possessions, and he is very rich. But above all others he is righteous in all goodness, (having been) hospitable and loving until the end of his life. But you, archangel Michael, go to Abraham, my beloved friend, announce his death to him, and give him this assurance, "At this time you are about to leave this vain world and depart from the body, and you will come to your own Master among the good."

So the Commander-in-chief left the presence of God and went down to Abraham at the oak of Mamre, and he found the righteous Abraham in the nearby field, sitting beside yokes of plow oxen with the sons of Masek and other servants, twelve in number. And behold the Commander-in-chief came toward him. "When Abraham saw the Commander-in-chief Michael coming from afar, in the manner of a handsome soldier, then Abraham arose and met him, just as was his custom to greet and welcome all strangers. And the Commander-in-chief saluted him and said, "Hail, honored father, righteous soul elect of God, true friend of the heavenly One." And Abraham said to the Commander-in-chief, "Hail, honored soldier, bright as the sun and most handsome, more than all the sons of men. Well met! Therefore I ask your presence whencesoever comes your youthfulness of age. Teach me, your suppliant, whencesoever from what army and from what road your beauty has come here."

The quotation is in precise agreement with LXX.

a. In both recs., "oak" is always singular and "Mamre" is treated as an adjective, as in LXX Gen 18:1, both points in contrast to the Heb.


c. Gk. archistrategos; a common title in A but not B; See B 14, n. b. The title is apparently Egyptian Jewish: See also 3Bar 11:6; 13:3; 2En 22:6; 33:10 (both in MS A); JosAsen 14:7; GkApEzra 1:4; 4:24. It appears to originate in the title LXX gives to the sword-bearing man who is captain of the Lord's army in Josh 5:13-15.

d. "Arrangements for the disposition" is diatassai, the verb consistently used in A. See also 4:11; 8:11; 15:1. The verb does not appear in B. Note dioikête (1:3) and diatithêmi (7:17).

e. Gen 22:17 is taken to refer to Abraham's wealth rather than his descendants; so also 4:11.


g. Isa 41:8LXX, "whom I loved"; Heb., "my friend"; cf. also 2 Chron 20:7. On Abraham as the friend (philos) of God: Jas 2:23; ApAb 9, 10; Philo, Soph 106 (adding "my friend" to Gen 18:17).

h. Gk. despot as a title for God: Gen 15:2, 8 LXX; and frequently in LXX.

2 a. Masek as proper name: Gen 15:2 LXX; contrast the Heb.

b. Cf. Heb 13:2: "And remember always to welcome strangers, for by doing this, some people have entertained angels without knowing it"; see Gen 18:1f.; Tob 5:5-12:22; Homer, Odyssey 17.485f.; Ovid, Metamorphoses 8.625f.

c. Apparently, "you"; cf. "your presence," "your beauty."
7 succession of a true friend of his, for the king summons him." • And Abraham said, "Come, my lord, go with me as far as my field." And the Commander-in-chief said, "I am coming." • And so they went and sat in the plowed field beside the company. • Abraham said to his servants, the sons of Masek, "Go to the herd of horses and get two gentle and tame horses, well broken, so that I and this stranger may ride." • And the Commander-in-chief said, "No, my lord Abraham, do not let them bring horses, for I abstain from ever sitting on a four-footed animal. For is not my king rich with great possessions, having authority over both men and every kind of beast? But I abstain from ever sitting upon a four-footed animal. Let us go then, righteous soul, walking in high spirits until (we reach) your house." And Abraham said, "Amen; let it be so."

1, 2 3 As they were leaving the field in the direction of his house, beside the road there stood a cypress tree. • And by the command of God the tree cried out in a human voice and said, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God who is summoning him to those who love him." • Abraham hid the mystery, thinking that the Commander-in-chief had not heard the voice of the tree. • Then they came near the house and sat in the courtyard. And when Isaac saw the face of the angel he said to Sarah his mother, "My lady mother, behold: The man who is sitting with my father 6 Abraham is no son of the race which dwells upon the earth." • And Isaac ran and did obeisance to him and fell at the feet of the incorporeal one. And the incorporeal one blessed him and said, "The Lord God will bestow upon you his promise which he gave to your father Abraham and to his seed, and he will also bestow upon you the precious prayer of your father and your mother." • Then Abraham said to Isaac his son, "Isaac, my child, draw water from the well and bring it to me in the vessel so that we may wash this stranger's feet, for he is tired, having come to us from a long journey." • And so Isaac ran to the well and drew water into the vessel and brought it to them. • Then Abraham went forward and washed the feet of the Commander-in-chief Michael. Abraham's heart was moved and he wept over the stranger. • When Isaac saw his father crying, he also cried. When the Commander-in-chief saw them crying, he too wept with them; and the Commander-in-chief's tears fell to the vessel, into the water of the basin, and they became precious stones. • Abraham saw the wonder and was astonished, and he picked up the stones secretly and hid the mystery, keeping it in his heart alone.

4 Then Abraham said to Isaac his son, "My beloved son, go into the guest room and beautify it. Spread out for us there two couches, one for me and one for this man who is staying as our guest today. • Prepare for us there a dining couch and a lampstand and a table with an abundance of everything good. Beautify the chamber, my child, and spread linens and purple cloth and silk underfoot. Burn every valuable and prized incense, and bring fragrant plants from the garden to fill our house. • Light seven lamps filled with oil so that we may make merry,
because this man who is staying as our guest today is more honorable than kings and rulers; for even his appearance surpasses all the sons of men." • Isaac prepared everything well. And Abraham, taking along the archangel Michael, went up to the guest chamber, and they both sat on the couches, and he placed between them a table with an abundance of everything good. • Then the Commander-in-chief rose up and went outside, as if he needed to urinate; and he ascended into heaven in the twinkling of an eye and stood before God and said to him: • "Master, Lord," let your might know that I cannot announce the mention of death to that righteous man, because I have not seen upon earth a man like him—merciful, hospitable, righteous, truthful, God-fearing, refraining from every evil deed. And so now know, Lord, that I cannot announce the mention of death." • Then the Lord said, "Michael, Commander-in-chief, go down to my friend Abraham, and whatever he should say to you, this do; and whatever he should eat you also eat with him. And I shall send my holy spirit upon his son Isaac, • and I shall thrust the mention of his death into Isaac's heart, so that he will see his father's death in a dream. Then Isaac will relate the vision, you will interpret it, and he himself will come to know his end." • And the Commander-in-chief said, "Lord, all the heavenly spirits are incorporeal, and they neither eat nor drink." Now he has set before me a table with an abundance of all the good things which are earthly and perishable. And now, Lord, what shall I do? How shall I escape his notice while I am sitting at one table with him?" • The Lord said, "Go down to him, and do not be concerned about this. For when you are seated with him I shall send upon you an all-devouring spirit, and, from your hands and through your mouth, it will consume everything which is on the table. Make merry with him in everything. • Only interpret well the things of the vision, so that Abraham will come to know the sickle of death and the unforeseen end of life, and so that he might make arrangements for the disposition of all his belongings; for I have blessed him more than the sand of the sea and as the stars of heaven." •

5 Then the Commander-in-chief went down to the house of Abraham and sat with him at table, while Isaac served them. • When the supper was finished, Abraham prayed, according to his custom, and the archangel prayed with him. Then they rested, each on his couch. • Isaac said to his father, • "Father, I too should like to rest with you in this room, so that I too might hear your conversation. For I love to hear the distinction of speech of this man who has every virtue." • But Abraham said, • "No, my son, but go to your own room and rest on your couch, so that we should not become burdensome to this man." • Then Isaac received the blessing from them and blessed them, and he went to his own room and rested on his couch. • Then God thrust the mention of death into Isaac's heart as in a dream. And around the third hour of the night Isaac woke up and rose from his couch and went running up to the room where his father was asleep with the archangel. • Then when Isaac reached the door he cried out saying, • "Father Abraham, get up and open (the door) immediately for me, so that I can come in and hang on your neck and kiss you before they take you from me." • Then Abraham arose and opened (the door) for him. Isaac entered, hung upon his neck, and began to cry in a loud voice. • Then Abraham's heart was moved, and he too cried with him in a loud voice. When the Commander-in-chief saw them crying he too cried. • Then Sarah, who was in her tent, heard their crying and came running to them. She found them embracing and crying. • And Sarah said with tears, • "My lord Abraham, what are you crying about? Tell me, my lord. • Did this brother who is staying as our guest

c. Gk. despota kyrie: Gen 15:2; 8 LXX; and elsewhere.
e. Angels neither eat nor drink: Deut 11:4; cf. bYoma 4b, top; 75b (where the question is debated). The angels who visited Abraham only pretended to eat: GenR 48:14; TarJon Gen 18:8 (cf. TargOsnk 18:8); cf. Tob 12:19. Angels' food is distinct from animals': Vita 4:2, WisSol 16:20 (= ma'ana); JosAssn 16:8 (= the honey that gives immortality).
today bring you news about your nephew Lot, that he has died? Is it for this that
your mourn thus?" Then the Commander-in-chief answered and said to her, "No, sister Sarah, it is not as you say. Rather, your son Isaac, it appears, had a dream and came to us crying, and when we saw him our hearts were likewise moved, and we cried."

6 When Sarah heard the Commander-in-chief's distinction of speech, she immediately realized that the speaker was an angel of the Lord. Then Sarah beckoned Abraham to come to the door (and step) outside, and she said to him, "My lord Abraham, do you know who this man is?" Abraham said, "I do not know."
Sarah said, "You must know, my lord, the three heavenly men who stayed as guests* in our tent beside the oak of Mamre when you slaughtered the unblemished calf and set a table for them. After the meat had been eaten, the calf got up again and exultantly suckled its mother. Do you not know, my lord Abraham, that they gave us Isaac, the very fruit of my womb, as promised to us? For this man is one of those three holy men." Then Abraham said, "O Sarah, you have spoken truly. Glory and blessing from (our) God and Father! For I too, late this evening, when I was washing his feet in the vessel (which has) the wash basin, said in my heart, 'These feet are (those of one) of the three men that I washed previously.' And later when his tears fell into the basin they became precious stones." And (Abraham) took them out of his bosom and gave them to Sarah and said, "If you do not believe me, look at them." Sarah took them and knelt down* and embraced (him) and said, "Glory be to God who shows us wonders. And now know, my lord Abraham, that a revelation of something is among us, whether it be evil or good."

7 Then Abraham left Sarah and entered the room and said to Isaac, "Come, my beloved son, tell me the truth. What were the things that you saw and what happened to you that you came running to us thus?" Isaac answered and began to say, "My lord, I saw, this night, the sun and the moon above my head, and its (i.e. the sun's) rays were encircling and shedding light on me. And while I was thus watching and exulting at these things, I saw heaven opened, and I saw a light-bearing man coming down out of heaven, flashing (beams of light) more than seven suns. And that sunlike* man came up and took the sun from my head, and he went up into the heavens, whence also he had come. And I was deeply grieved that he had taken the sun from me, and after a little while, as I was still grieving and anguishing, I saw that man for a second time coming down out of heaven. And he took from me also the moon from my head. And I cried greatly and I besought that light-bearing man and I said, 'No, my lord, do not take my glory from me. Have mercy on me and heed me. And if you do take the sun from me, at least leave the moon with me.' But he said, 'Let them be taken up to the king above, because he wants them there.' And he took them from me, but he left the rays with me."

8 The Commander-in-chief said, "Hear, righteous Abraham: The sun which your child saw is you, his father. And the moon similarly is his mother Sarah. And the light-bearing man who came down from heaven, this is the one sent from God, who is about to take your righteous soul from you. And now know, most honored Abraham, that at this time you are about to leave the earthly life and journey to God." The Commander-in-chief said to him, "I am Michael, the Commander-in-chief who

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6 a. The verb is ἐπισηνίζομαι, which appears here and in B6:10, but apparently nowhere else. See Dekor, Le Testament d'Abraham, p. 112, n. 1.
b. "Basin" is here apparently an adjectival genitive, "the wash-basin-vessel." The only other construction ("the vessel of the basin") would make the vessel (lekanē) a part of the basin (nipērē), contrary to the obvious sense of 3:11 above.
c. Gk. προσκαλέω. See ch. 3, n. b.
7 a. Lit. "sun-shaped."
stands before God, and I was sent to you that I might announce to you the mention of death. And then I shall return to him just as we were commanded." • And Abraham said, "Now I do know that you are an angel of the Lord, and you were sent to take my soul. Nevertheless, I will not by any means follow you, but you do whatever he commands."

When the Commander-in-chief heard this statement, he immediately became invisible. And he went up into heaven and stood before God and told (him) everything which he saw at Abraham's house. • And the Commander-in-chief also said this to the master, "Your friend Abraham also said this, 'I will not by any means follow you, but you do whatever he commands.' • Almighty Master, what do your glory and (your) immortal kingship command now?" • God said to the Commander-in-chief Michael, "Go to my friend Abraham one more time and say this to him: • Thus says the Lord your God, who led you into the promised land, who blessed you more than the sand of the sea and the stars of heaven, who opened the womb of the barren Sarah and graciously granted to you Isaac, the fruit of the womb in old age. • Truly I say to you that blessing I will bless you and multiplying I will multiply your seed, and I will give to you whatever you ask of me; for I am the Lord your God and besides me there is no other." • Tell me why you are resisting me and why there is grief in you? And why have you resisted my archangel Michael? • Do you not know that all those who (spring) from Adam and Eve die? And not one of the prophets escaped death, and not one of those who reign has been immortal. Not one of the forefathers has escaped the mystery of death. All have died, all have departed into Hades, all have been gathered by the sickle of Death. • But to you I did not send Death. I did not allow a fatal disease to befall you. I did not permit the sickle of Death to come upon you. I did not allow the nets of Hades to entwine you. I did not ever want any evil to come upon you. • But for (your) good comfort I sent my Commander-in-chief Michael to you, in order that you might come to know of your departure from the world and that you might make arrangements for the disposition of your house and everything that belongs to you, and so that you might bless Isaac your beloved son. And now know that I have done these things not wanting to grieve you. • And so why did you say to my Commander-in-chief, "I will not by any means follow you'? Why did you say these things? Do you not know that if I give permission to Death, and he should come to you, then I should see whether you would come or not come?"

The Commander-in-chief received the exhortations of the Lord and went down to Abraham. When the righteous man saw him he fell upon his face on the ground as one dead, and the Commander-in-chief told him everything which he had heard from the Most High. Then the pious and righteous Abraham stood up and with many tears he fell at the feet of the incorporeal one and besought (him), saying, "I beg you, Commander-in-chief of the powers above, since you have thought it altogether worthy yourself to come to me, a sinner and your completely worthless servant, I beseech you now too, Commander-in-chief, to serve me (by delivering) a communication yet once more to the Most High, and say to him: • Thus says Abraham your slave: 'Lord, Lord, in every deed and word which I have asked of you you have heeded me, and you have fulfilled my every wish. • And now,

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8 a. Amen.
b. Gen 22:17, retaining verbatim the Hebraism from LXX. The Heb. idiom means "I will surely bless..."

e. Cf. PetMos, BHM, vol. 1, pp. 127f.; DeutR 11:10: God first commands his chief angels to take Moses' soul, but they decline because they are not great enough. Then Sammael, the angel of death, goes but is unsuccessful. Finally God himself takes Moses' soul.

9 a. It is common in Jewish sources for those who are considered "righteous" to consider themselves unworthy in prayer or in comparison with God. See E. P. Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism, pp. 224-28, 266f., 291f., 375, 395, 421f.
Lord, I do not resist your might, for I too know that I am not immortal, but rather mortal. Although, therefore, at your command everything yields and shudders and trembles before your power, and I too fear, yet I ask one request of you. *And now, Master Lord, heed my plea: While I am yet in this body I wish to see all the inhabited world and all the created things which you established, master, through one word;* and when I have seen these things, then, if I depart from life, I shall have no sorrow.*’ ‘’ *The Commander-in-chief then went again and stood before God and told him everything, saying, ‘Thus says your friend Abraham, I wish to behold all the inhabited world in my life, before I die.’* ‘’ *When the Most High heard these things, he again commanded the Commander-in-chief Michael and said to him, ‘Take a cloud of light, and the angels who have authority over the chariots, and go down and take the righteous Abraham on a chariot of cherubim and lift him up into the air of heaven so that he may see all the inhabited world.’*

10 And the archangel Michael went down and took Abraham on a chariot of cherubim and lifted him up into the air of heaven and led him onto the cloud, as well as sixty angels. And on the carriage Abraham soared over the entire inhabited world. *And Abraham beheld the world as it was that day: Some were plowing, others leading wagons; in one place they were pasturing (flocks), elsewhere abiding (with their flocks) in the fields;* while dancing and sporting and playing the zither; in another place they were wrestling and pleading at law; elsewhere they were weeping, then also bearing the dead to the tomb. *And he also saw newlyweds being escorted in procession.* In a word, he saw everything which was happening in the world, both good and evil. *Then continuing on, Abraham saw men bearing swords, who held in their hands sharpened swords, and Abraham asked the Commander-in-chief, ‘Who are these?’* ‘’ *And the Commander-in-chief said, ‘These are robbers, who want to commit murder and rob and burn and destroy.’* Abraham said, ‘Lord, Lord, heed my voice and command that wild beasts come out of the thicket and devour them.’ *And as he was speaking wild beasts came out of the thicket and devoured them. *And he saw in another place a man with a woman, engaging in sexual immorality with each other,* and he said, ‘Lord, Lord, command that the earth open and swallow them up.’ And immediately the earth split in two and swallowed them up. *And he saw in another place men breaking into a house and carrying off the possessions of others,* and he said, ‘Lord, Lord, command that fire come down from heaven and consume them.’ And as he was speaking fire came down from heaven and consumed them. *And immediately a voice came down from heaven to the Commander-in-chief, speaking thus, ‘O Michael, Commander-in-chief, command the chariot to stop and turn Abraham away, lest he should see the entire inhabited world. *For if he were to see all those who pass their lives in sin, he would destroy everything that exists.*

For behold, Abraham has not sinned and he has no mercy on sinners. *But I made the world, and I do not want to destroy any one of them; but I delay the death of...*
of the sinner until he should convert and live. *Now conduct Abraham to the first gate of heaven, so that there he may see the judgments and the recompenses and repent over the souls of the sinners which he destroyed.*

11 Michael turned the chariot and brought Abraham toward the east, to the first gate of heaven. *And Abraham saw two ways.* The first way was strait and narrow and the other broad and spacious. *And he saw there two gates. One gate was broad,* corresponding to the broad way, and one gate was strait, corresponding to the strait way. *And outside the two gates of that place, they saw a man seated on a golden throne. And the appearance of that man was terrifying, like the Master’s. *And they saw many souls being driven by angels and being led through the broad gate, and they saw a few other souls and they were being brought by angels through the narrow gate. *And when the wondrous one who was seated on the throne of gold saw few entering through the strait gate, but many entering through the broad gate, immediately that wondrous man tore the hair of his head and the beard of his cheeks, and he threw himself on the ground from his throne crying and wailing. *And when he saw many souls entering through the strait gate, then he arose from the earth and sat on his throne, very cheerfully rejoicing and exulting.* *Then Abraham asked the Commander-in-chief, ‘My lord Commander-in-chief, who is this most wondrous man, who is adorned in such glory, and sometimes he cries and wails while other times he rejoices and exults?’* The incorporeal one said, ‘This is the first-formed Adam who is in such glory, and he looks at the world, since everyone has come from him. *And when he sees many souls entering through the strait gate, then he arises and sits on his throne rejoicing and exulting cheerfully, because this strait gate is (the gate) of the righteous, which leads to life, and those who enter through it come into Paradise.* And on account of this the first-formed Adam rejoices, since he sees the souls being saved. *And when he sees many souls entering through the broad gate, then he pulls the hair of his head and casts himself on the ground crying and wailing bitterly; for the broad gate is (the gate) of the sinners, which leads to destruction and to eternal punishment.* And on account of this the first-formed Adam falls from his throne, crying and wailing over the destruction of the sinners; for many are the ones who are destroyed, while few are the ones who are saved. *For among seven thousand there is scarcely to be found one saved soul, righteous and undefiled.*

11 a. Two ways: see e.g. SifDeut 53 (Finkelstein, pp. 120f.); bBer 28b; Dids 1:1; J. P. Audet, La Didaché: Instructions des apôtres (Paris, 1958); See Audet’s index under “Duas vias.”

b. The commentators correctly note that the theme of two ways is a common feature of Jewish literature. The verbamit agreement between this passage and Mt 7:13f., however, is marked: the combination of “gate” and “way,” the use of precisely the same four adjectives (sténé, tehillim, platea, and euvochoros), and the phrases that appear later in this chapter, “which leads to life” and “which leads to destruction.” The compact and balanced form of Mt could hardly have been derived from TAb; and in view of other evidence of verbamit agreement between TAb A and the NT, the dependence of the former on the latter here seems indisputable. See “Relation to Canonical Books.”

c. Following James’s reconstruction.

d. Or “1.” Either the person or the number of the verb changes here: from eiden to idon.

e. Gk. ho protoplastos; in LXX at WisSol 7:1.

f. LJSJ cites in addition only Philo, Fragmenta 61 H (= QE 2.46); but so also the introduction to ApMos (referring to both Adam and Eve). Cf. also Philo, Op 27: En archē (Gen 1:1) means prótos; the verb pleussein appears in Gen 2:7 LXX. Prōtos and pleussein are also connected in SibOr 3:25: ton próston plēstasia.

g. Apparently conflating Mt 7:13 (“that leads to perdition”) and Mt 25:46 (“eternal punishment”).

h. For the “many” and “few” theme, cf. Mt 22:14; 4 Ezra 8:3 (so Box, Delcor). The Romanian here is more severe: one saved in 7,000 years. Cf. the sevenfold of Gk. rec. B, where the Falasha has thirteen times. Cf. the “well nigh all that have been created” of 4 Ezra 7:48 and 7:68: “all the earth-born are defiled with iniquities . . . .”
12 While he was yet saying these things to me, behold (there were) two angels, with fiery aspect and merciless intention and relentless look, and they drove myriads of souls, mercilessly beating them with fiery lashes. And the angel seized one soul. And they drove all the souls into the broad gate toward destruction. Then we too followed the angels and we came inside that broad gate. And between the two gates there stood a terrifying throne with the appearance of terrifying crystal, flashing like fire. And upon it sat a wondrous man, bright as the sun, like unto a son of God. Before him stood a table like crystal, all of gold and byssus. On the table lay a book whose thickness was six cubits, while its breadth was ten cubits. On its right and on its left stood two angels holding papyrus and ink and pen. In front of the table sat a light-bearing angel, holding a balance in his hand. On (his) left there sat a fiery angel, altogether merciless and relentless, holding a trumpet in his hand, which contained within it an all-consuming fire (for) testing the sinners. And the wondrous man who sat on the throne was the one who judged and sentenced the souls. The two angels on the right and on the left recorded the one on the right recorded righteous deeds, while the one on the left (recorded) sins. And the one who was in front of the table, who was holding the balance, weighed the souls. And the fiery angel, who held the fire, tested the souls. And Abraham asked the Commander-in-chief Michael, "What are these things which we see?" And the Commander-in-chief said, "These things which you see, pious Abraham, are judgment and recompense." And behold, the angel who held the soul in his hand brought it before the judge. And the judge told one of the angels who served him, "Open for me this book and find for me the sins of this soul." And when he opened the book he found its sins and righteous deeds to be equally balanced, and he neither turned it over to the torturers nor (placed it among) those who were being saved, but he set it in the middle.

13 And Abraham said, "My lord Commander-in-chief, who is this all-wondrous judge? And who are the angels who are recording? And who is the unlike angel who holds the balance? And who is the fiery angel who holds the fire?" The Commander-in-chief said, "Do you see, all-pious Abraham, the frightful man who

a. Here the change to the first person is clear.

b. See ch. 4 n. b.

c. MSS CDE read "sins," perhaps influenced by 13:13 below, which in turn seems to have been influenced by 1Cor 3:13-15. According to the Romanian, the fiery angel holds not a trumpet with fire, but a page on which are written temptations and sins. Rec. B and the other versions do not have the passage.

d. Judgment by deeds written in a book or books: 1En 81:1f.; SifDeut 307; Ab 2:1; bNed 22a, top; RH 16b, 32b; 2En 52:15; and elsewhere. Contrast the books of the living or the book of life. Dan 12:1; Jud 30:20-22; 1En 47:3; 108:3; and elsewhere.

e. Gk. sugiazō, a verb unattested in LSJM and in Sophocles. Lampe cites only its two appearances in TABA 12, 13. The "weighing" scene appears to have led the author to use neologisms. Cf. the n. on sugias below.

f. The imagery of weighing deeds, as distinct from this graphic description of weighing souls, is very widespread. In Jewish literature, see e.g. 1En 41:1; 4 Ezra 3:34 (of books); 2En 52:15 (combining balance and books). See further Pearson, SCS 6, pp. 244, 249-53. On the theme in rabbinic material, see Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism, pp. 128-47. For evidence that emphasis on the strict weighing of deeds is closer to Iranian than rabbinic thought, see D. Winston, "The Iranian Component in the Bible, Apocrypha, and Quran," History of Religions 5 (1966) 195, n. 33. The depiction of weighing souls, however, is generally considered Egyptian; see Delcor ad loc.; Schmidt, Le Testament d’Abraham, vol. 1, pp. 72-76 (Egyptian, somewhat altered); Turner, The Testament of Abraham, pp. 177-85.

g. Fire as a means of testing, as distinct from being the means of punishing sinners, is not so common a judgment theme as weighing and recording. It is, however, indicated in such passages as Ps 66:10-12 (65:10-12 LXX): "You tested us, God, you refined us like silver . . . but now the ordeal by fire and water is over." Here "test" is dokimazō, the word used in TAb. See also Zech 13:9; Jer 6:29; WisSol 3:6. For refining by fire, see Mal 3:2. The image of testing (dokimazō) by fire is picked up by Paul (1Cor 3:13-15) and in 1Pet 1:7 (cf. also 1Pet 4:12, "for a test," peirazō). For refining by fire, see Rev 3:18. The theme as such is readily explicable in TAb as an independent use of the motif of testing by fire, although the precise wording in 13:13 below seems to have been influenced by 1Cor.

h. Gk. sugias . . . ex isow. The adjective sugias, "balanced" or "balancing," is not found in this meaning in LSJM or Sophocles, and Lampe gives only this reference. "Balanced" is required by the context, but MSS A and B correct the neologism. Cf. n.e above. Here there is a striking agreement with 9:8: isoragias, "evenly balanced."
is seated on the throne? This is the son of Adam, the first-formed, who is called
Abel, whom Cain the wicked killed. *And he sits here to judge the entire creation,
examining both righteous and sinners. For God said, 'I do not judge you, but
every man is judged by man.' *On account of this he gave him judgment, to judge
the world until his great and glorious Parousia." And then, righteous Abraham,
there will be perfect judgment and recompense, eternal and unalterable, which no
one can question. * For every person has sprung from the first-formed, and on
account of this they are first judged here by his son. *And at the second Parousia
they will be judged by the twelve tribes of Israel, both every breath and every
creature. *And, thirdly, they shall be judged by the Master God of all; and then
thereafter the fulfillment of that judgment will be near, and fearful will be the
sentence and there is none who can release. *And thus the judgment and recompense
of the world is made through three tribunals. And therefore a matter is not ultimately
established by one or two witnesses, but every matter shall be established by three
witnesses." *

"The two angels, the one on the right and the one on the left, these are those
who record sins and righteous deeds. The one on the right records righteous deeds,
while the one on the left (records) sins. *And the sunlike angel, who holds the
balance in his hand, this is the archangel Dokiel, the righteous balance-bearer,
and he weighs the righteous deeds and the sins with the righteousness of God.*
And the fiery and merciless angel, who holds the fire in his hand, this is the
archangel Purouel, who has authority over fire, and he tests the work of men
through fire. *And if the fire burns up the work of anyone, immediately the angel
of judgment takes him and carries him away to the place of sinners, a most bitter
place of punishment. *But if the fire tests the work of anyone* and does not touch
it, this person is justified and the angel of righteousness takes him and carries him
up to be saved in the lot of the righteous. *And thus, most righteous Abraham,
all things in all people are tested by fire and balance."

14 Abraham said to the Commander-in-chief, "My lord Commander-in-chief,
how was the soul which the angel held in his hand adjudged to the middle?" *The
Commander-in-chief said, "Hear, righteous Abraham: Since the judgment found its
sins and its righteous deeds to be equal, then he handed it over neither to judgment
nor to be saved, until the judge of all should come." *Abraham said [to] the
Commander-in-chief, "And what is still lacking to that soul in order (for it) to be
saved?" * And the Commander-in-chief said, "If it could acquire one righteous deed

13 a. The final judgment will be held by God
when he comes; thus the traditional view of the
judgment is combined with judgment of individuals
immediately after death. On God's coming, see 2En 32:1 (where it implies the resurrection). The
final judgment is not connected with the word
parousia in LXX, although it is linked with God's
coming; e.g. Mal 3:2; et idem. Parousia (usually
of Christ) is frequently linked with judgment in the
NT: e.g. 1Ths 4:15; 1Jn 2:28; for parousia used of
God, see Jas 5:7; 2Pet 3:12. The term was
probably more common in Jewish literature than
can now be directly demonstrated.

b. For the assignment of individual souls to
Torment or bliss immediately after death, without
waiting for the resurrection, see ApAb 21.
c. This brings in and motivates another traditional
mode of the judgment of Gen 2:8 by Israel (or of the
wicked by the righteous, in which case the righteous
could be understood as Israel): Dan 7:22 LXX: "He
gave the judgment to the saints of the Most High," i.e. to Israel; Jub 32:19: "They (Israel) shall judge
all the nations . . ."; WisSol 3:8: "They (the
righteous) shall judge (the) Gentiles" (ethne); KqPab
5.4: "God will give the judgment of the Gentiles
(goyim) into the hands of his elect"; cf. 1QS 5.6f.;
IQH 4.26; 1QM 6.6; 11.13f.; ApAb 22.29. The
theme is applied to the disciples in Mt 19:28, which
helps attest to its existence as a Jewish theme of
judgment. The present passage in TAB is the only
reference to Israel in the work.
d. Deut 19:15 LXX: "By the mouth of two
witnesses, and by the mouth of three witnesses,
shall every matter be established."
e. The name is elsewhere unattested, or virtually
so. See Delcor, ad loc. Box (ad loc.) proposed a
Heb. original, doq'él, which would refer to ex-
actitude (in weighing). Schmidt (Le Testament
d'Abraham, vol. 1, p. 75) proposed that the original
was Šedeq Š, "Justice of God."
f. Note that instead of souls (12:13), deeds are
to be weighed. See ch. 12 n. f, above.
g. Gk. en dikaiosune thn: i.e. with perfect
equity. Thus Delcor: "suivant la justice de Dieu."
But Stone takes en to mean "by means of."
h. Fire in Gk. is pur. This is apparently a gre-
cized form of Uriel. Cf. 1En 20:2.
i. The italicized words are found in a different
sequence in 1Cor 3:13f.
more than its sins, it would enter in to be saved."’

15 More than (its) sins, it would enter in to be saved. Abraham said to the Commander-in-chief, ‘Come, Commander-in-chief Michael, let us offer a prayer on behalf of this soul and see if God will heed us.’ And the Commander-in-chief said, ‘Amen, let it be so.’ And they offered supplication and prayer on behalf of the soul, and God heeded them, and when they arose from prayer they did not see the soul standing there. And Abraham said to the angel, ‘Where is the soul which you were holding in the middle?’ And the angel said, ‘It was saved through your righteous prayer, and behold a light-bearing angel took it and carried it up to Paradise.’

1. Abraham said, ‘I glorify the name of the Most High God and his boundless mercy.’

2. Abraham said to the Commander-in-chief, ‘I beg you, archangel, heed my plea; and let us beseech the Lord yet again and let us prostrate ourselves for his compassion and beg his mercy on behalf of the souls of the sinners whom I previously, being evil-minded, cursed and destroyed, whom the earth swallowed up and whom the wild beasts rent asunder and whom the fire consumed because of my words. Now I have come to know that I sinned before the Lord our God. Come, Michael, Commander-in-chief of the powers above, come, let us beseech God with tears that he may forgive me (my) sinful act and grant them to me.’

3. And the Commander-in-chief heeded him and they offered supplication before God. When they had besought him for a long time, a voice came out of heaven, saying, ‘Abraham, Abraham, I have heeded your voice and your supplication and I forgive you (your) sin; and those whom you think that I destroyed, I have called back, and I have led them into life by my great goodness. For I did punish them in judgment for a time. But those whom I destroy while they are living on the earth, I do not requite in death.’

The voice of the Lord said also (to) the Commander-in-chief, ‘Michael, Michael, my servant, return Abraham to his house, because behold his end is near and the measure of his life is completed, so that he may make arrangements for the disposition of everything. And then take him and conduct him up to me.’ The Commander-in-chief turned the chariot and the cloud around and conducted Abraham to his house. And he went to his room and sat on his couch. And Sarah his wife came and embraced the feet of the incorporeal one and made supplication, saying, ‘I thank you, my lord, for bringing my lord Abraham. For behold, we thought that (he) had been taken away from us.’

4. Isaac his son also came and embraced his neck. Similarly all his male and female servants also surrounded Abraham in a circle and embraced him, glorifying God. The incorporeal one said to him, ‘Hear, righteous Abraham: Behold your wife Sarah, behold also your beloved son Isaac, behold also all your male and female servants around you. Make arrangements for the disposition of everything which you have, because the day has drawn near on which you are to depart from the body and once again go to the Lord.’

5. Abraham said, ‘Did the Lord say so, or are you saying these things on your own?’

6. The Commander-in-chief said, ‘Hear, righteous Abraham: The Master commanded and I tell (it) to you.’

Abraham said, ‘I will by no means

14 a. One rabbinic tradition was that God himself would remove an iniquity in the case of one whose deeds were balanced. See yKid 1:10 (61d); bRH 17a. And note the similar view in the Cop. Enoch apocryphon: B. Pearson, SCS 6, pp. 244, 275. b. Note Abraham’s intercession on behalf of Sodom, Gen 18:22–33. On intercessory prayer as such, see AssMos 11:17; 12:6 (Moses on behalf of Israel); Ps-Philo, LAF 33:5 (effective only before death); 2En 53:1 (efficacy denied); 4Ezra 7:102–15 (intercession at the time of judgment denied). This may be the earliest instance in Jewish sources in which intercessory prayer is considered effective after the death of the person on whose behalf it is offered. From later sources, see e.g. EcclR 4:1. See further E. E. Urbach, *The Sages* (Jerusalem, 1975) pp. 508–10 and notes. On intercession generally, see R. le Déaut, “Aspects de l’intercession dans le Judaïsme ancien,” JSJ 1 (1970) 35–57.

11 follow you.” *When the Commander-in-chief heard this statement, he immediately left Abraham’s presence and went up into the heavens and stood before the Most High God and said, *“Lord Almighty, behold I have heeded your friend Abraham with regard to everything that he mentioned to you and I have fulfilled his request: I showed him your power and the entire earth under heaven as well as the sea; I showed him judgment and recompense by means of a cloud and chariots. And again he has said, ‘I will not follow you.’” *And the Most High said to the angel, “Does my friend Abraham say still again, ‘I will not follow you?’” *The archangel said, “Lord Almighty, thus he speaks, and I refrain from touching him because from the beginning he has been your friend and he did everything which is pleasing before you. *And there is no man like unto him on earth, not even Job, the wondrous man.* And for this reason I refrain from touching him. Command, then, immortal king, what is to be done.”

16 Then the Most High said, “Call Death here to me, who is called the (one of) abominable countenance and merciless look.” *And the incorporeal Michael went and said to Death, “Come! The Master of creation, the immortal king, calls you.” When Death heard, he shuddered and trembled, overcome by great cowardice; and he came with great fear and stood before the unseen Father, shuddering, moaning and trembling, awaiting the Master’s command. *Then the unseen God said to Death, “Come, bitter and fierce name of the world, hide your ferocity, cover your decay, and cast off from yourself your bitterness, and put on your youthful beauty and all your glory, *and go down to my friend Abraham and take him and conduct him to me. But I also tell you now that you may not terrify him; but rather you are to take him with soft speech, because he is my true friend.” When Death heard these things he left the presence of the Most High and donned a most radiant robe and made his appearance sunlike and became more comely and beautiful than the sons of men, assuming the form of an archangel, his cheeks flashing with fire; and he went away to Abraham. Now the righteous Abraham (had) come out of his room and (was) seated under the trees of Mamre, holding his chin in his hand and waiting for the arrival of the archangel Michael. *And behold a sweet odor came to him and a radiance of light. *And Abraham turned around and saw Death coming toward him in great glory and youthful beauty. And Abraham arose and went to meet him, thinking that he was the Commander-in-chief of God. *And when Death saw him he knelt before him and said, “Greetings,” honored Abraham, righteous soul, true friend of the Most High God, and companion of the holy angels.” *Abraham said to Death, “Greetings, you who are sunlike in appearance and form, most glorious assistant, bearer of light, marvelous man. Whence comes your glory to us, and who are you and whence have you come?” *Then Death said, “Most righteous Abraham, behold, I tell you the truth. I am the bitter cup of death.” *Abraham said to him, “No, rather you are the comeliness of the world, you are the glory and beauty of angels and of men, you are the best formed of all forms. And you say, ‘I am the bitter cup of death,’ and do you not rather say, ‘I am the best formed of everything good?’” *Death said, “I am telling you the truth. What God has named me, that I tell you.” *Abraham said, “Why have you come here?” *Death said, “I have come for* your holy soul.” *Then Abraham said, “I understand what you are


d. Gk. proskuneō; see ch. 3 n. b above.

e. For chairoi instead of chaire to mean “greetings,” “hail,” cf. 3Bar 11:6f.

f. The phrase “bitter cup of death” is often taken to reflect one of the names of the angel of death, Sammael, “the poison of God.” So Box, ad loc.; Delcor, ad loc. For Sammael, see DeutR 11:10 (Heb.); 3Bar 4:8, 9:7 (Gk.). In PetMos (above, ch. 8 n. e), he is called simply Sam.

g. Or, “on account of”; so also 18:4 below.
saying, but I will by no means follow you.” And Death became silent and did not answer him a word.

Abraham arose and went into his house, and Death followed him there. Abraham went up into his room, and Death also went up with him. Abraham reclined on his couch, and Death came and sat by his feet. *Then Abraham said, “Leave, leave me, because I want to rest on my couch.” *Death said, “I shall not depart until I take your spirit* from you.” *Abraham said to him, “By the immortal God I say to you that you must tell me the truth! Are you Death?”* Death said to him, “I am Death. I am the one who ravages the world.” *Abraham said, “I beg you, since you are Death, tell me, do you also come to all thus, in pleasing shape and glory and such youthful beauty?” *And Death said, “No, my lord Abraham; for your righteous deeds and the boundless sea of your hospitality and the greatness of your love for God have become a crown upon my head in youthful beauty and very quietly and with soft speech I come to the righteous, but to the sinners I come in much decay and ferocity and the greatest bitterness and with a fierce and merciless look.” *Abraham said, “I beg you, heed me and show me your ferocity and all your decay and bitterness.” *And Death said, “You could by no means bear to behold my ferocity, most righteous Abraham.”

Abraham said, “Yes, I shall be able to behold all your ferocity, on account of the name of the living God, because the power of my heavenly God is with me.”

Then Death put off all the bloom of youth and beauty and all the glory and the sunlike form which he had worn, and he put on (his) robe of tyranny, and he made his appearance gloomy and more ferocious than any kind of wild beast and more unclean than any uncleanness. *And he showed Abraham seven fiery heads of dragons and fourteen faces: (one of) most brightly burning fire and great ferocity, and a dark face, and a most gloomy viper’s face, and a face of a most horrible prespiçe, and a fiercer face than an asp’s, and a face of a frightening lion, and a face of a horned serpent* and of a cobra. *And he showed him also the face of a fiery broad sword and a sword-bearing face and a face of lightning flashing frighteningly and a noise of frightening thunder.* *And he showed him also another face, of a fierce, storm-tossed sea and a fierce, turbulent river and a frightening three-headed dragon and a mixed cup of poisons; and, in a word, he showed him great ferocity and unbearable bitterness and every fatal disease as of the odor of death. *And from the great bitterness and ferocity, male and female servants, numbering about seven thousand, died. *And the righteous Abraham entered the depression of death,* so that his spirit failed.

And when the all-holy Abraham saw these things, he said to Death, “I beg you, all-destroying Death, hide your ferocity and put on the youthful beauty and form which you previously had.” *Death immediately hid his ferocity and put on his youthful beauty which he previously had. *Abraham said to Death, “Why did you do this, that you killed all my male and female servants? Was it for the sake of this that God sent you here today?” *And Death said, “No, my lord Abraham, it is not as you say. Rather, I was sent here for* you.” *Abraham said to Death, “Then how did these die? Did not the Lord even say (that they should)?” *Death said, “Believe, most righteous Abraham, that it is itself a marvel that you too were not carried off with them. But still I tell you the truth: *For had not the right

17 a. For the variation of “soul” and “spirit,” cf. *Apqmos 1:5* (soul); 32:4 (spirit).

b. Gk. kerastês; see Prov 23:32.


d. Each of these two pairs apparently counts as one.

e. Gk. eis oligôrian thanstou, “into indifference of death.” Perhaps the meaning is “entered the state of indifference produced by fear or certainty of death.” The phrase apparently does not mean a “faint” (as Stone), though perhaps “faintness” (Box) is implied. Note 20:7–9 below, where, in this state, Abraham kisses Death’s hand.

18 a. See ch. 16 n. g above.
hand of God been with you in that hour, you too would have had to depart from this life." • The righteous Abraham said, "Now I know that I entered into the 9 depression of death, so that my spirit failed. • But I beg you, all-destroying Death, since the servants died untimely, come, let us plead to the Lord our God that he should heed us and raise those who died untimely through your ferocity." • And Death said, "Amen, let it be so." Then Abraham arose and fell upon the face of the earth and prayed, and Death with him, and God sent a spirit of life into the dead, and they were made alive again. Then, therefore, the righteous Abraham gave glory to God.  

19 And he went up into his room and lay down. And Death also came and stood before him. • Abraham said to him, "Leave me, because I wish to rest; for my spirit is beset with depression." • And Death said, "I shall not depart from you until you take your soul." • And Abraham, with a harsh countenance and an angry look, said to Death, "Who has commanded you to say these things? You on your own say these words, boasting; and I will by no means follow you until the Commander-in-chief Michael comes to me; and I shall go with him. • But I will say this to you: if you want me to follow you, teach me all your metamorphoses, the seven fiery heads of the dragons, and what is the face of the precipice, and what the sharp sword, and what the great turbulent river, and what the turbid, fiercely storm-tossed sea. • Teach me too about the unendurable thunder and the frightening lightning and what is the ill-smelling cup mixed (with) poisons. Teach me concerning all (these)." • And Death said, "Hear, righteous Abraham, for seven ages I ravage the world and I lead everyone down into Hades—kings and rulers, rich and poor, slaves and free I send into the depth of Hades. And on this account I showed you the seven heads of the dragons. • And I showed you the face of fire, since many will die burned by fire, and through the face of fire they see death. • And I showed you the face of the precipice, since many men, coming down from the heights of trees or frightening precipices, and passing out, die; and they behold death in the shape of a frightening precipice. • And I showed you the face of the sword, since many fall in wars by the sword, and they behold death in a sword. • And I showed you the face of the great turbulent river, since many, being carried off by the inundation of many waters and swept away by great rivers, are suffocated; and they die and see death untimely. • And I showed you the face of the fierce, storm-tossed sea, since many, encountering a great wave at sea, are shipwrecked and are (pulled) under the water and see the sea as death. • And I showed you the unendurable thunder and the frightening lightning, since many men, meeting in an hour of wrath unendurable thunder and frightening lightning coming with a carrying off of men, become . . ., and thus they see death. • And I showed you also venomous wild beasts—asps and cobras and leopards and lions and lion cubs and bears and vipers—and in a word I showed you the face of every wild beast, most righteous one, since many men are borne off by wild beasts,
while others, being breathed on by venomous snakes—[dragons and asps and horned serpents and cobras] and vipers—depart (life). * And I showed you also mixed cups of noxious poisons, since many men are given poisons to drink by other men, and they at once depart (life) unexpectedly."

20 Abraham said, "I beg you, is there also an unexpected death? Tell me."

Death said, "'Truly, truly,' I tell you by the truth of God that there are seventy-two deaths. And one is the just death which has (its appropriate) hour. And many men go to death in one hour and are consigned to the grave. * Now behold, I have told you everything that you have asked. Now I tell you, most righteous Abraham, set aside every wish² and leave off questioning once and for all, and come, follow me as the God and judge of all commanded me." * Abraham said to Death, "Leave me yet a little while, that I may rest on my couch, for I feel very faint of heart.

From the time when I beheld you with my eyes, my strength has failed; all the limbs of my flesh seem to me to be like a lead weight, and my breath is very labored. * Depart for a little; for I said, I cannot bear to see your form." * Isaac his son came and fell upon his breast weeping. Then also his wife Sarah came and embraced his feet, wailing bitterly. * Also all his male and female servants came and encircled his couch, wailing greatly. And Abraham entered the depression of death. * And Death said to Abraham, "Come, kiss my right hand, and may cheerfulness and life and strength come to you." * For Death deceived Abraham. And he kissed⁴ his hand and immediately his soul cleaved to the hand of Death. And immediately Michael the archangel stood beside him with multitudes of angels, and they bore his precious soul in their hands in divinely woven linen. And they tended the body of the righteous Abraham with divine ointments and perfumes until the third day after his death.¹ And they buried him in the promised land at the oak of Mamre, * while the angels escorted⁶ his precious soul and ascended into heaven singing the thrice-holy hymn to God, the master of all, and they set it (down) for the worship* of the God and Father. * And after great praise in song and glorification had been offered to the Lord, and when Abraham had worshiped, the undefiled voice of the God and Father came speaking thus: "Take, then, my friend Abraham into Paradise, where there are the tents of my righteous ones and (where) the mansions of my holy ones, Isaac and Jacob, are in his bosom,¹ where there is no toil, no grief, no moaning, but peace and exultation and endless life." * [Let us too, my beloved brothers, imitate the hospitality of the patriarch Abraham and let us attain to his virtuous behaviour, so that we may be worthy of eternal life, glorifying the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit: to whom be the glory and the power forever. Amen.]²

² a. Amén, amén.
b. Cf. above, 9:4: "you have fulfilled my every wish," but there were still further requests.
c. Gk. te pneuma mou epit polis talanxetai: The usual meaning of the verb, in all periods, is "call unhappy." * As a seventh meaning Lampe gives "ex, tortura," citing this passage and one in Chrysostom. The meaning appears to be otherwise unattested. The passage should perhaps be translated "my spirit is exceedingly unhappy." The Romanian has "my spirit is trembling within me."
d. The soul is taken by a kiss or greeted with a kiss (in Gk., aspazo): TJob 52:8; ApPaul 14; PetMos. BHM, vol. 1, p. 129; DeuR 11:10.
g. Angels receive and escort the soul: TJob 47:11; 52:2, 5 ('creatures of God' and the like); ApMos 33:2; PetMos, BHM, vol. 1, p. 129; DeuR 11:10 (in the last two, accompanying God himself); ApPaul 14.
h. The soul is taken and the body buried: TJob 52:10f.; ApMos 32-42; Clement of Alexandria, Strom 6:15 (apparently from the lost AsMos); by implication in Fr-Philo, LAB 23:13; PetMos, BHM, vol. 1, p. 129; DeuR 11:10; ApPaul 14. ApMos 41:1-3 and ApPaul 14, among others, definitely state that at the resurrection body and soul will be reunited, and this may be implied in TJob: See 4:9. See also TAb B7.16.
i. The Trisagion. based on Isa 6:3. Cf. also 1En 39:12; ApMos 40:5; bHull 91b.
j. Gk. eis proskunein; cf. ApMos 35:2, "on its face."
k. Gk. monai, as in Jn 14:2.
l. Logically, Abraham's bosom is already in Paradise, as are his descendants. For Abraham's bosom, see Lk 16:22f.
m. A Christian exhortation and doxology.