

TESTAMENT OF ABRAHAM

Recension A

1 **1** 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
2 hospitable: •For he pitched his tent at the crossroads of the oak of Mamre^a and
welcomed everyone—rich and poor, kings and rulers, the crippled and the helpless,
3 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.
4 Therefore the Master God called his archangel Michael^b and said to him, “Com-
mander-in-chief^c Michael, go down to Abraham and tell him about his death, so
5 that he may arrange for the disposition^d 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.^e But above
6 all others he is righteous in all goodness, (having been) hospitable^f and loving until
the end of his life. •But you, archangel Michael, go to Abraham, my beloved
7 friend,^g 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^h among the good.’ ”

1 **2** 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^a and other servants,
2 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
3 to greet and welcome all strangers.^b •And the Commander-in-chief saluted him
and said, “Hail, honored father, righteous soul elect of God, true friend of the
4 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
5 met! •Therefore I ask your presence whence has come your youthfulness of age.^c
Teach me, your suppliant, whence and from what army and from what road your
6 beauty has come here.” •The Commander-in-chief said, “Righteous Abraham, I
come from the great city. I have been sent from the great king to provide for the

1 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.

b. Michael as head of the angels and God’s principal messenger to men: ApMos 3:2; 13:2; 22:1; Rev 12:7; perhaps AsMos 10:2; cf. Dan 12:1, especially Theodotion.

c. Gk. *archistratēgos*; a common title in A but not B: See B14, 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. ‘Arrange for the disposition’ is *diataxetai*, the verb consistently used in A. See also 4:11; 8:11; 15:1. The verb does not appear in B: Note *dioikēsē* (1:3) and *diatithēmi* (7:17).

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

The quotation is in precise agreement with LXX.

f. Gk. *philoxenos*. On *philoxenia* as the principal virtue, cf. ApPaul 27.

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, *Sobr* 56 (adding ‘my friend’ to Gen 18:17).

h. Gk. *despotēs* 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* 8.626f.

c. Apparently, ‘you’; cf. ‘your presence,’ ‘your beauty.’

7 succession of^d 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-
 8 chief said, "I am coming." •And so they went and sat in the plowed field beside
 9 the company. •Abraham said to his servants, the sons of Masek, "Go to the herd
 10 of horses and get two gentle and tame horses, well broken, so that I and this
 11 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.
 12 For is not my king rich with great possessions, having authority over both men
 and every kind of beast?^e But I abstain from ever sitting upon a four-footed animal.
 12 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
 3 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
 4 to those who love him." •Abraham hid the mystery, thinking that the Commander-
 5 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^b 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
 7 you the precious prayer^c 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
 8 in the vessel so that we may wash this stranger's feet; for he is tired, having come
 9 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
 10 wept over the stranger. •When Isaac saw his father crying, he also cried. When
 11 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,^d and
 12 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.

Gen 12:1-7;
22:17

1 **4** Then Abraham said to Isaac his son, "My beloved son, go into the guest room^a
 and beautify it. Spread out for us there two couches, one for me and one for this
 2 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^b underfoot. Burn
 every valuable and prized incense, and bring fragrant plants from the garden to
 3 fill our house. •Light seven lamps filled with oil so that we may make merry,

d. "Provide for the succession of": *diadochên* . . . *komizomenos*; so also Schmidt. Box, Craigie, and Stone: "To take the place of"; Delcor: "Porteur d'une invitation." Delcor's translation gives a satisfactory translation of the participle, but neither translation makes good sense of *diadochên*. The meaning apparently is that Michael's assignment is to encourage Abraham to make testamentary dispositions; see 1:4; 4:11; 8:11; 15:1.

e. In 2:10f. the words for "animal" and "beast" are *zôon* and *kiênos* respectively. The same two words appear in B2:5, 12, in a different context and where there is little verbatim agreement.

3 a. The meaning is not completely clear, but it is probably "is summoning Abraham to be with those who love God." So Box.

b. Gk. *proskuneô*, which can vary in significance from "worship," "prostrate oneself before," and the like, to "salute." It is understood here in the stronger sense. Cf. Gen 18:2, where Abraham prostrates himself before the angels.

c. Gk. *euchê*, "prayer or vow," but usually "vow" in LXX. Gen mentions no relevant *euchê*, but cf. Jub 22:6-9, where Abraham prays for his descendants.

d. Gk. *niptêr*, for which LSJM cites only Jn 13:5.

4 a. Gk. *to tameian tou triklinou*, lit. "chamber with three couches." *Triklinos* is subsequently used for individual rooms and is translated "room."

b. Gk. *byssos*: LSJM: "flax," the linen made from it; Indian cotton; silk.

because this man who is staying as our guest today is more honorable than kings
 4 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
 5 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
 6 the twinkling of an eye and stood before God and said to him: •“Master, Lord,^c 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
 7 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;^d and whatever he should eat you also eat with him.
 8 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
 9 to know his end.” •And the Commander-in-chief said, “Lord, all the heavenly
 spirits are incorporeal, and they neither eat nor drink.^e 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
 10 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
 11 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.*”^f

1 **5** Then the Commander-in-chief went down to the house of Abraham and sat with
 2 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
 3 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
 4 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
 5 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
 6 couch. •Then God thrust the mention of death into Isaac’s heart as in a dream.
 7 And around the third hour of the night Isaac woke up and rose from his couch and
 8 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
 9 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
 10 voice. •Then Abraham’s heart was moved, and he too cried with him in a loud
 11 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
 12 embracing and crying. •And Sarah said with tears, “My lord Abraham, what are
 13 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.

d. Cf. Ma’asch d’R. Joshua b. Levi, *BHM*, vol. 2, p. 48, top.

e. Angels neither eat nor drink: DeutR 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. TargOnk 18:8); cf. Tob 12:19. Angels’ food is distinct from animals’: *Vita* 4:2; WisSol 16:20 (= manna); JosAsen 16:8 (= the honey that gives immortality).

f. “More than”: also 8:5. Cf. “as”: Gen 22:17 LXX; 1:5 above.

today bring you news about your nephew Lot, that he has died? Is it for this that
 14 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."

1 **6** When Sarah heard the Commander-in-chief's distinction of speech, she im-
 2 mediately 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
 3 Abraham, do you know who this man is?" •Abraham said, "I do not know."
 4 Sarah said, "You must know, my lord, the three heavenly men who stayed as
 guests^a in our tent beside the oak of Mamre when you slaughtered the unblemished
 5 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 was promised to us? For this man
 6 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,^b said in my
 heart, 'These feet are (those of one) of the three men that I washed previously.'
 7 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
 8 do not believe me, look at them." •Sarah took them and knelt down^c 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."

1 **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
 2 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
 3 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
 4 than seven suns. •And that sunlike^a 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
 5 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
 6 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
 7 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,
 9 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
 10 God." •And Abraham said to the Commander-in-chief, "O most surprising wonder
 11 of wonders! And is it you, then, who are about to take my soul from me?" •The
 Commander-in-chief said to him, "I am Michael, the Commander-in-chief who

6 a. The verb is *epizenizomai*, which appears here and in B6:10, but apparently nowhere else. See Delcor, *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 (*niptēr*), contrary to the obvious sense of 3:11 above.

c. Gk. *proskuneō*. 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
12 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.”

1 **8** 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)
2 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
3 means follow you, but you do whatever he commands.’ •Almighty Master, what
4 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
5 this to him: •‘Thus says the Lord your God, who led you into the promised land,
6 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
7 of the womb in old age. •Truly^a I say to you that *blessing I will bless you and
multiplying I will multiply your seed*,^b and I will give to you whatever you ask
8 of me; for I am the Lord your God and besides me there is no other.^c •Tell me why
you are resisting me and why there is grief in you? And why have you resisted
9 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
10 death. All have died, all have departed into Hades, all have been gathered by the
sickle of Death.^d •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
11 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
12 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?”^e

Ex 6:8
Heb 11:9
Gen 22:17
Gen 18:11-14

1 **9** 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
2 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,
3 “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,^a I beseech you now too, Commander-in-chief, to serve me (by delivering)
4 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
5 of you you have heeded me, and you have fulfilled my every wish. •And now,

8 a. *Amēn*.

b. Gen 22:17, retaining verbatim the Hebraism from LXX. The Heb. idiom means “I will surely bless . . .”

c. Gk. *plēn emou ouk estin allos*. Cf. Ex 20:3 and Deut 5:7, *theoi heteroi plēn emou*; Deut 4:35, 39, *ouk estin eti [allos] plēn autou*; 2En 36:1.

d. Cf. the argument with Moses, PetMos, *BHM*, vol. 1, p. 116 bottom.

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;^b 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^a 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,^b while dancing and sporting and playing the zither; in another place they were wrestling^c 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.^d 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^e 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^f 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^g the death

Ezek 53:11
4Ezra 8:60

b. Cf. 1Clem 27:4, “By the word of his majesty he established all things”; Poimandres 31, “By a word you established all things”; similarly WisSol 9:1; SibOr 3:20; Jub 12:4; and elsewhere, apparently depending on Ps 33:6. Contrast Ab 5:1, “with ten words.”

10 a. The “carriage” or “vehicle” is now apparently the cloud.

b. “Abiding in the fields,” *agraoulontas*. The word means “live out of doors,” and LSJM gives only Lk 2:8 as applying it to shepherds. Thus the usage may here depend on Lk. Most translators add “by night” or “overnight.”

c. For the evidence that Jews in the Diaspora watched and perhaps participated in sports and theater, see Philo, *Ebr* 177 (theater) and passages cited

by H. A. Wolfson, *Philo*, vol. 1, pp. 80f. (although Wolfson denies their significance).

d. Gk. *opsikeuō*, “escort in procession,” a late word, cited by Lampe and Sophocles, but not LSJM. Cf. also below, 20:12, where the angels escort the soul of Abraham.

e. Lit. “digging” or “tunneling”; the word appears in Mt 6:19f.; 24:43.

f. Cf. Abraham’s self-description in 9:3, “a sinner.”

g. “Delay . . . until,” *anamenō . . . heōs*. The usual translation of *anamenō* is “await,” but LSJM gives “delay” as a possibility, and this yields better sense here. So also Box. Note that B has “my heart is moved (with compassion) . . . so that they may convert.” The Slavonic has “for they may turn from their sins and save themselves” and the Ro-

15 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^h and repent overⁱ the souls of the sinners which he destroyed.’

1 **11** Michael turned the chariot and brought Abraham toward the east, to the first
2 gate of heaven. •And Abraham saw two ways.^a The first way was *strait* and *narrow*
3 and the other *broad* and *spacious*.^b •[And he saw there two gates. One gate was
4 broad],^c corresponding to the broad way, and one gate was strait, corresponding
5 to the strait way. •And outside the two gates of that place, they^d saw a man seated
6 on a golden throne. And the appearance of that man was terrifying, like the
7 Master’s. •And they saw many souls being driven by angels and being led through
8 the broad gate, and they saw a few other souls and they were being brought by
9 angels through the narrow gate. •And when the wondrous one who was seated on
10 the throne of gold saw few entering through the strait gate, but many entering
11 through the broad gate, immediately that wondrous man tore the hair of his head
12 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^e 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.^f 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.’^g

Gen 2:8(LXX)
1En 32:2

manian “I do not desire the death of the wicked, but that he should repent and live.” Cf. ApPaul 4, 5, 6 (“bear with them . . . so that”). The idea that God postpones the punishment of sins in order to allow time for repentance is relatively widespread: Rom 2:4; 3:25; WisSol 11:23; 12:10; Philo, *LegAll* III.106; cf. the rabbinic view that God postpones the deserved punishment of the world for the sake of the patriarchs (Sifra Beḥuqqotai pereq 8:7; to Lev 26:42). Actually delaying death is a striking development of this theme.

h. Gk. *antapodosis* may have either a negative or a positive meaning.

i. Or, “change his mind about.”

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

b. The commentators correctly note that the theme of two ways is a common feature of Jewish literature. The verbatim 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 (*stenē, tethlimmenē, plateia, and eurochōros*), 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 verbatim 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 “I.” Either the person or the number of the verb changes here: from *eiden* to *idon*.

e. Gk. *ho prōtoplastos*; in LXX at WisSol 7:1; 10:1. LSJM 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 *prōtos*; the verb *plassein* appears in Gen 2:7 LXX. *Prōtos* and *plassein* are also connected in SibOr 3:25: *ton prōton plasthenta*.

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

g. For the “many” and “few” theme, cf. Mt 22:14; 4Ezra 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 4Ezra 7:48 and 7:68: “all the earth-born are defiled with iniquities . . .”

1 **12** While he was yet saying these things to me,^a behold (there were) two angels,
 with fiery aspect and merciless intention and relentless look, and they drove myriads
 2 of souls, mercilessly beating them with fiery lashes. • And the angel seized one 1En 56:1
 3 soul. And they drove all the souls into the broad gate toward destruction. • Then
 4 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,
 5 flashing like fire. • And upon it sat a wondrous man, bright as the sun, like unto
 6,7 a son of God. • Before him stood a table like crystal, all of gold and byssus.^b • On
 the table lay a book whose thickness was six cubits, while its breadth was ten
 8 cubits. • On its right and on its left stood two angels holding papyrus and ink and
 9 pen. • In front of the table sat a light-bearing angel, holding a balance in his hand.
 10 [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
 11 the sinners.^c • And the wondrous man who sat on the throne was the one who
 12 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
 13 (recorded) sins.^d • And the one who was in front of the table, who was holding the
 14 balance, weighed^e the souls.^f • And the fiery angel, who held the fire, tested the
 15 souls.^g • And Abraham asked the Commander-in-chief Michael, “What are these
 things which we see?” And the Commander-in-chief said, “These things which
 16 you see, pious Abraham, are judgment and recompense.” • And behold, the angel
 17 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
 18 of this soul.” • And when he opened the book he found its sins and righteous deeds
 to be equally balanced,^h 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.ⁱ

1 **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 sunlike angel
 2 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

12 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 Rumanian, 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; Jub 30:20–22; 1En 47:3; 108:3; and elsewhere.

e. Gk. *zugiazō*, 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 *zugias* 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; 4Ezra 3:34 (of nations); 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 Qumran,” *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. So 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,” *peirasmos*). 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. *zugias*. . . *ex isou*: The adjective *zugios*, “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 B9:8: *isozugousas*, “evenly balanced.”

i. “In the middle”: Cf. tSanh 13:1.

is seated on the throne? This is the son of Adam, the first-formed, who is called
 3 Abel, whom Cain the wicked killed. •And he sits here to judge the entire creation, Gen 4:8
 examining both righteous and sinners. For God said, 'I do not judge you, but
 4 every man is judged by man.' •On account of this he gave him judgment, to judge
 the world until his great and glorious Parousia.^a And then, righteous Abraham,
 there will be perfect judgment and recompense, eternal and unalterable, which no
 5 one can question. •For every person has sprung from the first-formed, and on
 6 account of this they are first judged here by his son.^b •And at the second Parousia
 they will be judged by the twelve tribes of Israel,^c both every breath and every
 7 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
 8 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.^d

9 "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,
 10 while the one on the left (records) sins. •And the sunlike angel, who holds the
 balance in his hand, this is the archangel Dokiel,^e the righteous balance-bearer,
 and he weighs the righteous deeds and the sins^f with the righteousness of God.^g
 11 And the fiery and merciless angel, who holds the fire in his hand, this is the
 archangel Purouel, who has authority over fire,^h and he tests the work of men
 12 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
 13 place of punishment. •But *if the fire tests the work of anyone*ⁱ and does not touch
 it, this person is justified and the angel of righteousness takes him and carries him
 14 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."

1 **14** Abraham said to the Commander-in-chief, "My lord Commander-in-chief,
 2 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 judge found its
 sins and its righteous deeds to be equal, then he handed it over neither to judgment
 3 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
 4 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, *eisodos*. *Parousia* (usually of Christ) is frequently linked with judgment in the NT: e.g. 1Thes 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 modifies another traditional motif: the judgment of *gentiles* 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*); IQpHab 5.4: "God will give the judgment of the Gentiles

(*goyim*) into the hands of his elect"; cf. IQS 5.6f.; IQH 4.26; IQM 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, *dōqf'el*, which would refer to exactitude (in weighing). Schmidt (*Le Testament d'Abraham*, vol. 1, p. 75) proposed that the original was *Sedeqiel*, "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 dikaiosunē theou*: 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 greccized form of *Uriel*. Cf. 1En 20:2.

i. The italicized words are found in a different sequence in 1Cor 3:13f.

5 more than (its) sins, it would enter in to be saved.”^a • 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.”^b And the Commander-in-chief
 6 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
 7 see the soul standing there. • And Abraham said to the angel, “Where is the soul
 8 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
 9 it up to Paradise.” • Abraham said, “I glorify the name of the Most High God and
 10 his boundless mercy.” • 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
 11 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
 12 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 foregive me (my) sinful act and
 13 grant them to me.” • And the Commander-in-chief heeded him and they offered
 supplication before God. When they had besought him for a long time, a voice
 14 came out of heaven, saying, • “Abraham, Abraham,^c 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
 15 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.”^d

1 **15** 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
 2 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 Abra-
 3 ham 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
 5 thought that (he) had been taken away from us.” • Isaac his son also came and
 embraced his neck. Similarly all his male and female servants also surrounded
 6 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.
 7 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
 8 to the Lord.” • Abraham said, “Did the Lord say so, or are you saying these things
 9 on your own?”^a • The Commander-in-chief said, “Hear, righteous Abraham: The
 10 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 AsMos 11:17; 12:6 (Moses on behalf of Israel); Ps-Philo, LAB 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.

c. Note the repetition, “Abraham, Abraham” in Gen 22:11.

d. Cf. the well-known rabbinic view that those who are punished with suffering or premature death in this world are considered to have been sufficiently punished and to have atoned for their sins, so that they are not punished in the world to come: See Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, pp. 168–74.

15 a. Cf. PetMos, *BHM* vol. 1, p. 127, bottom: Moses asks Sammael: “Who sent you . . .”

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
 12 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
 13 again he has said, ‘I will not follow you.’” •And the Most High said to the angel,
 14 “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
 15 before you. •And there is no man like unto him on earth, not even Job, the
 wondrous man.^b And for this reason I refrain from touching him. Command, then,
 immortal king, what is to be done.”

1 **16** Then the Most High said, “Call Death here to me, who is called the (one of)
 2 abominable countenance and merciless look.”^a •And the incorporeal Michael went
 and said to Death, “Come! The Master of creation, the immortal king, calls you.”
 3 When Death heard, he shuddered and trembled, overcome by great cowardice;
 and he came with great fear and stood before the unseen Father, shuddering,
 4 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
 5 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.”
 6 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.
 7 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
 8 archangel Michael. •And behold a sweet odor^b came to him and a radiance of light.^c
 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
 9 the Commander-in-chief of God. •And when Death saw him he knelt^d before him
 and said, “Greetings,^e honored Abraham, righteous soul, true friend of the Most
 10 High God, and companion of the holy angels.” •Abraham said to Death, “Greet-
 ings, 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
 11 whence have you come?” •Then Death said, “Most righteous Abraham, behold,
 12 I tell you the truth. I am the bitter cup of death.”^f •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
 13 good?’” •Death said, “I am telling you the truth. What God has named me, that
 14,15 I tell you.” •Abraham said, “Why have you come here?” •Death said, “I have
 16 come for^g your holy soul.” •Then Abraham said, “I understand what you are

b. Note that TJob comes from approximately the same time and place as TAb. On rabbinic views about the relationship between Job and Abraham, see A. Büchler, *Studies in Sin and Atonement in the Rabbinic Literature of the First Century* (London, 1929; repr. 1967) pp. 130–50.

16 a. Cf. ch. 8 n. e above.

b. Gk. *osmē euōdias*, as in Gen 8:21.

c. Gk. *phōtos apaugasma*; cf. WisSol 7:26, *apaugasma . . . phōtos aidou*.

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

e. For *chairois* 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.

1 **17** 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
2 reclined on his couch, and Death came and sat by his feet. •Then Abraham said,
3 "Leave, leave me, because I want to rest on my couch." •Death said, "I shall
4 not depart until I take your spirit^a from you." •Abraham said to him, "By the
immortal God I say to you that you must tell me the truth! Are you Death?"
5.6 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
7 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,
8 but to the sinners I come in much decay and ferocity and the greatest bitterness
9 and with a fierce and merciless look." •Abraham said, "I beg you, heed me and
10 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."
11 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."
12 Then Death put off all the bloom of youth and beauty and all the glory and the
13 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
14 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
precipice, and a fiercer face than an asp's, and a face of a frightening lion, and
15 a face of a horned serpent^b and of a cobra.^c •And he showed him also the face of
a fiery broad sword and a sword-bearing face^d and a face of lightning flashing
16 frighteningly and a noise of frightening thunder.^d •And he showed him also another
face, of a fierce, storm-tossed sea and a fierce, turbulent river and a frightening
17 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
18 death. •And from the great bitterness and ferocity, male and female servants,
19 numbering about seven thousand, died. •And the righteous Abraham entered the
depression of death,^e so that his spirit failed.

1 **18** 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
2 form which you previously had." •Death immediately hid his ferocity and put on
3 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
4 of this that God sent you here today?" •And Death said, "No, my lord Abraham,
5 it is not as you say. Rather, I was sent here for^a you." •Abraham said to Death,
6 "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
7 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. ApMos 13:6 (soul); 32:4 (spirit).

b. Gk. *kerastēs*; see Prov 23:32.

c. Gk. *basiliskos*: LSJM: "kind of serpent, basilisk, perh. Egyptian cobra"; Sophocles: "an imaginary reptile."

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

e. Gk. *eis oligōrian thanatou*, "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
 8 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
 10 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
 11 the earth and prayed, and Death with him, •and God sent a spirit of life into the
 dead, and they were made alive again.^b Then, therefore, the righteous Abraham
 gave glory to God.

1 **19** And he went up into his room and lay down. And Death also came and stood
 2 before him. •Abraham said to him, “Leave me, because I wish to rest; for my
 3 spirit is beset with depression.” •And Death said, “I shall not depart from you
 4 until I take your soul.” •And Abraham, with a harsh countenance and an angry
 look, said to Death, “Who has commanded you to say these things?^a You on your
 own say these words, boasting; and I will by no means follow you until the
 5 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,
 6 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
 7 me concerning all (these).” •And Death said, “Hear, righteous Abraham, for
 seven ages^b 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
 8 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
 9 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
 10 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
 11 sword. •And I showed you the face of the great turbulent river, since many, being
 carried off by the inundation^c of many waters and swept away by great rivers, are
 12 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
 13 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
 14 coming with a carrying off of men, become . . . , and thus they see death.^d •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,

b. Gk. *anazōpoieō*, a rare word and probably Egyptian Jewish. See JosAsen 8:11; 15:4.

19 a. Cf. ch. 15 n. a above.

b. On the time limit of the world, see D. Winston, “The Iranian Component in the Bible, Apocrypha, and Qumran: A Review of the Evidence,” *History of Religions* 5 (1966) 187.

c. Gk. *hypo embasēs*.

d. As James notes, the passage is corrupt. Delcor (*Le Testament D’Abraham*, p. 170) comments, “Without changing the evidently corrupt text, the general idea seems to be the following: certain men who perish of violent death are victims of the divine wrath by reason of their sins and deserve a sudden punishment.” Schmidt has considered more recent MS evidence and proposed the following for

19:13–15, which does not, however, solve all the problems (see Schmidt, *Le Testament d’Abraham*, vol. 1, p. 102; vol. 2, p. 122): “And I showed you the unendurable thunder and the frightening lightning, since many men, at the hour of wrath of dragons and asps, surprised by the coming of unendurable thunder and frightening lightning, are carried off; and thus they see death. I showed you also venomous wild animals and asps and cobras and leopards and lions and lion cubs and bears and in a word I showed you the face of every wild animal, most righteous Abraham, since many men are borne off by wild animals; while others are snatched away by lions; while others, being breathed on by asps, and others by a viper, depart (life); while others are killed by a venomous snake.”

15 while others, being breathed on by venomous snakes—[dragons and asps and
16 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.”

1 **20** Abraham said, “I beg you, is there also an unexpected death? Tell me.”
2 Death said, “Truly, truly,^a 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
3 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 wish^b and leave off questioning once and for all, and come, follow me
4 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.
5 For 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
6 labored.^c 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
7 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
8 death. • And Death said to Abraham, “Come, kiss my right hand, and may
9 cheerfulness and life and strength come to you.” • For Death deceived Abraham.
And he kissed^d his hand and immediately his soul cleaved to the hand of Death.
10 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.
11 And they tended the body of the righteous Abraham with divine ointments^e and
perfumes until the third day after his death.^f And they buried him in the promised
12 land at the oak of Mamre, • while the angels escorted^g his precious soul^h and
ascended into heaven singing the thrice-holyⁱ hymn to God, the master of all, and
13 they set it (down) for the worship^j 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:
14 “Take, then, my friend Abraham into Paradise, where there are the tents of my
righteous ones and (where) the mansions^k of my holy ones, Isaac and Jacob, are
in his bosom,^l where there is no toil, no grief, no moaning, but peace and exultation
15 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.]^m

20 a. *Amēn, amēn.*

b. Cf. above, 9:4: “you have fulfilled my every wish,” but there were still further requests.

c. Gk. *to pneuma mou epi polu talanizetai*: The usual meaning of the verb, in all periods, is “call unhappy.” As a seventh meaning Lampe gives “vex, torture,” 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., *aspazō*): TJob 52:8; ApPaul 14; PetMos, *BHM*, vol. 1, p. 129; DeutR 11:10.

e. Angels anoint the body: ApMos 40:1

f. The third day: TJob 53:7; cf. Jn 11:6, 39; 4Bar 9:7–14. In the last case the soul returns in the three-day period. Cf. further Winston, *History of Religions* 5 (1966) 196 and n. 34.

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; DeutR 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 Ps-Philo, *LAB* 23:13; PetMos, *BHM*, vol. 1, p. 129; DeutR 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 proskunēsēsin*; cf. ApMos 35:2, “on its face.”

k. Gk. *monai*, as in Jn 14:2.

l. Illogically, 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.