

# Four Powers in Heaven

The Interpretation of Daniel 7  
in the Testament of Abraham

Phillip B. Munoa, III





**JOURNAL FOR THE STUDY OF THE PSEUDEPIGRAPHA  
SUPPLEMENT SERIES**

**28**

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Sheffield Academic Press

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Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha  
Supplement Series 28



To Kathy,  
Phillip, Anna and Elle.

You fill my life with love

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Published by  
Sheffield Academic Press Ltd  
Mansion House  
19 Kingfield Road  
Sheffield S11 9AS  
England

Typeset by Sheffield Academic Press  
and  
Printed on acid-free paper in Great Britain  
by Bookcraft Ltd  
Midsomer Norton, Bath

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available  
from the British Library

ISBN 1-85075-885-9

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## PREFACE

Dan. 7.9-27 has exercised considerable influence on apocalyptic texts. Its descriptions of the 'Ancient of Days', 'one like a son of man', and the 'holy ones of the Most High' influenced many Middle Jewish documents<sup>1</sup> and resurface in later rabbinic and Christian literature. The *Testament of Abraham* should be counted among such writings. There is a strong probability that Dan. 7.9-27, with its portrayal of exalted figures, influenced the depiction of Adam, Abel and the tribes of Israel in the judgment scene of the *Testament of Abraham*.

A close examination of the context of the *T. Abr.* 11.1-13.7 reveals something more than an allusion to Dan. 7.13-27. From 11.1 to 13.7 there is a lengthy description of Abraham's visit to heaven during which he gains insight about the judgment of all mankind. He learns that several figures are part of the process of judgment: Adam, before whom all souls must pass; Abel, the son of Adam, who judges the entire creation; the 12 tribes of Israel, who are granted a part in the judgment of mankind at the parousia; and lastly, the 'Master God of all', who will render the final judgment. The way these characters parallel those described in Dan. 7.9-27 is striking. There is a strong probability that the entire pericope of Dan. 7.9-27 influenced the depiction of the judgment scene in the *Testament of Abraham*.

The *Testament of Abraham* bears witness to an ongoing exegetical interest in apocalyptic materials. Just as first-century Jesus communities studied apocalyptic passages, so too other Jewish communities worked to interpret the same enigmatic passages, like Dan. 7.9-27. This was an intra-Jewish development, rooted in pre-Christian speculations about exalted biblical figures, and fueled by dependence on the same scriptures. The diverse interpretations reflect the traditions held dear by each community and illustrate how they associated their revered

1. G. Boccaccini has proposed that Judaism between the third century BCE and the second century CE be known by the term 'Middle Judaism' (*Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought 300 BCE to 200 CE* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991], pp. 21-25).

figures—whether they be Jesus, Adam, Abel, or some other exalted person—with ambiguous biblical texts.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Space does not permit me to thank all those who have helped me write this book. Family and friends have been a constant source of support and encouragement. My wife Kathy, and my children, Phillip, Anna and Elle, were fully supportive of me, even when it infringed upon the time we would spend together. They kept me grounded. The University of Michigan, with its generous fellowship support, made it possible for me to return to school and devote five years to the study of biblical literature. Fellow students have given of their time, insights and careful thinking. I have learned from all my teachers and deeply appreciate their scholarship.

I want to thank personally the members of my dissertation committee: Dr Gabriele Boccaccini, Dr Brian Schmidt and Dr Ralph Williams. Your willingness to read and critique my research will make my work better.

Lastly, I want to thank Dr Jarl Fossum. We met during your first year at Michigan. When you accepted me as your student you made my doctoral studies possible. What merit there is in my work is only because you guided and directed me. You are a model scholar and teacher.

Phillip B. Munoa, III  
June, 1997

## ABBREVIATIONS

ABD	David Noel Freedman (ed.), <i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> (New York: Doubleday, 1992)
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
ANRW	Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase (eds.), <i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1972-)
ATS	Armenian Texts and Studies
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums
BHS	<i>Biblia hebraica stuttgartensia</i>
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BZAW	Beihefte zur ZAW
CahArch	<i>Cahiers Archéologiques</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i> , Monograph Series
ConBNT	Coniectanea biblica, New Testament
ConBOT	Coniectanea biblica, Old Testament
CRINT	Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CTA	A. Hérodote (ed.), <i>Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques découvertes à Ras Shamra-Ugarit de 1929 à 1939</i> (Paris: Imprimerie nationale Geuthner, 1963)
EncJud	<i>Encyclopedia Judaica</i>
EPRO	Études préliminaires aux Religions Orientales dans l'Empire Romain
ErJb	<i>Eranos-Jahrbuch</i>
ETL	<i>Ephemerides theologicae Iovanienses</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
Hen	<i>Henoch</i>
HNTC	Harper's NT Commentaries
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs

HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
IDBSup	<i>IDB, Supplementary Volume</i>
JA	<i>Journal asiatique</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JewEnc	<i>The Jewish Encyclopedia</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JSHRZ	<i>Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit</i>
JSJ	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series</i>
JSPSup	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha, Supplement Series</i>
JTSA	Jewish Theological Seminary of America
JU	Judentum und Umwelt
Jud	<i>Judaism</i>
NHS	Nag Hammadi Studies
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NovTSup	<i>Novum Testamentum</i> , Supplements
NTL	New Testament Library
NTOA	<i>Novum Testamentum et orbis antiquus</i>
OTP	James Charlesworth (ed.), <i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i>
OTS	<i>Old Testament Studies</i>
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
RSPT	<i>Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques</i>
SBLDS	SBL Dissertation Series
SBLEJ	SBL Early Judaism and its Literature
SBLSCS	SBL Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SBLSP	SBL Seminar Papers
SCS	Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SecCent	<i>Second Century</i>
SHR	Studies in the History of Religion
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
ST	<i>Studia theologica</i>
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
StudPhilo	<i>Studia Philonica</i>
SUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti pseudepigrapha
TDNT	Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (eds.), <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> (trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; 10 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-)



<i>Theo</i>	<i>Theologica</i>
TOTL	The Old Testament Library
T & S	Text and Studies
T & T	Texts and Translations
UUA	Uppsala universitetsårsskrift
VC	<i>Vigiliae christianae</i>
VTSup	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i> , Supplements
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

## Chapter 1

## THE TESTAMENT OF ABRAHAM: INTRODUCTORY ISSUES

The modern study of the *Testament of Abraham* was inaugurated by M. James's publication of the Greek text in 1892.<sup>1</sup> This was soon followed by the first English translation by W. Craigie,<sup>2</sup> and since then a number of studies have appeared in different languages.

1. M. James (ed.), *The Testament of Abraham: The Greek Text Now First Edited with an Introduction and Notes* (T & S, 2.2; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1892). The latest examination of introductory issues for the *Testament of Abraham* is by G. Vermes, M. Goodman and F. Millar in their revision of Emil Schürer's *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (3 vols.; eds. G. Vermes, E. Millar and M. Goodman; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1987), III, pp. 761-67. See also G.W.E. Nickelsburg's treatments in 'Testament of Abraham', in M. Stone (ed.), *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (CRINT, 2; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), pp. 60-64, and in *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), pp. 248-53; and his edited work, *Studies in the Testament of Abraham* (SBLSCS, 6; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976); E. Sanders's excellent summary in *OTP*, I, pp. 871-91; M. Delcor, *Le Testament d'Abraham* (SVTP, 2; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), pp. 1-77; N. Turner, 'The Testament of Abraham: A Study of the Original Language, Place of Origin, Authorship, and Relevance' (PhD Dissertation, University of London, 1953), pp. 13-143, and his updated summary and English translation in *The Apocryphal Old Testament* (ed. H. Sparks; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 393-421; A.-M. Denis, *Introduction aux pseudépigraphes grecs d'Ancien Testament* (SVTP, 1; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970), pp. 31-39; and G.H. Box (ed. and trans.), *The Testament of Abraham: Translated from the Greek Text with Introduction and Notes* (London: SPCK, 1927), pp. vii-xxix. For a bibliography on the *Testament of Abraham* see J. Charlesworth, *The Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research* (SCS, 7; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), pp. 70-72.

2. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (rept.; 12 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), IX, pp. 182-201.