The Apocalypse of Abraham

Apocalypse of Abraham (1st–2nd century)

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Authorship. An apocryphal book. It is not scripture.

The Apocalypse of Abraham

THE APOCALYPSE OF ABRAHAM.
From the Roumanian Text, Discovered and Translated By Dr. M. Gaster. Read 2nd February, 1886. At the moment when the power of prophecy ceased, its place was taken by the mysterious metaphysical and emblematical vision, in which the future was likewise prognosticated, but in an allegorical and fantastical form. There grew up the apocalyptical literature, especially in the period of time which elapsed between the Book of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John, and in the following two or three centuries. Almost at as remote a period as it first arose, the apocalyptic, or rather the apocryphal literature, was seized upon by all who were desirous of exercising an influence on the masses. In the first instance, the heretical sects of Christianity utilized it. The populace, as a rule, understands nothing of the subtle and higher questions of dogmatism, and it is most easily approached by those who speak its accustomed language, by those who enter into its views, who use its word-pictures and metaphors. What could serve better to popularise creeds which branched off from the straight road of orthodoxy, than to present them in the guise of a religious story, of a biblical allegory, of an apocalyptic vision? Special books of religious and prophetical tendency were therefore ascribed to all the patriarchs from Adam onwards. Each sect had a special predilection for a, different personage, and various books were written, or in some cases ancient ones were altered to suit the requirements of the sects, and thus these works increased in number.

Contest with the ruling Church began at the same early period. Indices of these heretical books were drawn up, in which their destruction was urged as a sacred duty. |196 Strange to say, almost all the forbidden Apocryphas have nevertheless been preserved to us. To the explorer in the territory of folk-lore opportunities frequently present themselves of recognizing the ancient apocryphal stories amongst the popular literature of the middle ages. All, however, have not been preserved from destruction. Amongst others there has been missing until now an apocryphal story concerning the death of Abraham. It is referred to by Epiphanius (adv. haereses, 39, 5), and also by Athanasius (Synopsis). Nikephorus (Stichometria, No. (5) also speaks of an apocryphon of about 300 verses, with reference to Abraham. This apocryphal story, of which until now nothing certain has been known, has been preserved in the old Slavonian and in the old Roumanian language. In the former, as far as I know, it is only in two MSS. (of which one is a fragment), and in Roumanian it is

in four MSS., of which one is the translation of the Slavonic fragment. The complete text, discovered by myself, in three MSS., which are all in my possession, I propose to give now in a literal translation.

Before I proceed, I should wish to say a few words concerning this text, the more ancient of the two fragments, and especially regarding the connection of this text with that of the Slavonic one of the sixteenth century. The first incomplete text, which, as I have before stated,entirely agrees with that of the contemporaneous Slavonic, is only distinguished from the more complete text by greater brevity, and some features which are wanting in the latter. The complete Slavonic text is distinguished from our present one only by some unimportant features, and therefore points to a common and more ancient source. That the source of the Slavonic text (and hence of the Roumanian) |197 is Greek, is beyond all doubt. The fathers of the Church, already quoted, expressly say so. But besides this we have historical and linguistic proofs, which necessarily point to a Greek origin. Of the linguistic proofs I will only adduce one here. The name of the place----as we will see----where the angel first meets Abraham is called Dria the Black, which was taken from the falsely rendered Αρυα τ ς Μαμβρη, the translation of the Hebrew Elone Mamre. Drüa was considered as a proper name, and Mamre, changed into Mavri, was rendered by the Slavic translator as black. Thus arose this otherwise inexplicable name.

Of the historical proofs, the most incontestible lies in the fact that all theological literature, in the widest sense of the word, reached the Slavic through the medium of the Greek, and that even a Greek MS. of it seems to be preserved in the library of Vienna. The stories, however, came originally from the poetical East, with its fantastic imagery, and amidst the influences of similar pictures of olden times. The fathers of the Church, who have preserved for us the name of this apocrypha, have also recorded the name of the sect in whose midst it first arose, namely, the sect of the Sethians, who beheld in Seth the son of Adam the true Christ and Redeemer from hereditary sin. It would carry me too far afield were I to be more explicit as to this, and especially were I to dilate on the heretical agitation in Asia Minor, and to follow out in these texts traces which have been almost obliterated by time. In reference to this I wish to point out the ”threefold Judgement” mentioned here, of which the orthodox church knows nothing.

At every step we meet parallels to the various incidents of this legendary story, both in the corresponding Jewish literature, and in the apocalyptic which has developed out of it. |198 I will reserve to myself for some future work the investigation of these parallels. For the present it will suffice if I merely refer to the principal sources, or rather the most striking parallels. As an example present to the mind of the authors of this legend, I would cite the Apocalypse of the Apostle Paul,especially the Oriental version, which has also been published in English from a Syriac original. In this legend the Apostle, who has been carried up to heaven, beholds a very similar spectacle of the Judgment after death. The second part of the legend of Abraham, that relating to his death, shows a decided leaning towards the widely spread legends (of Jewish literature) relating to the death of Moses.

That some features have been altered, whilst others have been superadded, will excite no surprise in those who are even but partially acquainted with this very luxuriant literature. In conclusion, I would here set at rest an objection which is contained in the question, as to whether this text is actually the ancient and hitherto undiscovered apocalypse? The road usually taken by such apocrypha precludes any possible doubt. Brought from the East, they were in an early period translated from the Greek into the Slavonic, and thence they became also by translation part of Roumanian literature. Similarly to these manuscript stories, the "Lists" of heretical books were translated into the Slavonic, and here we find our text incontestibly figuring amongst the forbidden books. Origen, in quoting this text, appears to labour under a slight misconception. The Angel of Good and the Angel of Evil do not dispute with regard to the salvation of Abraham himself, but in Abraham's presence the angels dispute concerning that of another soul. This is meant by the story related in the text, when the soul was placed in the mid-way until it was released by the prayer of Abraham.

Out of the three MSS. in my possession I have reconstructed the critical Roumanian text, which is published here |199 for the first time. As a basis I took the MS. of c. 1750, which although fragmentary at the beginning and end, nevertheless represents the best version. In ( ) I included the corrections I considered necessary, and in [ ] the additions taken either from MS. b (1818), or MS. c (1777), or from both. The transcription is strictly phonetical, following the ordinary manner used in publishing Roumanian texts. It is as follows: letters have the Italian value, t = tz; s = sh; a, a, i = e (Lepsius); i = y. Every Cyrillian letter, in which the texts are originally written, is reproduced by a Latin letter; and I went so far as to preserve even the dialectical forms, for the MSS. bear a Moldavian character. The translation is of the reconstructed text, which has been divided by me in chapters. |200

The Life and Death of our Father Abraham the Just, written according to the Apocalypse in nice words. Introduction. 1. Our father Abraham lived more than 175 years. In his lifetime he was vigorous, very gentle, compassionate and just towards all, and very hospitable. He dwelt not far from the place called Dria the Black, at the cross-road by which all strangers had to pass. He received the wayfarers and entertained them. Rich and poor, kings and princes, boyards and voyevods, all neighbours, the weak and the sick, all were treated with the greatest kindness, for Abraham was good and just, and loving all men, till he attained to extreme old age, and the time and the hour drew nigh when he was to taste the cup of death. 2. Then the Lord called the archangel Mihail, and said unto him: Go down, Mihail, to my friend Abraham, and remind him of death, for I have promised him to increase his |201 property and to multiply his descendants like the stars of heaven and like the sand of the sea. And I have blessed him. Therefore he is now richer and more just than all in his goodness and hospitality which he displays until his end.

3. And the archangel Mihail, who sat before the Lord, went out of His presence and descended to Abraham in Dria the Black, And he found our father Abraham near the village with his servants and also other young men. And the archangel approached him. Abraham

seeing him, thought he was a soldier, being so modest and fair in his appearance. 4. Then the aged Abraham arose in order to meet the archangel. And the archangel said, "Rejoice, venerable father, the chosen one of the Lord, righteous soul, friend of the Ruler of heaven." And Abraham said to the angel, "Rejoice, oh chief of the hosts (Arhistratig)! Thou, who art greater than any of the children of men, be welcome on my return home. Kindly relate me, oh young man, whence thou comest, and whence it is that thou art so beautiful?" |202 5. And the Arhistratig replied, "Oh, just man! I come from the Great City, and I am sent by the Great Ruler, to say to His chosen friend, that he should be prepared, because the Ruler calls him." And Abraham replied, " Well! Let us go back to the village."' And the Arhistratig said, "Let us go! "

6. And they went to the nearest village, and sat down to rest. And Abraham said to his servants, "Go to the field, where the horses are, and fetch two that are fit for riding, and get them ready, so that I may mount one, and the stranger the other one." But the Arhistratig said to Abraham, "Let them not bring the horses, because I do not ride on a beast with four legs. Oh, thou righteous soul, let us go on foot to thy pure abode." And Abraham replied, "Let it be so." And they walked from that village to his house. 7. On the way there grew a lofty and mighty cypress. And the tree exclaimed, by the will of God. with a loud voice of man: "Holy one! Holy one! Holy one! The |203 Lord God calls thee!" And Abraham held his peace, and replied not, for he thought the Arhistratig had not heard the voice of the tree.

8. Then they approached the courtyard, and sat down. Isaac, the son of Abraham, saw the face of the angel, and said to his mother Sarah, "Look at the man who is sitting with my father, he does not appear to me to be born from a human being." And Isaac ran to the angel, and bowed down before him. And the angel blessed him, and said, "May God give thee what he has given to thy father and thy mother!" 9. And Abraham said to Isaac, "Take the basin and pour in some water, so that we may wash the feet of this stranger, who comes from afar to us, and who is weary." And Isaac ran to the well and poured water into the basin and brought it. And Abraham went to wash the feet of the angel, and Abraham sighed and wept on account of this stranger. And Isaac seeing his father weep, wept also, and his tears ran down. And the angel seeing them both weeping, wept with |204 them, and his tears fell down into the basin. And these tears turned into precious stones. And when Abraham beheld this miracle, he took away the jewels and hid the secret in his heart.

10. And Abraham said to his beloved son, "Go into the room and get ready two beds, one for me and the other for the stranger, because he is a wayfarer; and prepare everything well and carefully, and put candles in the candlesticks, and prepare the table, and light the incense-burner, and bring sweet smelling herbs of the paradise and put them on the floor, so that they may scent the place, and light seven candles, and we will sit down and rejoice with the stranger, who is greater than any human being on the earth, and mightier than kings." And Isaac prepared everything carefully, according to the directions of his father. And Abraham went with the angel in the room, where the beds were ready, and they both sat down, one on one bed and one on the other, and between them stood the table with food.

|205 11. And the Arhistratig arose and went out to take the air, and he ascended to heaven, and came before the Lord, and said to the Lord God, "Lord! Lord! know that Abraham is very powerful, so that I cannot mention to him of death, for I have never seen a man like unto him on the earth, just, compassionate, and avoiding all evil."

12. And the Lord spake to the Arhistratig, "Go to my friend Abraham, and eat of all that which will be put on the table; and I will send My Spirit unto his son Isaac, and I will show him the approach of his father's death, so that he may see all in a dream." 13. And the Arhistratig said, "The incorporeal beings of heaven do not eat, neither do they drink, and he has spread for me a table with all the good things of the earth; and now, O Lord, what shall I do? How can I become different, as we shall be all at one table?" |206 14. And the Lord answered him, "Go to My friend Abraham, and do not trouble thyself, for I will send spirits, who shall cause the food to disappear from thy hands and from thy mouth; all that is on the table shall disappear. And rejoice them with him. But thou shalt interpret Isaac's dreams unto him, so that Abraham may know the hour of his death. For he has numberless properties and lands and houses, because I have blessed him, and I have increased his possessions like the sands of the sea and like the stars in heaven."

15. Thereon the Artistratig descended to Abraham's table, and they sat down. And Isaac had provided the supper. And Abraham said his prayer, as it was his custom. And after the meal they arose, said a prayer, and sat down each one on his bed. 16. And Isaac said to his father, "I should like to sleep here also, because I love with all my heart to listen to the words of this stranger." But Abraham replied to his son, |207 "No, my son! go thou to thy bed and rest, so that we may not inconvenience this stranger." Then Isaac received his father's blessing, and went to his bed to rest. 17. And the Lord showed Isaac in a dream the approaching death of his father. And after the third hour of the night Isaac awoke from his sleep, and arose from his bed, and ran quickly to his father, where he slept with the Arhistratig, and called aloud, "My father Abraham, open the door quickly, so that I may enter and cling to thy neck, and kiss thee before they take thee away from me."

18. And Abraham got up and opened the door. And Isaac entered, and he embraced his father, and wept aloud; and Abraham wept also; and the Arhistratig seeing this, wept with them. And Abraham said to Isaac, "My dear child, tell me truly what has appeared to thee, so that thou camest so frightened to me?" |208 19. And Isaac wept, and said to his father, 'I beheld the sun and the moon, with luminous and far-stretching rays, resting on my head, and seeing this I was glad; when suddenly the heaven opened and a luminous man descended from heaven. And he was brilliant. And he removed the sun from my head and ascended to heaven. And shortly afterwards, while I was still sad, I saw the luminous man again descending from heaven, and he removed the moon from my head. And I wept, and I said to him, "do not take from me my pride, but have pity on me and listen to me, for thou hast taken the sun from me. Do not also take away the moon!' And he replied, 'Let them go, because the Lord of heaven wishes that I should bring them to him.' And they left their rays upon me."

20. And the Arhistratig said to them, "Listen to me, oh Abraham the just! Thou art the sun, seen by thy son Isaac his father; and the luminous man, descending from heaven, will take away thy soul. And know, oh just Abraham! that |209 thou wilt soon leave this world to go to the Lord." And Abraham replied, "Oh wonderful! I fear thou art the man who will take away my soul!" And the Arhistratig said to Abraham, "I am the angel Mihail, the greatest of the angels standing before the Lord; and I announce to thee the news of thy death. And thou wilt come to Him, according to thy covenant." And Abraham replied, "Now I understand that thou art he who will receive my soul----but I will not yield to thee!" 21. After these words of Abraham, the Arhistratig disappeared; for he went up to heaven and stood before the Lord, and related to him all that he had seen and heard in the house of Abraham, and how Abraham had said, "I will not yield to thee."

22. And the Lord replied to his Arhistratig, "Go to my friend Abraham, and say to him as follows: I am the Lord his God, who brought him out and led him to the Promised Land; and I have blessed him, so that his descendants shall become as numerous as the sands of the sea, and as the stars in the heaven. And say to him, How hast thou dared |210 to oppose my Arhistratig Mihail, by saying that thou wouldst not follow him? "Does he not know that from the time of Adam and Eve all have died? That neither the kings, nor the forefathers have escaped death? because no one is immortal; but all have died and have gone down into hell. But to him I did not send either death, or sickness, or the scythe of death, which should mow him down; but I sent to him my Arhistratig. with a request, so that he might know my decision and put his house and lands in order. But why did he oppose my Arhistratig Mihail, saying that he would not follow? Does he not know, that I will send the angel of death, whose presence he could not endure?"

23. After receiving the command of the Lord, the Arhistratig descended to Abraham, fell at his feet, and repeated to him all that he had heard from the Lord. And Abraham the just said amidst many tears, "I entreat thee, Arhistratig of the heavenly powers, because thou had honoured me, a sinner, grant me one request. For the Lord God has always |211 given me the things for which I have prayed, and has always fulfilled my wishes. And I know that I shall not escape death, but I shall certainly die. Know, therefore, that I expect that thou wilt fulfil this my request: I should like to see now, whilst still in the flesh, all the peoples and their deeds; then I will yield myself entirely." 24. And the Arhistratig ascended once more to heaven, and placed himself before the Lord, and told him all about Abraham. And the Lord replied to the Arhistratig, "Place Abraham the just in the chariot of the cherubim, and carry him to heaven." And the Arhistratig descended and took the just Abraham into the clouds and surrounded him with sixty angels.

25. And Abraham walked on the clouds, and he beheld another chariot behind him, and also some who walked (?). And in another part he saw people who were suffering, and much wrong-doing. And he said, "Oh Lord! command that the earth may open and swallow them." And in another |212 direction he saw people plundering and stealing, and despoiling the stranger. And he exclaimed, "Oh Lord I command that fire shall come down from heaven

and destroy them." And fire came from heaven and consumed them. 26. And instantly" there a voice came from heaven to the angels, and a thunder-clap reached the Arhistratig and he heard the words: "Turn round the chariot and depart with Abraham so that he may not see the people any more; for if he sees them living in sin he will destroy them all to the very last," because Abraham could not endure those who did evil. And the Lord continued: "I have created the world, and I do not wish that any human being shall be destroyed, for I do not desire the death of the wicked, but that he should repent and live. Lead the just Abraham to the first gate of heaven, so that he may see the last judgment, and that he also may repent even more than the sinners."

27. And the Arhistratig turned round Abraham's chariot, and brought him to the first gate of heaven. And Abraham |213 beheld two paths, one narrow and difficult to pursue, and the other wide and extended. And on the narrow path he saw a man sitting on a golden chair, and his face was terrible like unto God. And he saw many souls pursued by angels on the broad way, and but few souls conducted by the angels on the narrow path. And the marvellous man, when he saw all the wounded and sick souls on the wide way, tore out the hair of his head and of his beard, and he cast himself from his golden chair unto the ground and wept. But when he saw many souls in the narrow path, he rose and sat on his golden chair in joy. 28. And Abraham asked the Arhistratig: "Lord! who is this marvellous man in such splendour? Sometimes he weeps, and sometimes he rejoices." The Arhistratig answered: "This is Adam, who was the first man created to adorn the world, for all are descended from him. And when he sees many souls traversing the narrow path he rejoices, because that is the entrance to heaven, by which the just go to |214 paradise. And when he sees many souls going on the wide way he weeps and tears his hair, because that is the path of the sinners, by which they go to hell. In seven thousand years only one soul will be saved."

29. And while they were speaking, two angels brought innumerable souls, and struck them with a whip of fire; and one poor soul was supported by their hands and led on the narrow way. 30. And he beheld again at the doorway a golden chair, shining like fire; and on it there sat a man in the form of the Son of God. And in front of him stood a table of precious stones and pearls; and upon the table there lay a Bible, that is a big book of twelve yards in length, and eight yards in width. And there were two angels holding paper, ink, and pens. And at the head of the table there sat a luminous angel holding a scale in his hand; and at his left hand stood an angel of fire, who held in his hand a paper, and on it were inscribed the temptations and sins. And that man who sat |215 there condemned or liberated the souls. And of the two angels who stood to the right and left, the one on the right wrote the virtues, and the one on the left hand wrote down the sins; and the one at the head of the table weighed the souls; and the angel of fire examined the souls.

31. And Abraham asked the Arhistratig: " What is it that I see? " And the angel replied, "That, which thou seest, oh just Abraham, is the judgment in the other world." And he saw the soul of a man brought before the judge by an angel. And the angel said to the

judge, "Open the book and see the record of his sins and of his virtues .... and erase them, for he is neither to be condemned nor to be saved; therefore place him in the middle." 32. And Abraham said, "My lord! who are these judges, and these luminous angels?" And the Arhistratig replied, "Listen, oh just Abraham I He who sits in the chair and judges, is Abel, the son of Adam. He judges the righteous and the sinners. For the Lord hath said, that He will not |216 judge mankind, but that they shall judge each other. And to him (Abel) he has given the power to judge men, till the last judgment. Then the Son of God will judge perfectly and finally and for ever; and no other will be able to judge. Because men are descended from Adam, they must be first judged by a son of Adam; but at the second resurrection they will all be judged by the twelve Apostles; but at the third resurrection, our Lord and Saviour will judge them. For at the third time, at that terrible judgment, all will be ended. As it is written, 'By three witnesses shall the judgment be fulfilled.' And of the two angels the angel on the left records the evil deeds, and the angel on the right records the good actions; and he shines like the sun."

33. And Abraham asked his Arhistratig Mihail, "My lord! what is to be done with the soul which the angel brought in his hand, and which was placed in the middle?" The angel answered, "The judge has found that his good and his bad deeds shall be erased, and he is neither condemned nor saved, until the Lord, the Judge, shall come." |217 34. And Abraham asked, "What is wanting to this soul that it should be saved? " The angel answered, "If he had performed one more good deed, he would had been saved." And Abraham said, "We will say a prayer for this soul perhaps God will save it!" And the Arhistratig said "Amen! so shall it be!" And they both prayed, and God listened to them and saved this soul. And Abraham said "I pray thee, Arhistratig, tell me where is the soul?" And the angel answered, "It hath been saved, in answer to the prayer of thy holiness! "

35. And Abraham said, "Oh, Arhistratig, let us entreat God for the sins of those whom I cursed before! " And the Arhistratig listened to him, and they prayed for a long time, until there came a voice from heaven, saying, "Abraham! I have heard thy prayer for those whom it appeared to thee that I destroyed. But I have saved them, and have preserved them alive. At the last judgment I will separate them. For, even if I destroy some on earth, I do not deliver any one entirely to death; I wish that they may repent and live." |218 36. And the Lord said to the Arhistratig, "My servant! Turn the chariot, and take him back to his dwelling, for the end of his life is approaching, and he must put his house in order." And the Arhistratig turned the chariot of clouds and brought him back to his house. And Abraham went and sat on his bed.

37. And Sarah, the wife of Abraham, came and knelt at the angel's feet, and kissed them, and wept and thanked him, saying, "I thank thee, that thou hast brought back my lord, for it seemed to me, that he had withdrawn himself from our midst." And Isaac came and embraced his father; the servants also came and surrounded Abraham, thanking and blessing God. 38. And the Arhistratig said to Abraham, "Set thy house in order, and settle all with thy servants which concerns them; for thy last day draws near, when thy soul will depart

from thy body; because the Lord has ordered it so, and He is just." And Abraham replied to the Arhistratig, "I will not obey thee!" |219 39. When the Arhistratig heard these words, he ascended at once to heaven, stood before the Lord, and said, "Lord! Sustainer of all! I fulfilled Thy will, and Thy friend Abraham has seen all the earth and the heaven, and whilst still living he beheld the Judgment from the chariot of clouds, and yet he says that he will not obey me. I would willingly give him time, because he has done so much good on the earth that no man is like unto him; he is like an immortal king, and he is worthy of immortality. Oh Lord! what dost Thou command?"

40. And the Lord said, "Call Death hither!" And the Arhistratig Mihail went to Death, and said, "Go, for the Immortal King calls thee." "When Death heard this, he trembled and ground his teeth, and went to the Mighty Lord, and stood before Him with much fear and trembling. 41. And the Lord said unto Death, "Go and disguise thy fearful face and thy countenance, and clothe thyself with gentleness and beauty and splendour; and go to My friend |220 Abraham and receive his soul and bring it to Me; and thou shalt not frighten him, but take it away in all tenderness." When Death heard this, he went away from the presence of the Lord, and changed his fearful countenance, and became gentle and luminous, and of great beauty. 42. And Abraham sat under a sweet smelling tree, resting his hand on his knees, awaiting hopefully the return of the Arhistratig Mihail. And he noticed the approach of a worthy and fine-looking man, and it appeared to him that it was the Arhistratig. And the angel beheld him, and bowed to him, and said, "Rejoice, venerable Abraham, just soul, friend of the Lord, like unto the angels!" And Abraham replied, "Rejoice, shining light, luminous man! From whence has this resplendent man come? "

43. And Death answered, "I tell thee the truth. I am the poison of death!" And Abraham said, "Art thou the cup which poisonest? And art thou he who takest away the life of man and the beauty of woman? Art thou the poison |221 of death?" And Death replied, "I am the poisoned cup of death; and I speak unto thee the truth, for thus has the Lord commanded me." 44. And Abraham said, "Why hast thou come hither? " Death replied, "I have come for thy righteous soul." And Abraham said, "I understand! But, I do not wish to die!" And Death was silent, for he would not give any further answer. 45. And Abraham arose and went in and seated himself on his bed. And Death seated himself also on the bed, at the feet of Abraham. And Abraham said, "Depart from me, for I would rest." And Death replied, "I shall not depart from thee until I have taken thy soul." And Abraham said, "Fulfil my wish: show me the bitterness of thy poison when thou takest the souls of mankind." And Death replied, "Thou could'st not in any case bear to see my fearful countenance." And Abraham said, "I will see it; in the Name of the Lord, for He is with me."

46. Then Death cast off all his beauty, and he assumed a fierce and murderous and all-consuming expression, like unto |222 the wild beasts; and (he assumed) a dragon's head with seven faces, and his countenance was as seventeen fiery faces; and he became like unto a fierce and dreadful lion and like a poisonous snake, and he had a mane like a lion, and he was like a thunderbolt, and like the waves of the sea, and like the stream of a rapid

torrent, and like a very wild dragon with three wings. And from the fear of Death, seven thousand boys and girls died, and even Abraham the just was in danger of his life. 47. All this Abraham saw, and he said to Death, "I pray thee, poisonous Death, hide thy fearful countenance, and appear in thy former beauty." And Death resumed his former beauty. And Abraham said, "What hast thou done to kill so many souls? Hast thou been sent to kill them also? " And Death replied, "No, my lord! I was sent only on thy account."

48. Abraham said, "Indeed? How could'st thou kill them when the Lord did not command thee to do it?" |223 And Death answered, "Believe me, my lord, it is a wonder thou did'st not die with them. But I swear to thee in very truth, that I have in this hour the power of killing thee, and thy strength, will not avail thee. Therefore put in order all that thou wishest to arrange." 49. And Abraham said, "I acknowledge now that the weakness of death is upon me. and my soul grows faint. But, I pray thee, oh poisonous Death to tell me, why hast thou killed so many boys and girls? Let us now both entreat the Lord to restore these boys and girls to life, and perchance He may listen to us." And Death said, "Amen! so may it be." And Abraham arose and threw himself on the ground on his face, and Death also cast himself on the ground; and they both prayed to God for a long time. And God sent the spirit of life unto the dead, and they were restored to life again.

50. And Abraham returned thanks unto God, and went to his bed. Death also went to the bed. And Abraham said to Death, "Depart from me; I would rest, for soon thou wilt take away my soul." And Death replied, "I will not leave |224 thee, until I shall have taken thy soul." And the patriarch Abraham became cross with him, and spoke angry words, and said unto Death, "Who has sent thee to me? Dost thou really believe that I will die?" And Abraham repeated again, "I will not follow thee." 51. And Death said, "Listen to me, oh, just Abraham! In seven epochs I shall destroy the whole world, and I shall cause all human beings and kings to go down into the earth, and to descend into hell; the kings, princes, rich and poor, old and young. Therefore I have shown thee the seven heads of a lion and the fiery faces, so that thou mayest arrange thy property and leave everything in order."

52. And Abraham said, "Depart from me, for I will see, if having the favour of God, I must still die, as thou doest demand of me!" And Death said, "I tell thee the truth, by God, there are seventy-two kinds of death, and I mow whomsoever I like; put therefore away thy doubts, oh just Abraham, and obey me, according to the will of the Universal Judge!" And Abraham said, "Depart from me for a while, |225 so that I may rest for a time on my bed; for I have lost, all strength since mine eyes have beheld thee; all parts of my body are weak, my head is heavy as lead, and my spirit is trembling within me, so that I can no longer see thy face." 53. And Isaac came and cried bitterly; and all the servants gathered him and cried bitterly. And Abraham arose and set free all his servants and his maids. And he called his beloved son Isaac, and kissed him tenderly, and blessed him with the father's blessing. And he blessed his wife Sarah, and he took leave of her and of all.

54. And the hour of his death approached; and Death said to Abraham, "Come and kiss my right hand, so that thou mayest revive for a while." And Abraham was deceived, and kissed

the hand of Death. But Death, when he gave him his hand, gave him also the cup with the poison of death. And at the same moment the Arhistratig Mihail and numberless angels came and received in their holy hands the pure and holy soul, and brought into the holy hands of the Lord's. |226 55. But the body was enveloped in clean and pure linen, and they sprinkled him with heavenly perfumes, and buried him with many heavenly songs. And all wept and lamented greatly. Isaac his beloved son, and Sarah, the mother of Isaac, and his servants, and his maids, and all his neighbours lamented for him, because they had lost their good and blessed father Abraham.

56. And they buried him in "Dria the black," with many hymns and with great honour. And they heard the voice of the Lord saying from heaven, "Take My friend Abraham and lead him into the paradise of joy, the abode of all the righteous; and to the eternal life, which is everlasting and without end." There follows here a short "moralizatio," which has no bearing on the text itself, and which I therefore omit. [Romanian text omitted. A few footnotes follow] 1. E. Schürer, "Geschichte des jüd. Volkes im Zeitalter Christi," II, p. 688, Leipzig, 1886. 2. Published by Prof. B. P. Hasdeu, Cuvente den batrani. II, Bucuresti 1880, pp. 189-194. 3. Tihonravov, Pamjatniki otrechennoj russkoj literatury. I, St. Petersburg, 1863, pp. 79-90. 4. Cf. Fabricius, Codex pseudepigraphicus Vet. Test. I, pp. 417-118, and, M. Gaster, Literatura populara romana, Bucuresti, 1883, pp. 311-317. 5. Ed. Tischendorf, Apocalypses Apocryphae, p. 34, seq.

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