

## THE MORE OLD TESTAMENT PSEUDEPIGRAPHA PROJECT

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### *Introduction*

The More Old Testament Pseudepigrapha project at the University of St. Andrews (<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/academic/divinity/MOTP/index-motp.html>) has assembled an international team of scholars to translate a new collection of Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. The project is being headed by Professor Richard Bauckham and myself. I use the term "Old Testament Pseudepigrapha" to mean ancient books that claim to be written by a character in the Hebrew Bible or to be set in the same time period as the Hebrew Bible. Other retellings of biblical stories survive from antiquity, but there are far too many of them to be included in a single collection. This paper introduces the project and very briefly summarizes the texts in the corpus.

Our overall criteria for inclusion are somewhat more flexible, but at the same time more consistent and focused, than those that underlie the two-volume edition of Old Testament Pseudepigrapha published by Charlesworth in the 1980s. First, with a few exceptions to be noted, we are limiting the corpus to texts for which a reasonable – if not necessarily conclusive – case can be made for a date of composition before the rise of Islam in the early seventh century C.E. (As an aside, it is interesting to note that our oldest text is an Iron Age II inscription dating to around 700 B.C.E.) Second, we are including texts of any origin (Jewish, Christian, indigenous polytheistic [i.e., "pagan"], etc.). Third, we are not including texts published already in the Charlesworth volumes unless we have important new manuscript data or we believe that the text was inadequately treated for other reasons. Fourth, for purely practical reasons we mostly exclude texts that fit best in and survive only in other coherent collections of works that have been treated (or deserve treatment) on their own terms. These include the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Nag Hammadi Library, the Hekhalot Literature, and the like. In some cases fragments of our texts survive in the Dead Sea Scrolls, but important manuscripts are known from elsewhere as well. Finally, fifth, we have included a number of texts that were written in the form we have them well after the early seventh century, but which clearly either preserve earlier material or have a close relationship with such material.

As noted, the corpus includes indigenous polytheistic pseudepigrapha, Jewish pseudepigrapha transmitted by Jews, Jewish pseudepigrapha transmitted by Christians, pseudepigrapha composed by Christians, etc. They survive in a great many different languages, including Arabic, Judeo-Arabic, Aramaic, Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopic, Greek, Hebrew, Manichean Iranian, Old Irish, Iron Age Jordanian (Northwest Semitic), Latin, Phoenician, Church Slavonic, Syriac, and Manichean Turkic. We currently have an

international team of about 50 contributors who are editing more than 60 complete or nearly complete texts and about 35 additional quotations or fragments. We estimate that the project will produce two volumes of texts. The project has been supported by a generous research grant from the Leverhulme Trust which allowed us to hire Dr. Alexander Panayotov as a research fellow for three years.

### *Jewish Texts*

I first present a brief survey of texts in the corpus that can be regarded as Jewish compositions beyond reasonable doubt, along with a few that may be Jewish but whose origin is less certain than the others. Most of the texts are written in Hebrew or Aramaic and were transmitted in an explicitly Jewish social context, so their origins are secure. As a starting point I assume that texts that circulated only in Christian circles are Christian compositions unless a compelling positive case can be made for a different origin and that we should understand them first in the social context of their earliest surviving manuscripts and move backwards from there only on the basis of convincing evidence. Evidence for Jewish origin may include internal evidence for a pre-Christian date combined with informed interest on Jewish matters; compelling linguistic evidence for a Hebrew *Vorlage*; and a consistent pattern of sympathetic interest in Jewish ritual and *halakha* and Jewish ethnic and national interests. I have discussed these issues at length in my monograph *The Provenance of the Pseudepigrapha: Jewish, Christian, or Other?* and will not rehearse my arguments again here. The documents can be categorized in many different ways, but for the purposes of this paper I will list them according to genre, starting in this section with the works transmitted in Jewish manuscripts and then moving to two transmitted by Christians, then moving on in subsequent sections to Christian texts and indigenous polytheistic texts. The summaries that follow give my own understanding of each text at present and are subject to any amount of correction by the editors of those texts in their contributions. Additional texts may also be added to the corpus as they come to our attention. If you know of any that seem relevant, please draw them to my attention.

First, under **rewritten scripture**, we have the early work *Aramaic Levi*, which survives in individually very fragmentary manuscripts from Qumran, a better-preserved manuscript from the Cairo Geniza (new fragments of which have recently been discovered), a long translated extract in a Greek manuscript of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* from Mt. Athos, and a brief quotation in a Syriac manuscript. Most of the document can be reconstructed out of these varied sources. This text was a source for the Christian Greek *Testament of Levi*. The case of *Hebrew Naphtali* is still more complicated. This work survives in a medieval version embedded in the *Chronicles of Jerahmeel*. It has a close relationship of some sort to the Greek *Testament of Naphtali* and they both seem to have developed from a common archetype from the Second Temple period. A fragment of this archetype, or something closely related, survives in 4Q215, a Qumran fragment in Hebrew which gives the genealogy of Bilhah. The eleventh-century author R. Moses the Preacher of Narbonne cites Naphtali material in Hebrew which also seems to stem ultimately from this lost work. All of these Hebrew sources will be included under the rubric *Hebrew Naphtali* in the More Old Testament Pseudepigrapha contribution. *The Book of Giants* is another work that fits loosely under the rubric of rewritten scripture, although it may be more accurate to call it scripture-related literature, since it may both be inspired by Genesis and include early traditions omitted from Genesis. This Second Temple-era Jewish work survives in a number of highly fragmentary Aramaic manuscripts from Qumran, but it was adopted by the

Manicheans as well and medieval fragments of their version survive in the Iranian and Turkic languages. The combined sources allow us to reconstruct the overall shape of the work, although many of the details remain lost or obscure. *The Words of Gad the Seer* is a collection of oracles attributed to the prophets Gad and Nathan and stories set in the time of David. It survives in a single eighteenth-century manuscript from Cochin, India, and has been known but mostly ignored for the last two centuries. Its current editor, Meir Bar-Ilan, argues for a date in the early centuries C.E., although others have taken it to be medieval.

Four **apocalypses** are included. The *Vision of Gabriel* is a recently published first-century apocalypse preserved in Hebrew, inked upon a stone tablet. It contains a poorly preserved and very difficult eschatological prophecy in which the angel Gabriel addresses an unknown visionary. Its genuineness is still debated. The Hebrew *Apocalypse of Elijah* (*Sefer Eliyahu*) presents revelations from the archangel Michael about military conflicts in the end times and the coming of the Messiah, along with oracles from the prophet Elijah concerning the fate of the dead and the coming of the New Jerusalem. *The Visions of Ezekiel* (*Re'uth Yehezkel*) is a midrash on the opening words of the book of Ezekiel which then develops into an apocalypse with a tour of the other world. In it the prophet Ezekiel is granted a vision of the seven levels of the underworld, then he gazes into the River Chebar and sees the seven heavens reflected therein. Each heaven contains its own merkavah (throne-chariot), while the archangel Metatron is found in the third heaven and the celestial Temple in the fourth. This work is composed in Hebrew and quotes only Palestinian rabbinic sages of the fourth century and earlier. Some have suggested that this in itself indicates an early date, but this may oversimplify the complexities of the text. But a case has been made by David Halperin that, whatever the date of the work, the mythology of *The Visions of Ezekiel* is derived from third-century Palestinian synagogue sermons associated with the festival of Shavuot. The Hebrew *Apocalypse of Zerubbabel* (*Sefer Zerubbabel*) purports to give revelations granted to Zerubbabel by the angel Michael-Metatron. This revelatory material gives an obscure timetable for the end and tells of the future coming of the Davidic Messiah, his mother, the suffering Messiah son of Joseph, and Elijah, and describes their battle with and defeat of the Antichrist. Most scholars date this work to the early seventh century or earlier.

A number of **poetic works** are included in the corpus. *The Aramaic Song of the Lamb* is an acrostic poem quoted at length but perhaps not completely in the Tosefta-Targum to 1 Samuel 17. Another fragment may survive in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to 2 Sam 23:8. This poem presents the dialogue between David and Goliath during their encounter and describes David metaphorically as a "lamb" who does battle with the "bear" Goliath. The original editors have argued, mainly on the basis of parallels with the book of Revelation, that it was composed in the first century B.C.E. or C.E. In addition four Hebrew *Songs of David* were recovered from the Cairo Geniza about a century ago. Some have argued that they are medieval compositions, but others take them to have been composed in the Second Temple period and perhaps even within the Qumran community. (These are not to be confused with the Syriac *Psalms of David*, which are known in part in Hebrew also from Qumran.) There are also fragments of three *Hebrew hymns attributed to David* which are quoted in two Aramaic incantation bowls and one Aramaic and Greek silver lamella, all from late antiquity. One of the hymns, however, is also known from the 11QPsalms manuscript from Qumran.

Three **magical and mantic texts** are included. *The Seven (Adjurations) of Elijah* (*Sheva Eliyahu*) or *The Seven Lesser (Adjurations) (Sheva Zutarti)* consists of seven adjurations of exorcism and healing structured around the seven Sabbath *Amida* blessings of

the Palestinian rite. It survives in two recensions in manuscripts of the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries from the Cairo Geniza and elsewhere. The work has numerous close parallels to both the Hekhalot literature and to Greek and Aramaic incantations from late antiquity. *The Sword of Moses* (*Harba di-Moshe*) is a collection of magical traditions supposedly revealed to Moses. It consists of an opening Hebrew section of preparatory rituals, a middle section giving the divine names and *nomina barbara* that constitute the *Sword* proper, and a concluding Aramaic section that gives instructions for the use of these names for numerous specific purposes. *The Book of the Mysteries* (*Sefer Ha-Razim*) is a late-antique Hebrew compendium of incantations organized according to the various angels in the seven firmaments who are to be invoked for each spell. We are told that the book was revealed to Noah by the angel Raziel and then was transmitted via Abraham to Solomon.

The **works** mentioned above which are clearly **written after the early seventh century** include the following. *The Greatness of Moses* (*Gedullat Moshe*) is a Hebrew account of the ascent of Moses through the seven heavens and his tour of hell and paradise. It echoes many traditions found in earlier works, including early Christian apocalyptic tours of heaven and hell. Along with it are translated eight other texts in Hebrew and Aramaic describing various visions of heaven and hell, all of which have interesting parallels with earlier material. These nine were first collected and translated by Moses Gaster in 1893 and are retranslated for the More Old Testament Pseudepigrapha Project. The other eight are the *Legend of "Hear, O Israel,"* the *History of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi*, the *Order of Gan Eden*, the *Tractate on Gehinnom*, *In What Manner is the Punishment of the Grave*, the *Legend of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi*, the *Treatise on the Work of Creation*, and the *David Apocalypse*. *The Midrash of Shemihazai and Aza'el* is a medieval Hebrew account in several versions of the rise of the Watchers and the genesis and fall of the Giants. It has some connection with the *Book of Giants*. The Hebrew work *Midrash Vayissa'u* (*The Book of the Wars of the Sons of Jacob*) was published by Jellinek in the nineteenth century. It appears to draw on source material used in the book of *Jubilees* and the Greek *Testament of Judah*. Likewise, *The Book of Asaph* (*Sefer Assaf*), a Jewish medical work from perhaps the tenth century C.E., claims to quote from *The Book of Noah*, and parallels in the excerpted passage with *Jubilees* 10:1-14 support the possibility that this medieval author actually had access to this lost Second Temple work, which is also mentioned in the Qumran *Genesis Apocryphon* and elsewhere, or at least access to traditions based on it. Finally, *The Treatise of the Vessels* (*Massekhet Kelim*) is a Hebrew work of undetermined date which purports to tell where certain leaders at the time of the Babylonian destruction of the First Temple hid the Temple vessels and paraphernalia. Remarkably, the text claims that this information was hidden on a bronze tablet or tablets and one of the copies of the work was actually found engraved on marble plaques in a house in Beirut. The parallels with the Copper Scroll as well as other Second Temple legends that claim to describe the fate of the lost Temple treasures are obvious and make this document worthy of further attention whatever its date.

Two **Jewish texts already published in the Charlesworth volumes** are revisited by the More Old Testament Pseudepigrapha Project. *The Ladder of Jacob* (a text of rewritten scripture) was translated by H. G. Lunt in the second Charlesworth volume on the basis of two poor recensions in the *Explanatory Palaia* in Church Slavonic. A highly corrupt Hebrew version of Jacob's prayer in chapter 2 of this work has recently been recovered from the Cairo Geniza and is included in our corpus. Redactional considerations suggest that this may be an excerpt from a Hebrew version of the whole work. *The Treatise of Shem* (another magical/mantic text) was published by Charlesworth from a fifteenth-century Syriac

manuscript. Recently an earlier rather different recension in Byzantine-era Jewish Aramaic and Judeo-Arabic has been recovered from the Cairo Geniza and will be translated for our project.

We will also include a section on **quotations of and references to lost works in the canonical biblical books**, both Hebrew Bible and New Testament. The Hebrew Bible alludes to many such, including, for example, *The Book of the Righteous* (*Sefer Ha-Yashar*); *The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah*; *The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel*; *The Book of the Wars of YHWH*; and the lost *Laments* of the prophet Jeremiah. The New Testament quotation of *1 Enoch* 1:9 in Jude 14 is well known, as is the apparent allusion in Jude 9 to an *Assumption* or *Testament of Moses* and the mention of Jannes and Jambres in 2 Timothy 3:8. Lost pseudepigrapha may also be quoted in Ephesians 5:14 (from the *Apocrypha of Jeremiah* according to George Syncellus) and James 4:5 (arguably from the book of *Eldad and Modad*).

Two works of possibly Jewish origin survive only in manuscripts transmitted by Christians. First, two *Sermons on Jonah and Samson* are found only in an Armenian translation. Although their attribution in the manuscripts to Philo of Alexandria seems to be erroneous, their content strongly supports the contention that they are ancient Jewish sermons. Second, a Coptic *Apocryphon of Jeremiah* survives complete in a single manuscript, but fragments of other manuscripts go back to the ninth and seventh centuries C.E. The text, which is rife with anachronisms, retells Jeremiah's confrontations with King Zedekiah and narrates the fall of Jerusalem; Jeremiah's hiding of the Temple treasures; the Babylonian exile; the Rip Van Winkle-like seventy-year sleep of the righteous eunuch Ebedmelech; and Jeremiah's recovery of the Temple treasures at the end of the exile. The work contains Christian references as it stands, but some would argue that it was originally a Jewish composition.

### *Christian Texts*

Next are works transmitted by Christians which cannot convincingly be shown to be Jewish and which often are obviously Christian.

First are texts of **rewritten scripture**. The Slavonic *Adam Octipartite* is a very brief text found in *2 Enoch* and elsewhere, including non-Slavonic sources, and contains speculations about the creation of Adam's body from eight elements and connects him with the four corners of the world via a Greek anagram of his name. It also survives in Latin and Old Irish versions. A very fragmentary Coptic *Enoch Apocryphon* includes an ascent of Enoch, angelic revelations granted to him, and interactions between him and his sister Tabitha, who is arguably the Sibyl. This late antique work is explicitly Christian and there is no reason to posit a Jewish original. A poorly preserved *Apocryphon of Jacob and Joseph* is found in several very fragmentary Greek manuscripts of the fifth and sixth century. The surviving content has to do with the story of Joseph, notably the return of his brothers to their father after their first encounter with Joseph in Egypt (Gen 42:29). In 1990 Ephraim Isaac published an Ethiopic *History of Joseph* that he believed went back to a Second Temple Jewish work, perhaps via Arabic and Syriac versions. Unknown to him, the Syriac text behind the Ethiopic had actually been published already in the late nineteenth century, as was recently noticed by Kristian Heal, and the Syriac *History of Joseph* is being translated for our project. It seems to be a Christian composition with considerable influence from Jewish traditions. Three additional accounts of the Maccabees are included in the project. 6 *Maccabees* is a Syriac poem which Sigrid Petersen argues shared a lost source with 4

*Maccabees*. 7 Maccabees is another Syriac work that focuses on the speeches of the mother the seven martyrs, Martha Shamoni, and her sons. And we may include as 8 Maccabees a brief account of the revolt drawing on Seleucid sources and now preserved in the *Chronicle* of John Malalas, §§206-207. (We are not including the two works known as *5 Maccabees*. One is merely a Syriac translation of book 6 of Josephus' *Jewish War* and the other is related, perhaps an Arabic epitome of the medieval *Josippon*.) A Narrative of Lamech survives in Slavonic and tells the story of Lamech's killing of the two men (Cain and a slave) in a version whose general contents were known in late antiquity and became quite popular thereafter. Since there are no other obvious candidates, we take this to be a translation of the Lamech apocryphon mentioned in the seventh century List of the Sixty Books. The Greek Story of Melchizedek survives in numerous manuscripts and translations, some of them ascribed incorrectly to Athanasius. It tells the story of the birth of Melchizedek, his conversion to monotheism and his calling down of the wrath of God upon his idolatrous and child-sacrificing neighbors and family; his retreat into the wilderness as a holy man; and how at God's behest Abraham found him and brought him back to civilization. This work draws on numerous Jewish traditions, particularly about Abraham, but it is clearly a Christian composition that explicitly advances a particular interpretation of the letter to the Hebrews. We are also including another Melchizedek Legend that survives in Greek in the Byzantine compendium known as the *Chronicon Pascale* and also in an Ethiopic version. The Questions of the Queen of Sheba survives in somewhat variant Syriac and Armenian versions which may go back ultimately to a Greek version. In it, the Queen asks Solomon questions about astronomy, biology, theology, and metaphysics, followed by a series of riddles.

Four Daniel **apocalypses** are included in the corpus. The Syriac Apocalypse of Daniel survives in a single manuscript and may have been composed in the early seventh century. It is an "historical apocalypse" that describes the experiences of Daniel in Babylon and presents revelations about coming messianic woes, the Antichrist, and the return of Christ and his reign in the earthly paradise. The Armenian Seventh Vision of Daniel also comes within our time frame. In addition, we are including two relatively early Greek Apocalypses of Daniel that are post-600 but clearly incorporate earlier material and provide context for the fragmentary Danielic oracles mentioned below.

We have also decided to include the Armenian translation of 4 Ezra as a work in its own right, since it is of considerable interest for the history of the interpretation of this ancient apocalypse. In addition, the shorter works 5 Ezra (2 Esdras 1-2) and 6 Ezra (2 Esdras 15-16), which survive only in the Latin translation of 2 Esdras as additions to 4 Ezra, are included. Although they were translated by Metzger in his "4 Ezra" contribution to the Charlesworth corpus, we judged that they merited treatment as individual works in their own right.

The Apocalypse of the Seven Heavens describes the fate of the righteous and the wicked as they are carried through the seven heavens to judgment. It is found complete in Anglo-Saxon and Middle-Irish versions and a Latin fragment from around 800 also survives. Its contents point to a date within our range. The Latin Vision of Ezra was translated in the Charlesworth *Pseudepigrapha* by J. R. Mueller and G. A. Robbins, but it was noted therein that a longer (and indeed, we now know, earlier) version was also known which seems to have been composed within our time frame, and it will be included in our corpus.

Next are **oracles**. A brief work called Jeremiah's Prophecy to Pashhur usually follows the Ethiopic version of the book of Jeremiah and is also known in Sahidic Coptic. In it the prophet predicts that the progeny of the hostile priest Pashhur of Jeremiah 20 will

condemn a righteous healer (i.e., Christ) for thirty pieces of silver and shall reap eternal condemnation as a result. The oracles of the *Tiburtine Sibyl* survive in medieval Greek and Latin manuscripts. They describe the Sibyl's visit Rome, where she interpreted the dream of nine suns, which had been dreamed by one hundred judges in the same night. The interpretation revealed that the nine suns represented nine human generations. The original work has been heavily developed in different directions in the Greek and Latin manuscript traditions, but a Greek *Vorlage* of the early sixth century C.E. can be recovered with confidence. Arguments have been made for a lost fourth-century original that can be partly reconstructed and even a lost Jewish-Christian original of the early second century, which, again, can be partly reconstructed. But these remain hypothetical. Another *Sibylline Oracle* also survives in Latin and on the basis of its content has been dated to the fourth or fifth century C.E. We are also including fragments of two *Danielic oracles* stemming from Byzantium and quoted in later texts.

Then come **magical and mantic works**. Two or three *Lunationes* (works of prognostication on the basis of the moon's location or appearance) attributed to the prophet Daniel will be included, as will the *Somniale Danielis*, an "alphabetic dream manual." The *Hygromanteia of Solomon* (or *Epistle to Rehoboam*) is a Greek astrological and magical treatise attributed to Solomon and addressing his son Rehoboam. And the *Selendromion of David and Solomon* is a *lunarium*, a set of divinatory guidelines for each day of a lunar month. This example of the genre has been heavily Judaized or at least heavily biblicalized, in that references to the pagan gods have been replaced with biblical events and characters. Crown's edition of the *Testament of Solomon* was translated by D. C. Duling in the Charlesworth corpus, but we believe the earliest manuscript of this work is worthy of treatment on its own. The so-called Vienna Papyrus is a fragmentary fifth or sixth century manuscript that seems to have been a scroll containing the material on the thirty-six decans (deities ruling the zodiac) of *TSol* 18 redacted into a form somewhat differently organized than in the *Testament of Solomon*. Redaction-critical observations have been advanced by Duling to argue for this manuscript being an excerpt from the larger work rather than an independent source later incorporated into the *Testament of Solomon*. A work known as *The Signs of the Judgment* gives a list of fifteen catastrophic omens of the eschaton. It survives in Armenian, Irish, Latin, and Hebrew versions (the Hebrew probably secondary to the Latin). The Armenian and Irish apocryphal traditions were not in contact, so a work surviving in both has a good case for being relatively early.

Three texts of debatable provenance – but to my mind probably Christian – which were published in the Charlesworth corpus, are being **revisited** for MOTP with important additional manuscript evidence. These are Coptic fragments of the *Life of Adam and Eve* (**rewritten scripture**), the *Testament of Job* (a **testament**), and, discovered only in 2009, the book of *2 Enoch* or (until now) Slavonic *Enoch* (an **apocalypse**).

A number of additional fragmentary texts are included, whose genres are often not well understood due to the paucity of what survives. Most of them can tentatively be placed in the category of **rewritten scripture**. New material from Qumran and elsewhere that may belong to the *Apocryphon of Ezekiel* has been recovered in recent years. The traditional five fragments of this work were covered in the Charlesworth corpus, but the new material merits a full re-examination of the text and all possible surviving sources for it. Likewise, additional material in Greek and Slavonic related to the *Assumption* and *Testament of Moses* has also been collected. These fragments are included in our corpus. The collected fragments of the *Apocryphon of Ezekiel* were translated for the Charlesworth Pseudepigrapha

and a long Latin fragment of a work assigned the title *Testament of Moses* was also translated therein, although the relationship of the latter to our Moses fragments is not always entirely clear. The new Ezekiel and Moses fragments are preserved in Christian contexts but some or all of them may stem from Jewish works. We are also including fragments from an *Elijah apocryphon or apocrypha*, and these remarks are largely appropriate to it as well. Other quotation fragments are included in the corpus, such as Justin the Gnostic's *Book of Baruch* quoted by Hippolytus (*Haer.* 5.20-22; 10.11); a quotation of a *Daniel Apocalypse* attributed to Papias preserved in Armenian; a fragment about Joseph and Aseneth quoted by Origen (PG 12:136); *The Paraphrase of Seth*, also quoted by Hippolytus (*Haer.* 5.18.1); another *Book of Baruch* quoted by Cyprian (*Test.* 3.29); lost works cited in the *Life of Mani*; a dubious reference to a book about *Zechariah and King Joash*, quoted by Sozomen (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 9.17); quotations from a *Book of the Covenant*, a *Heber Apocryphon*, a *Seth Apocryphon*, a narrative about Manasseh, two Abraham apocrypha (one of which may be a Greek quotation from the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, otherwise known only in Slavonic); and the story of the rich man and the precious stone.

Two long texts, one of which may come from a period technically after our cut-off point and one of which certainly does, are also included. Both clearly draw on interesting earlier material. The *Cave of Treasures* survives in a complete Syriac version and fragments of a Coptic one. It is a long retelling of the biblical narrative which begins with the six days of creation and ends with the resurrection of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles. It may have been composed before 600 C.E. and, in any case, it draws on earlier material including the *Testament of Adam*. The *Palaea Historica* is a Byzantine Greek composition from the ninth century or later which retells the Old Testament story from creation to King David, along with material about Isaiah and King Uzziah, a garbled version of the story of Tobit ("Bit"), and material from the apocryphal additions to Daniel. It includes a version of the *Story of Melchizedek* and the *Narrative of Lamech* mentioned above and draws on a great deal of earlier Jewish and Christian biblical legend.

#### *Indigenous Polytheistic ("Pagan") Texts*

Finally, a number of Old Testament pseudepigrapha in our corpus are clearly of polytheistic ("pagan") origin, although for various reasons they deal with characters known from the Hebrew Bible or are set in that period.

The *Balaam Text from Deir Alla* was excavated in Jordan, painted on a plaster wall in what may have been a cultic installation and written in an otherwise unknown Northwest Semitic dialect. It is a fragmentary narrative about the biblical seer Balaam, embedded with **prophetic oracles** of cosmic destruction. Another work of visionary oracles the *Oracle of Hystaspes*, a book attributed to the Persian king who was Zoroaster's mentor, but is actually a Hellenistic forgery, although perhaps a Zoroastrian one. It is quoted by the fourth-century Christian writer Lactantius and alluded to by other ancient writers. Although it does not technically deal with a biblical character, it exerted a great influence on early Christian apocalyptic speculations and it is included on analogy with the Sibylline Oracles.

Two **magical texts** are included. The *Eighth Book of Moses* is found in Greek Magical Papyrus XIII lines 1-734, a fourth-century C.E. manuscript containing three versions of Greek-pantheon polytheistic, Greco-Egyptian magical rites that are heavily influenced by Jewish tradition and show some familiarity with Christianity. The *Phylactery of Moses* is a magical amulet from the second or third century C.E., inscribed on copper and attributing a magical spell to Moses involving protection within the holy of holies.

A reference in the work of the first-century writer Vettius Valens to a book of astrological traditions by Abraham perhaps counts as **rewritten scripture**, as does the *Surid Legend*, a narrative set in the biblical era and it takes its launching point from a biblical story. It is preserved in Arabic by Muslim writers of the tenth and twelfth centuries who plausibly report that it was translated from a Coptic papyrus looted from a tomb at a Monastery near Saqqara. The Coptic seems to have been translated in turn from Greek. Surid had a vision of cosmic destruction before the Flood and had the two largest pyramids built, filled them with treasures and works of art, had all human knowledge inscribed on their walls, and was himself buried in the "Eastern" Pyramid, the Pyramid of Kheops.

Finally, there is a text that I have titled *The Mighty Og*. This is a Phoenician tomb inscription from Byblos dating to around 500 B.C.E. which has a curse in it that says that if someone disturbs the bones of the occupant, "the mighty Og will avenge me." This seems to refer to Og the giant, who is known in the biblical tradition as a giant conquered by the Israelites in the time of Moses (Deut 3:11). Og is also one of the Rephaim, a term that refers to one of the pre-Israelite groups in Canaan and also to ghosts, especially of the ancient kings (Isa 14:9).

### *Conclusion*

These texts are of importance for understanding the reception history of the Hebrew Bible in late antiquity and they frequently give us different perspectives from those found in the retrospectively canonical traditions of the rabbinic and Patristic literatures. Some of the earlier pseudepigrapha in our corpus are of interest for background to the New Testament and Tannaitic rabbinic texts, and a few of them seem to give us traditions that ran parallel to the Hebrew Bible rather than deriving from it. Our aim is to make these documents widely available with good English translations and accessible introductions so as to promote more scholarly study of them and to raise awareness of them among non-specialists as well. Our current aim is to turn in volume one, containing about half the texts, to the publisher early in 2010.