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Chapter 2

ABRAHAM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA*

Géza G. Xeravits

The patriarch Abraham is one of the most pre-eminent figures of the Old Testament. The “first Jew,” beneficiary of God’s promises and covenant is an exciting personality already according to the primary epical source where he first appears (Genesis). It is no wonder that later biblical texts and the authors of the literature of early Judaism were heavily interested in Abraham, and developed a rich tradition around him.¹ This contribution intends to explore texts that belong to a rather artificial category, the Deuterocanonical books or the Old Testament Apocrypha. These late Second Temple period writings do not appear in the Hebrew Bible, but found their way into the Septuagint and its parent versions.²

The evidence might be categorized into four distinct groups. The only text of the first group, Sirach 44:19-21, is a complex unit that draws on various themes. Texts belonging to the second group center on the story of the *Akedah*, the “binding of Isaac” (Genesis 22). The third category has the common *Leitmotif* “inheritance of the land,” whereas the fourth group does not have a central unifying theme.

* The author is indebted to the editors of the volume for their helpful comments on the first draft of this paper.

1. R.S. Hendel, *Remembering Abraham: Culture, Memory, and History in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 31–43; M. Goodman, G.H. van Kooten and J.T.A.G.M. van Ruiten, eds., *Abraham, the Nations, and the Hagarites: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Perspectives on Kinship with Abraham* (TBN 13; Leiden: Brill, 2010); J.D. Levenson, *Inheriting Abraham: The Legacy of the Patriarch in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012); G.A. Anderson and J.S. Kaminsky, eds., *The Call of Abraham: Essays on the Election of Israel in Honor of Jon D. Levenson* (CJAS 19; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013).

2. See e.g., L.T. Stuckenbruck, “Apocrypha and Septuagint. Exploring the Christian Canon”, in *Die Septuaginta und das frühe Christentum—The Septuagint and Christian Origins*, eds. S. Cauley et al. (WUNT 277; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 177–204.

Sirach 44:19-22

I begin this chapter with the most complicated witness, the book of Ben Sira. This book—collecting together rich and multifaceted traditions of early Judaism—was written in Hebrew at the beginning of the second century BCE and was translated into Greek by the author's grandson in 132 BCE, according to the Prologue of the Greek version.³ The book has two main parts: the first is a collection of sapiential sayings (chapters 1–43), while the second is a detailed *encomium* of the high priest Simeon that evokes many important figures from Israel's past (the Praise of the Ancestors, chs 44–50).⁴ The latter section contains a passage on Abraham.⁵ Below, I quote the entire passage according to the longer, Greek version⁶:

Abraham was the great father of a multitude of nations,
and no one has been found like him in glory.

²⁰He kept the law of the Most High,
and entered into a covenant with him;
he certified the covenant in his flesh,
and when he was tested he proved faithful.

²¹Therefore He [God] assured him with an oath
that the nations would be blessed through his offspring;
that he would make him as numerous as the dust of the earth,
and exalt his offspring like the stars,
and give them an inheritance from sea to sea
and from the river to the ends of the earth.

This passage alludes to various texts from Genesis.⁷ The opening title “father of a multitude of nations” (πατὴρ πλήθους ἐθνῶν) is taken from Gen. 17:4, the story of the covenant of circumcision between God and Abraham. The idea of covenant

3. On the dating, see e.g., P.W. Skehan and A.A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (AB 39; New York: Doubleday, 1987), 8–16.

4. On the latter, see, e.g. T.R. Lee, *Studies in the Form of Sirach 44–50* (SBLDS 75; Atlanta, GA: SBL, 1986); O. Mulder, *Simon the High Priest in Sirach 50: An Exegetical Study of the Significance of Simon the High Priest as Climax to the Praise of the Fathers in Ben Sira's Concept of the History of Israel* (JSJSup 78; Leiden: Brill, 2003).

5. See P.C. Beentjes, “Ben Sira 44:19-23—The Patriarchs: Text, Tradition, Theology”, in *Studies in the Book of Ben Sira*, eds. G.G. Xeravits et al. (JSJSup 127; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 209–28; B.C. Gregory, “Abraham as the Jewish Ideal: Exegetical Traditions in Sirach 44:19-21”, *CBQ* 70 (2008): 66–81; M. Marttila, *Foreign Nations in the Wisdom of Ben Sira: A Jewish Sage between Opposition and Assimilation* (DCLS 13; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 165-71.

6. The Hebrew MS B does not have a parallel text for bicolon 21cd. For the differences in the textual traditions, see Beentjes, “Ben Sira 44:19-23”, 209-12, 227.

7. Beentjes, “Ben Sira 44:19-23”, 215-16.

appears in the present context of Sirach twice, in cola 44:20bc. Colon 20c continues the allusion to Genesis 17, when speaking about the bodily sign of the covenant (“he certified the covenant in his flesh,” ἐν σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ ἔστησεν διαθήκην), because this chapter speaks about the circumcision. The more general formulation of 44:20b could refer either to Genesis 17 or to Genesis 15—both chapters deal with the issue of the covenant. The fact that Abraham is called “faithful” (πιστός) in colon 20d might suggest the impact of the latter passage, for the verb “believe” (πιστεύω) is its *Leitwort*.

Colon 20d of this text reminds the reader of the *Akedah*, when alluding to Abraham’s test (“when he was tested he proved faithful,” ἐν πειρασμῷ εὐρέθη πιστός). The creative combination of elements from Genesis 22 (“during testing,” ἐν πειρασμῷ) and Genesis 15 (“faithful,” πιστός) is worth noting, for this aspect places the *Akedah* into the perspective of covenant. Ben Sira is thus the first witness of a longer interpretative tradition, which will be seen later in this chapter (1 Macc. 2:52), and which occurs also in the New Testament (see Jas. 2:22-24).⁸ Most of 44:21 alludes to the continuation of the *Akedah* story, in some cases quoting verbatim Gen. 22:16-18.

Gen. 22:16-18

By myself I have sworn, says the Lord: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, [17] I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous (πληθύνων πληθυνῶ τὸ σπέρμα) as the stars (ὡς τοὺς ἀστέρας) of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, [18] and by your offspring shall gain blessing (ἐνευλογηθήσονται ἐν τῷ σπέρματι) all the nations (ἔθνη) of the earth for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.

Sir. 44:21a-d

Therefore He assured him with an oath that the nations would be blessed through his offspring (ἐνευλογηθῆναι ἔθνη ἐν σπέρματι αὐτοῦ); that he would make him as numerous (πληθύναι) as the dust of the earth, and exalt his offspring (τὸ σπέρμα) like the stars (ὡς ἄστρα).

The idea of Abraham’s numerous offspring resonates with texts from the “inheritance” group (below), and the closure of verse 21 develops further this theme. The verb “inherit” ([κατα]κληρονομέω) recalls the vocabulary of Gen. 22:17, but what follows is in fact nearly exactly borrowed from Ps. 71:8 (MT 72:8),

8. E. Kessler, *Bound by the Bible: Jews, Christians and the Sacrifice of Isaac* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 38, 60–62. Late antique Jewish and Christian exegetical traditions on this chapter are treated in G. Stemberger, “Genesis 15 in Rabbinic and Patristic Interpretation”, in *The Exegetical Encounter between Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity*, eds. E. Grynpeou et al. (JCPS 18; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 143–62.

a psalm which relates the duties of the ideal king and his splendid rule over Israel and the nations.⁹ The use of a royal psalm with reference to Abraham shows another interesting exegetical combination of different sources. Although nothing explicitly indicates that Ben Sira would interpret Abraham or his descendants in connection with the idea of kingship, here again the impact of Genesis 17 is probable.¹⁰ In 17:6 God promises to Abraham that “kings shall come from you” (βασιλεῖς ἐκ σοῦ ἐξελεύσονται). The image of Abraham as a progenitor of rulers is complemented here by the view that he himself was a kind of royal personage. In the Septuagint version of Genesis, this view is reinforced by a reading of 23:6. Here Abraham intends to acquire a burying place for Sarah, and the sons of Chet label him: “a king from a god among us” (βασιλεὺς παρὰ θεοῦ εἰ σὺ ἐν ἡμῖν). This feature reflects the idea of the exaltation of figures of the past, a common trend in Second Temple Jewish literature.¹¹

The Akedah Group

Abraham’s sacrifice, as related in Genesis 22, is one of the most important biblical legends. After his extreme obedience to God—which might have included the sacrifice of his beloved son, Isaac—Abraham got the promise of numerous offspring.¹²

In the Book of Judith, written during the Hasmonaean period,¹³ chapter 8 contains the introductory address of the heroine. In her speech Judith warns the leaders of Bethulia to trust in God, and do not surrender the city to the enemy. She rebukes them not to test God (“who are you to put God to the test today,” τίνας ἐστὲ ὑμεῖς οἱ ἐπειράσατε τὸν θεὸν ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ σήμερον; Jdt. 8:12). At the end of her address she evokes the example of the forefathers (Jdt. 8:25–27). The key term of this closing exhortation is, again, “to test” (πειράζω); nevertheless, in this case, it is God who tests the patriarchs. In Judith’s approach, God deserves thanks for testing humans (“let us give thanks to the Lord our God, who is putting us to the test as he did our ancestors,” εὐχαριστήσωμεν κυρίῳ τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν ὃς πειράζει ἡμᾶς

9. See, e.g. F.L. Hossfeld and E. Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 202–20.

10. Gregory, “Abraham as the Jewish Ideal”, 78–79.

11. In this connection it is enough to mention Moses, who is also presented with royal treats in a number of sources. See W.A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (NovTSup 14; Leiden: Brill, 1967), *passim*; on related issues in the Pentateuch, see D. Matthews, *Royal Motifs in the Pentateuchal Portrayal of Moses* (LHBOTS 571; London: T & T Clark, 2012).

12. On the Akedah see e.g., E. Noort and E.J.C. Tigchelaar, eds., *The Sacrifice of Isaac: The Akedah (Genesis 22) and Its Interpretations* (TBN 4; Leiden: Brill, 2002); Kessler, *Bound by the Bible*; Levenson, *Inheriting Abraham*, 66–112.

13. D.L. Gera, *Judith* (CEJL; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 26–44.

καθὰ καὶ τοὺς πατέρας ἡμῶν: Jdt. 8:25). Judith's speech thus uses the idea of testing as a kind of frame, which creates a sharp contrast between her contemporaries (who test God in their ignorance) and the patriarchs (who remained steadfast in testing).

The appearance of Abraham and Isaac is remarkable in this context. Jdt. 8:26a reads "Remember what he did with Abraham, and how he tested Isaac." Concerning Abraham, the verse uses a rather neutral verb "to do" (ποιέω), which is specified by the previous verse "to test" (πειράζω), whereas concerning Isaac it uses the verb "to test"; however, in Genesis this verb does not refer to Isaac. The author of Judith interprets thus the *Akedah* as a test for both patriarchs, attributing an active role to Isaac, too.

The next source is 1 Maccabees, written at the end of the second century.¹⁴ 1 Macc. 2 recounts Mattathias' deeds, testament (2:49-68),¹⁵ and death. In the course of his final exhortation, the dying hero enumerates the example of outstanding personalities from Israel's past, among others, Abraham (1 Macc. 2:52): "Was not Abraham found faithful when tested, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness?" Similarly to what was said in Ben Sira, but in a more eloquent manner, the author of this verse interestingly combines elements of two distinct biblical sources. At the first part of the sentence, the term "testing" (ἐν πειρασμῷ) obviously refers to Genesis 22. Immediately after this, reference is made to Abraham's faith ("found faithful," εὐρέθη πιστός)—a concept absent in the *Akedah*—but, instead, it creates an allusion to another quintessential episode of the Abraham cycle, viz. Gen. 15:1-6, of which the faith of the patriarch is one of the key concepts: "and Abram believed God" (καὶ ἐπίστευσεν Ἀβραμ τῷ θεῷ: Gen. 15:6a). This impression is verified by the fact that the second half of the sentence contains a direct quotation of Gen. 15:6b: "and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην: 1 Macc. 2:52b).

This combination of separate stories from Genesis is highly creative. In Gen. 15:1-6 Abraham's problem is that he does not have a child; he labels himself "childless" (ἄτεκνος, 15:2), and complains that God did not give him descendants (ἐπειδὴ ἔμοι οὐκ ἔδωκας σπέρμα, 15:3). Following Abraham's doubt, a divine

14. A. Momigliano, "The Date of the 1st Book of Maccabees", in *L'Italie préromaine et la Rome républicaine. Mélanges offerts à J. Heurgon* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1976), 657-61; J.A. Goldstein, *1 Maccabees* (AB 41; New York: Doubleday, 1976), 62-89; K. Berthelot, *In Search of the Promised Land?: The Hasmonean Dynasty Between Biblical Models and Hellenistic Diplomacy* (JASup 24; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2017), 67-71.

15. T. Hieke, "The Role of Scripture in the Last Words of Mattathias (1 Macc 2:49-70)", in *The Books of the Maccabees. History, Theology, Ideology*, eds. G.G. Xeravits et al. (JSJSup 118; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 61-74; F.V. Reiterer, "Die Vergangenheit als Basis für die Zukunft. Mattatias' Lehre für seine Söhne aus der Geschichte in 1 Makk 2:52-60", in *The Books of the Maccabees. History, Theology, Ideology*, eds. G.G. Xeravits et al. (JSJSup 118; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 75-100.

speech displays a promise of a child (15:5), and as an answer Abraham believes (15:6). The promised child finally is born (21:1-2), and during the test of Genesis 22 the life of this child seems to be in danger.

The third source, the book of Wisdom, is hard to date. It was very probably written in Alexandria in the decades around the turn of the era, but its dating ranges from the second century BCE to the mid-first century CE.¹⁶ The third main part of the book, the so-called “book of History”, begins with two hymns.¹⁷ The first deals with the presence of Wisdom in the lives of the forefathers (from Adam to Joseph: Wisd. 10:1-14), while the second concentrates on the exodus of the Jews from Egypt (Wisd. 10:15-21). The first hymn mentions seven righteous figures and their antagonists, without naming them. Verse 5 apparently relates to Abraham: “She [Wisdom] also, when the nations in wicked agreement had been put to confusion/ recognized the righteous man and preserved him blameless before God/ and kept him strong in the face of his compassion for his child.” The term “righteous man” (δίκαιος) is recurrent in this context: except the first man, each protagonist of the hymn is denoted as such. The third colon of this verse obviously refers to the *Akedah*, the expression “compassion for his child” (ἐπὶ τέκνου σπλάγγχνους) makes this clear. Wisdom guards (φυλάσσω) Abraham, however, in an unexpected manner; it is she, who keeps him strong *against* his *compassion* (ἐπὶ τέκνου σπλάγγχνους ἰσχυρόν ἐφύλαξεν).¹⁸ According to this interpretation, divine providence thus strengthens Abraham’s obedience during the test. A similar view is expressed in 4 *Maccabees*, which was composed somewhat later than the book of Wisdom.¹⁹ Here the mother of the seven martyrs is told: “But sympathy for her children did not sway the mother of the young men; she was of the same mind as Abraham” (ἀλλ’ οὐχὶ τὴν Ἀβραὰμ ὁμόψυχον τῶν νεανίσκων μητέρα μετεκίνησεν συμπάθεια τέκνων: 14:20). According to this tradition, paternal love was the *par excellence* characteristic of the patriarch and a trait whose emulation was thought to be desirable.

The fourth source contains a subtle, intertextual reference to Genesis 22. As Tzvi Novick demonstrated, chapter 6 of the book of Tobit—composed before the first half of the second century²⁰—contains a series of allusions to the *Akedah*.²¹ Here, however, the parallel between Tobiah and Isaac is much more important than the one between Azariah (Raphael) and Abraham.

16. D. Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon* (AB 43; New York: Doubleday, 1979), 20–25.

17. On the structure of the book, see, e.g. J.M. Reese, “Plan and Structure in the Book of Wisdom”, *CBQ* 27 (1965): 391–99; A.G. Wright, “The Structure of Wisdom 11–19”, *CBQ* 27 (1965): 28–34; A.G. Wright, “The Structure of the Book of Wisdom”, *Biblica* 48 (1967): 165–84.

18. A.T. Glicksman, *Wisdom of Solomon 10: A Jewish Hellenistic Reinterpretation of Early Israelite History through Sapiential Lenses* (DCLS 9; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 117.

19. D.A. deSilva, *4 Maccabees: Introduction and Commentary on the Greek Text in Codex Sinaiticus* (SCS; Leiden: Brill, 2006), xiv–xvii.

20. On the dating of Tobit, see e.g., J.A. Fitzmyer, *Tobit* (CEJL; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 50–52.

21. T. Novick, “Biblicized Narrative: On Tobit and Genesis 22”, *JBL* 126 (2007): 755–64.

To sum up these sources, one might conclude that the Old Testament Apocrypha display a vivid interest in the *Akedah* story. All of them have somewhat different interpretative agendas, nevertheless common trends may also be noted. Ben Sira, Judith and 1 Maccabees are common in underlining the perspective of testing; the verb *πειράζω* or the noun *πειρασμός* appear in each context. Nevertheless, Judith differs from the two other books in referring to the patriarchs' test. When speaking about the testing of Isaac, Judith assigns, albeit tacitly, an active role to Isaac during Abraham's sacrifice. This interpretation develops in Jewish writings of the first century CE, such as the Pseudo-Philonic *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* (32.3), Josephus (*Ant.* 1.232) or 4 Maccabees (7.14). Similarly, when Tobit uses this story from the perspective of Isaac, it anticipates this kind of interpretation. Finally, the book of Wisdom has a completely different understanding of the original story. Here, with the help of Wisdom, Abraham proves to be victorious over his parental tenderness. Abraham serves in these stories as an example: an ideal figure who remains steadfast during his test.

The "Inheritance" Group

Abraham is continuously promised that his offspring will inherit the land (cf. Gen. 12:7; 13:15-17; 15:18-20; 17:8; etc.). This motif appears throughout in the texture of the Abraham cycle in Genesis.²² A variant of this motif, the eschatological gathering of the Israelites into this land, is a very familiar theme in Second Temple literature.²³

In the book of Tobit, chapter 4 relates the sapiential instructions of Tobit, before his son, Tobiah, departs to foreign lands. In course of this exhortation, Tobit admonishes against exogamous marriage (Tob. 4:12-13).²⁴ As a basis of the recommended marital praxis, Tobit evokes the example of the patriarchs, as follows: "Remember, my son that Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, our ancestors of old, all took wives from among their kindred." The continuation of this sentence suggests that endogamy was the source of blessing, and the promise of the land: "and they were blessed in their children, and their posterity will inherit the land" (καὶ εὐλογήθησαν ἐν τοῖς τέκνοις αὐτῶν καὶ τὸ σπέρμα αὐτῶν κληρονομήσει γῆν,

22. Two important passages are treated in P.R. Williamson, *Abraham, Israel and the Nations: The Patriarchal Promise and its Covenantal Development in Genesis* (JSOTSup 315; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000). See furthermore, Levenson, *Inheriting Abraham*, 36–65; H.D. Preuss, *Old Testament Theology* (OTL; Louisville: WJK, 1995), Vol. 1, 119.

23. See e.g., M.E. Fuller, *The Restoration of Israel: Israel's Re-gathering and the Fate of the Nations in Early Jewish Literature and Luke-Acts* (BZNW 138; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012).

24. See e.g., Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 172–74; T. Hieke, "Endogamy in the Book of Tobit, Genesis, and Ezra-Nehemiah", in *The Book of Tobit. Text, Tradition, Theology*, eds. G.G. Xeravits et al. (JSJSup 98; Leiden: Brill 2005), 103–20. The sapiential instructions of the book are treated in F.M. Macatangay, *The Wisdom Instructions in the Book of Tobit* (DCLS 12; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011).

Tob. 4:12c). Seeing the date of Tobit's emergence when Hellenism started to grow within Judaism, the paradigm of the patriarchs has a special strength.²⁵

In the book of Tobit the theme of Abraham's inheritance reappears later, in chapter 14. This chapter contains the farewell speech of the dying Tobit, in which he exhorts his son, Tobias, once again. In his address Tobit treats, among other things, eschatological issues, including the future of just Israelites. Verse 14:7 imagines that all nations will praise God, and the Israelites will experience joyful exaltation. The *Codex Sinaiticus* manuscript version of Tobit here also contains an expanded, alternative, text.²⁶ This version is not interested in the gentiles; the expression "all nations" (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη) is missing. *Sinaiticus*, instead, focuses exclusively on the Israelites; these "will be gathered together; they will go to Jerusalem and live in safety forever in the land of Abraham, and it will be given over to them" (Tob. 14:7b). This clause is without parallel in the shorter version of the book; one of the fragmentary Aramaic Tobit manuscripts from Qumran, however, probably contains a similar reading (4Q196 19, 1, written between 50–25 BCE).²⁷ The place of the eschatological gathering is called "the land of Abraham" (ἐν τῇ γῇ Ἀβρααμ), which is an obvious Deuteronomic allusion,²⁸ and this land "will be given" (παραδοθήσεται) to the Israelites.²⁹ Thus, the figure of Abraham and his inheritance appears in this context as an eschatological marker.

The book of Baruch is a short and complicated early Jewish work. Its final version was composed very probably in the second half of the first century BCE, but the traditions behind its text were widely circulated in late Second Temple times.³⁰ Baruch 1:14–3:8 is a penitential prayer, a genre used with predilection in late biblical and extra-biblical literature.³¹ The prayer's structure is tripartite: after

25. Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 112; Hieke, "Endogamy".

26. On the textual witnesses of Tobit, see R. Hanhart, *Text und Textgeschichte des Buches Tobit* (MSU 17; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984). A commentary on this version is R.J. Littman, *Tobit: The Book of Tobit in Codex Sinaiticus* (SCS; Leiden: Brill, 2008).

27. Edition of the Qumranic Tobit manuscripts: J.A. Fitzmyer, *Qumran Cave 4: XIV, Parabiblical Texts, Part 2*, eds. M. Broshi et al. (DJD 19; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 7–76.

28. A.A. Di Lella, "The Deuteronomic Background of the Farewell Discourse in Tob 14:3–11", *CBQ* 41 (1979): 382–83.

29. See Fuller, *The Restoration of Israel*, 26–32.

30. On the dating of the book, see S.A. Adams, *Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah: A Commentary Based on the Texts in Codex Vaticanus* (SEPT; Leiden: Brill, 2014), 4–6.

31. See the three volumes of M.J. Boda, D.K. Falk, and R.A. Werline, eds., *Seeking the Favor of God. 1: The Origins of Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism* (SBLEJL 21; Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2006); M.J. Boda, D.K. Falk, and R.A. Werline, eds., *Seeking the Favor of God. 2: The Development of Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism* (SBLEJL 22; Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2007); M.J. Boda, D.K. Falk, and R.A. Werline, eds., *Seeking the Favor of God. 3: The Impact of Penitential Prayer Beyond Second Temple Judaism* (SBLEJL 23; Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2008).

an admission of guilt two petitions follow.³² The closing section of the first petition (2:27-35) is basically a complex, pseudo-Mosaic quotation of various scriptural passages.³³ The author/compiler of this passage has an eschatological vision following the Deuteronomistic sin-exile-restoration pattern. Baruch 2:34 deals with the return of the exiled Israelites; God will bring them home (ἀποστρέψω αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν γῆν), and they will rule over the land (κυριεύσουσιν αὐτῆς). The destination of the homecoming is the patriarchs' inheritance, the land that God swore to give, among others, to Abraham (ἦν ὥμοσα τοῖς πατράσιν αὐτῶν τῷ Ἀβραάμ καὶ τῷ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ τῷ Ἰακώβ). Again, the figure of Abraham marks the eschatological fulfilment of the divine promises.

To sum up this section, two texts in this group—Tobit 14 and Baruch 2—are common in assigning the importance of Abraham's inheritance to the eschatological future. This view is familiar in the post-exilic books of the Old Testament and in early Jewish literature,³⁴ beginning with the book of Ezekiel (especially chapters 38–39).³⁵ The labelling of the goal of Israel's eschatological regathering as the land of Abraham emphasizes the importance of the patriarch. Instead of this eschatological orientation, the interest of Tob. 4 focuses on the present, and the idea of Abraham's inheritance encourages Tobit's program of endogamous marriage. The fact that the patriarchs—including Abraham—serve as examples for this custom stresses its significance in a period when "classical" Israelite values were questioned again and again.

Passages with Various Purposes

When treating the events under the high priest Jonathan, 1 Maccabees records that he reconfirmed treaties with Rome and Sparta (1 Macc. 12:1-23; cf. *Ant.* 13.164–70).³⁶ In this section the author of the book inserts two official letters, creating the

32. The structure is treated in A. Kabasele Mukenge, *L'unité littéraire du livre de Baruch* (Etudes Bibliques N.S. 38; Paris: Gabalda, 1998), 111–17; Adams, *Baruch*, 60–61.

33. See S.A. Adams, "Reframing Scripture: A Fresh Look at Baruch's So-Called 'Citations'", in *Scriptural Authority in Early Judaism and Ancient Christianity*, eds. G.G. Xeravits et al. (DCLS 16; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 63–83; Adams, *Baruch*, 86–87.

34. J.M. Scott, ed., *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives* (JSJSup 72; Leiden: Brill, 2001) 41–221.

35. See W.A. Tooman, *Gog of Magog: Reuse of Scripture and Compositional Technique in Ezekiel 38–39* (FAT 2.52; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011); W. Pikor, *The Land of Israel in the Book of Ezekiel* (LHBOTS 667; London: T & T Clark, 2018).

36. See V. Kókai Nagy, "Die Beziehung der Makkabäer zu fremden Nationen—die Bündnisse mit Rom und Sparta", in *The Stranger in Ancient and Mediaeval Jewish Tradition*, eds. G.G. Xeravits et al. (DCLS 4; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 107–17; J. Sievers, "Josephus, First Maccabees, Sparta, the Three Haireseis—and Cicero", *JSJ* 32 (2001): 241–51.

impression that they are original, yet they seem to be pure fiction.³⁷ Verses 12:20-23 purport to be a letter of the Spartan king Arius to the high priest Onias. The king reports that according to their archives (“it has been found in writing,” εὑρέθη ἐν γραφῇ, 12:21) Spartans and Jews are brothers (ἀδελφοί), because both are descendants of Abraham (ἐκ γένους Ἀβρααμ). The intention of the author with this passage is very probably to exalt the Jews, establishing for them a noble brotherhood among the nations. At the same time, he exalts the figure of Abraham, too, when creating the impression that an important nation acknowledges him as an ancestor. Note that for Josephus the latter detail is not important; he speaks about the relationship between Jews and Spartans (“friendship and kindred,” φιλίαν καὶ συγγένειαν, *Ant.* 13.164), without, however, mentioning Abraham.³⁸

2 Maccabees, written in the mid-second century BCE,³⁹ opens with two letters.⁴⁰ The first one, a festal letter (1:1-9), is addressed to the Egyptian Jews about the feast of the dedication of the Temple. After a salutation the letter displays a prayer for blessing (1:2-5), composed as a series of petitions. Verse 2 contains the first two petitions; of which the first is a general wish of divine benevolence, whereas the second reads: “may he remember his covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, his faithful servants.” This text is heavily influenced by Pentateuchal passages.⁴¹ The two important concepts in this clause are: the idea of the covenant (“may he remember his covenant,” μνησθῆι τῆς διαθήκης αὐτοῦ), and the labelling of the patriarchs as “his faithful servants” (τῶν δούλων αὐτοῦ τῶν πιστῶν). Behind these terms lies a complex exegesis of Genesis 15: Abraham believes God (καὶ ἐπίστευσεν Ἀβραμ τῷ θεῷ, 15:6a), and this is followed by a passage relating God’s covenant with Abraham (15:7-21); 2 Maccabees extends both of these ideas to all three patriarchs. This is partly due to the influence of several Pentateuchal passages; these passages speak about the covenant established with all the three: “and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” (καὶ ἐμνήσθη ὁ θεὸς τῆς διαθήκης αὐτοῦ τῆς πρὸς Ἀβρααμ καὶ Ἰσαακ καὶ Ἰακωβ) Exod. 2:24; “and I will remember the covenant with Jacob and the covenant with Isaac and the covenant with Abraham,” (καὶ μνησθήσομαι τῆς διαθήκης Ἰακωβ καὶ τῆς διαθήκης Ἰσαακ καὶ τῆς διαθήκης Ἀβρααμ) Lev. 26:42). The plural form “faithful servants” is due to a tendency of harmonization with the first part of the sentence.

37. J.R. Bartlett, *1 Maccabees* (GAP; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 95–97.

38. Josephus’ image of Abraham is treated in L.H. Feldman, *Josephus’s Interpretation of the Bible* (HCS 27; Berkeley: UCLA Press, 1998), 223–89.

39. D.R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees* (CEJL; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 11–15.

40. E.J. Bickerman, “A Jewish Festal Letter of 124 B.C.E.”, in *Studies in Jewish and Christian History*, ed. E.J. Bickerman (AJEC 68; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 408–31; V. Parker, “The Letters in II Maccabees: Reflexions on the Book’s Composition”, *ZAW* 119 (2007): 386–90; Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 519–29.

41. On the biblical background, see J.A. Goldstein, *II Maccabees* (AB 41A; New York: Doubleday, 1983), 142.

Finally, a passage from the book of Judith deserves attention. After the beheading of Holophernes, Judith returns to Bethulia, and relates to her compatriots the events. Then, the people bless God (Jdt. 13:17), and Ozias blesses the heroine (13:18-20). The beginning of Ozias' blessing alludes to the meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek as reported in Genesis 14.

Gen. 14:19-20

Blessed be (εὐλογημένος) Abram by God Most High (τῷ θεῷ τῷ ὑψίστῳ), who created the heaven and the earth (ὃς ἐκτίσεν τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν); and blessed be God (καὶ εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς) Most High, who has delivered your enemies (ἐχθρῶν) into your hand!

Jdt. 13:18

You are blessed (εὐλογητῇ), o daughter, by the Most High God (τῷ θεῷ τῷ ὑψίστῳ) above all other women on earth; and blessed be (καὶ εὐλογημένος) the Lord God (ὁ θεός), who created the heavens and the earth (ὃς ἐκτίσεν τοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ τὴν γῆν), who has guided you to cut off the head of the leader of our enemies (ἐχθρῶν).

One might find it strange that Judith is compared to a male hero. However, this feature characterizes the presentation of Judith throughout her book. Jan van Henten demonstrated, for example, how the figure of Judith was modelled on characteristics that remind the reader of Moses, whereas József Zsengellér detected Davidic traits in the presentation of the heroine.⁴² The comparison with Abraham here is based on the fact that both passages have the same context. In both cases there is:

1. A victorious protagonist. In Genesis, this is Abraham, who defeated the coalition of great kings, and rescued his nephew, Lot. In Judith, the victorious protagonist is Judith, who defeated Holophernes and rescued the people of Bethulia.
2. The hero/ine after his/her triumphal return receives a blessing from an authoritative figure. In Genesis, this is the mysterious Melchizedek, priest-king of the city of Salem. In Judith, this is Ozias, chief leader of the city of Bethulia.

These common characteristics substantiate the correspondence between Abraham and Judith. The author nevertheless softens this unusual parallel, and strengthens the female orientation of the passage in alluding to another pretext. The beginning

42. J.W. van Henten, "Judith as a Female Moses: Judith 7–13 in the Light of Exodus 17; Numbers 20 and Deuteronomy 33:8–11", in *Reflections on Theology and Gender*, eds. A. Brenner et al. (Kampen: Kok, 1994), 33–48; J. Zsengellér, "Judith as a Female David: Beauty and Body in Religious Context", in *A Pious Seductress: Studies in the Book of Judith*, ed. G.G. Xeravits (DCLS 14; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 186–210. On these characteristics, see furthermore C. Rakel, *Judit—über Schönheit, Macht und Widerstand im Krieg: Eine feministisch-intertextuelle Lektüre* (BZAW 334; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 248–65.

of the verse “you are blessed . . . above all other women on earth” (εὐλογητὴ σύ . . . παρὰ πάσας τὰς γυναῖκας τὰς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς) echoes the Song of Deborah, the praise of Jael (εὐλογηθεῖη ἐκ γυναικῶν Ιαηλ, Judg. 5:24). This pretext influences once more the present literary unit, in 14:7, where Achior praises Judith.⁴³

Conclusion

The Old Testament Apocrypha shows an interest in the figure of Abraham; his figure appears at least once in every book of the collection. Despite the fact that the Apocrypha is a late and artificial category, and the collective books have different dates, authorship, and settings, this does not seem to have significant consequences for the reception of Abraham within the literature. At the least, the data brought together in this paper suggest the continued popularity of Abraham in the Judaism of the second/first centuries BCE.

Nevertheless, some convergent features within the corpus are noteworthy. The texts often use the same biblical passages as points of reference. The most important of them are Genesis 15 and 22, both of which have a rich history of reception within early Judaism and ancient Christianity. The Abraham figure of these pretexts is used as an example of faith, steadfastness, and trust in God. Elaboration of the *Akedah* story has a special place, for it appears in more than half of the corpus, in conformity with its popularity in the literature of the period.⁴⁴

Another convergent feature of some of the texts is the theme of inheritance of the land. In Tobit 4, the patriarch serves, again, as an exemplary figure, whereas the eschatologically oriented passages exalt his personality. Similar tendencies occur in Sirach 44 or in 1 Maccabees 12. The first refers to Abraham by using a royal psalm, while the second exalts his figure in stating that he is a progenitor of not only the Jews, but also of such an important nation as the Spartans.

Finally, the thematic variability of these passages must be noted. Despite the converging tendencies, they display a rich and vivid exegesis of biblical sources, in which various aspects of the Abrahamic traditions are emphasized. These features establish the patriarch as one of the most important biblical figures for the communities that wrote and used these texts.

43. Gera, *Judith*, 409 and 416.

44. See chapters 4–6 of this volume.