

# Testament Of Adam

## Information on Testament of Adam

James Charlesworth writes (*The Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research*, pp. 91-92) :

The Syriac and Arabic texts were edited, with critical notes to the Ethiopic, by C. Bezold (*Die Schatzhöhle*. 2 vols. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1883-1888), and the Syriac text of B. M. Add. 25875 was translated into English by E. A. Wallis Budge (*The Book of the Cave of Treasures*. London: Religious Tract Society, 1927). Two Arabic manuscripts of a different recension of the Cave of Treasures, one on Mt. Sinai and the other in Cambridge, were brought to the attention of scholars by M. D. Gibson. She edited and translated the former and appended a description of the latter (*Apocrypha Arabica* [Studia Sinaitica 8] London: CUP, 1901).

The present form of the work dates from the sixth century A.D. (Budge, pp. xi, 21f.), but the original is from about the fourth century, and was written somewhere near Edessa in Syriac because of the exalted concept of that language (see Budge, pp. 22f., 132, 230; Gibson, p. 34).

For specialists on the Pseudepigrapha the main question is not how later sources, like the Book of the Bee, were dependent on the Cave of the Treasures (see E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Bee*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1886), but how it used and preserved earlier Jewish and Jewish-Christian writings, e.g. Jubilees and Life of Adam and Eve.

Worthy of special note is a text often appended to the Cave of Treasures (contrast Gibson's text), the Testament of Adam, which was edited from the Syriac by M. Kmosko ('Testamentum Patris Nostri Adam,' *Patrologia Syriaca*, ed. R. Graffin. Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1907. Vol. 2, pp. 1306-60), and from a different recension in Arabic by Gibson (pp. 12-17 [in Arabic numbering]). An English translation is found in Budge's *The Book of the Cave of Treasures* (cf. the different recension translated by Gibson, pp. 13-17). This pseudepigraphon evidences many features that suggest a date of composition in the late second century A.D. The rewriting of tradition in the second half in which Cain slays his brother because of jealousy over Lud, their sister (cf. Budge, *Cave of Treasures*, p. 70; Gibson, p. 17) may reflect early Syrian asceticism, perhaps that of the Encratites. Even earlier is the first half, because of the conspicuous absence of Christian elements and the general early Jewish tone (cf. the ending with 4Q Morgen- und Abendgebete). Significantly, the Greek portions preserve only this first section (see the editions mentioned by A.-M. Denis, no. 24, p. 11, n. 37).

The Testament of Adam is a good candidate for inclusion within the Pseudepigrapha because of its date and apparent Jewish character. The Cave of Treasures should not be so included, because it is beyond the chronological limits and is permeated with relatively late Christian ideas (e.g., "Eden is the Holy Church;" Budge, *Cave of Treasures*, p. 62; Gibson, p. 8).

The purpose of the Cave of Treasures is to relate the "succession of families from Adam to Christ." After the expulsion from Eden, Adam and Eve dwell in a cave on the top of one of the mountains near Paradise, which has been shut. The cave is called "Cave of Treasures" because Adam places therein gold, myrrh, and frankincense "from the skirts of the mountain of Paradise."

S. E. Robinson writes: "The three sections of the Testament of Adam were not written at the same time, but the final Christian redaction, in which the testament took on its present form, probably occurred in the middle or late third century A.D. This tentative date for the final redaction of the Testament of Adam is supported by several bits of evidence. First, the testament is familiar with the Christian traditions found in the New Testament and must therefore be dated after, say, A.D. 100. Second, part of the Prophecy section is quoted in the Syriac *Transitus Mariae*, which is dated in the late fourth century. Third, the Testament of Adam demonstrates a literary relationship at one point with the Coptic Apocalypse of Elijah, which is dated in the third century A.D. Ordinarily this might be due to copying at some later date, but here the Testament of Adam seems to preserve the passage (a description of the signs of the Messiah) in a more original form than does the Apocalypse of Elijah and should probably not be dated after that document." (*The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, p. 990)

## Fragment 2, shorter recension

Translated from the edition prepared by M. Kmosko, "Testamentum Patris Nostri Adam," in *Patrologia Syriaca* (3 vols.; Turnhout: Brepols, 1907), 2:1339-46.

Adam said to Seth his son: 'I have heard, my son, that God will come to the world after a long time. He will be conceived by a virgin and wear a body and be born like a human being and mature like a child. He will perform signs and wonders upon earth—walking upon the waves of the sea, rebuking the winds so that they abate, beckoning the waves that they cease (rolling), opening (the eyes) of the blind, cleansing lepers, causing the deaf to hear, giving speech to the mute, straightening those who are bent, strengthening the paralyzed, finding the lost, expelling devils, casting out demons.

For He said to me in Paradise after I had plucked some of the fruit which concealed Death within it: "Adam, Adam, do not fear. You wished to become a god. I shall make you a god, not now, but after a period of many years. I shall deliver you over to Death, and the maggot and worm will consume your body."

I answered, saying to him, "Why, my Lord?" He said to me: "Because you hearkened to the words of the serpent, you and your descendants shall serve as food for the serpent. But after a brief time mercy shall be shown to you, for you were created in My image, and I will not abandon you to waste away in Sheol. For your sake I shall be born from the virgin Miriam, and for your sake I shall experience Death and enter the realm of Death. For your sake I shall fashion new heavens, and I shall set your descendants in (positions of) authority among them. After three days in the grave, I shall resuscitate the body which I wore on your account, and I shall set you at the right hand of My divine station, and I shall make you divine like you wished. I accept (this) freely, and shall restore you and your descendants, for this is the justice of heaven."

I (also) learned, my son Seth, that a Flood will come and purge the entire earth on account of the descendants of Cain your brother. Because of (his) jealousy for Leubada your sister, he murdered your brother Abel. Similarly, due to your mother Eve, sins came into existence. And after the Flood, the years for the (continued) appearance of the world will be 6000 years. And then its end will come.'

And I Seth wrote down this testament. My father died and was buried east of Paradise, opposite the first city to be built on earth, which was named Enoch. Adam was accompanied (to the grave) by angels and heavenly powers because he was created in the image of God. The sun and moon grew dark, and there was thick darkness for seven days. We sealed the testament and placed it in the Cave of Treasures with the offerings which Adam had brought out from Paradise—gold, myrrh, and incense. And the Magi, the sons of kings, came and removed them, and brought them to the Son of God in the cave at Bethlehem of Judaea.

Finished is the testament of our ancestor Adam.