

BOOK REVIEW

Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures – Volume 2, Richard Bauckham, James R. Davila and Alexander Panayotov, eds. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2025), 694 pp. Reviewed by Simcha Rosenberg.

This is the long awaited second volume to the collection put out by Eerdmans back in 2013 as a follow up to the classic two-volume collection, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (OTP; 1983-85), edited by James H. Charlesworth, now paralleling that work with its own two thick volumes. The term Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, from the Greek word meaning “false title,” refers to a text which falsely claims to be written by a biblical character or to give an account of events from the biblical era, particularly adding episodes or details not mentioned in the Bible. These works were considered significant and perhaps even sacred in ancient times, yet they often represent alternative views than those destined to become part of what may be described as "normative Judaism" today. Over the years, scholars have identified more of these works, some complete and many just a few pages from a lost work, which are collected in this volume. As before, this work does not use the definite article when referring to the Pseudepigrapha, to make it clear that this is not, and indeed there cannot be, a definitive collection of Pseudepigrapha, because there is no canon of this material and new discoveries are still being made.

Some of the works here are “quotation fragments,” which are excerpts of other works, which may or may not have actually existed, found in a larger book. For example, the Cologne Mani Codex, a fourth or fifth CE Greek work containing teachings of Mani, founder of Manicheism, once a religion widespread in the Aramaic speaking world. This work contains information stated to be quoted from works about Adam, Sethel (the Manichean way to refer to Seth), Enosh, Shem and Enoch. As other Manichean collections actually preserved earlier Jewish and Christian sectarian works that were otherwise disregarded, these may also represent snippets from similar works.

Included in this volume are fragments from *The Book of Giants*, two versions of which are known, an expansion of the narrative about the Nephilim in Genesis 6:1-4. Here the interbreeding of heavenly creatures with human wom-

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en results in a race of giants who enslave humanity and bring general destruction to the world. God helps the humans in response to their prayers by having angels battle the giants, and the righteous Enoch is involved as well. Some readers may already detect echoes of some midrashim in this story, and indeed many of the works here shed light on ideas current among readers of the Bible at the time, which are reflected in the midrashic literature by their incorporation or rebuttal.

This is undeniably a very valuable collection, but in this particular volume, as it contains so many fragmentary texts and summaries of lost complete works, as well as alternate versions of other already collected texts, there is a sense that the major pseudepigraphal texts have already been collected and analyzed, and most of the newly discovered material just rounds out the material that we already have. For example, an English translation of *Sefer Ha-Razim*, a magical work attributed to the angel Raziel, known in certain Jewish circles as possessing supernatural powers of its own, is included here. This work has already been translated into English decades ago, but here is translated anew with some variant readings from other manuscripts noted.

Still, it appears that a collection such as this is needed every so often to collect such material that does have scholarly value. As an indicator of this, the end of this volume contains a section, "Old Testament Pseudepigrapha Known Only by Title." These are titles of works mentioned in other books that we have no evidence for at this time at all beyond a title. As with the "quotation fragments" it is not clear if these works existed beyond the imagination of the author referencing them or are actual lost works awaiting discovery.

Texts are all provided with helpful introductions and explanatory notes, including the history of scholarship and the discovery of the text in question, with bibliographies for each individual work. An extensive index includes references to the Bible, rabbinic literature, and other Pseudepigrapha. The introduction to the volume states that "for various reasons we were not able to include a number of the texts we had hoped to publish in this volume." Perhaps there will be yet another volume published in about a decade from now.