
The present Commentary incorporates the results of exegetical and historical investigations which accompanied the work on the edition of the text and which followed upon it. It is based on the new Edition and should be used alongside it.

There has been no lack of studies on the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs since R. H. Charles published his influential edition of the text in 1908 and his commentary which appeared in the same year. In § 1 of the INTRODUCTION below, the reader will find an evaluation of recent research as well as references to earlier surveys of work on the Testaments and to bibliographical resources. The authors have taken into account the results reached in the studies published by many colleagues while they worked further along the lines laid down in earlier publications of their own. It did not seem wise, however, to burden the Commentary with surveys of recent discussions on specific topics or to sum up the arguments in favour of, or against, certain solutions. § 1.3 of the INTRODUCTION explains the plan of the present Commentary, and the other chapters will make clear where the authors stand at present with regard to the main issues in the study of the Testaments.

The preparation and the writing of this book took place over a number of years, starting in the spring of 1979 on the basis of material already collected for other purposes. Considerable progress was facilitated in the period from 1 September 1980 to 31 August 1982, when a subsidy from the Netherlands Organisation for the Advancement of Pure Research (Z.W.O.) enabled H. W. Hollander to work full-time on the project. He devoted much time to collecting, sifting and arranging old and new material from primary and secondary sources, and assumed responsibility for the final form of the manuscript. At all stages, however, the two authors worked together very closely, and particularly during the drafting and the writing of the INTRODUCTION and of the commentaries on the individual testaments, there was constant contact between them. They are jointly responsible for the results laid down in the present work. On the title-page, their names appear in alphabetical order.

Numerous scholars have supplied information or made critical remarks in private conversations while the work was in progress. § 2 of the INTRODUCTION presupposes the work done on the Edition and for the textcritical
notes on the various passages the authors could consult records of conversations between H. W. Hollander, M. de Jonge and Th. Korteweg on difficult passages during the work on the constitution of the critical text. Dr A. van der Heide is responsible for Appendix I on the Hebrew Testament of Naphtali and for Appendix II on Midrash Wayissa'u. Dr M. E. Stone and Dr J. C. Greenfield kindly supplied a translation of the Aramaic and Greek Levi fragments (accompanied by short notes) in Appendix III. It will be followed in due course by a new edition with translation and commentary from their hand. Dr M. M. Winter is responsible for the correction of the authors’ English. The authors are grateful for so much cooperation. Finally, they have to thank The Netherlands Organisation for the Advancement of Pure Research (Z.W.O.) for a substantial grant towards the costs of publication.

For an index on Greek words the reader is referred to the Edition. The extensive Table of Contents at the beginning of this volume may serve as subject index.

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