

## Early Jewish Writings

# Apocalypse of Zephaniah

First Century B.C. - First Century A.D.

## Online Text for Apocalypse of Zephaniah

- [English Translation](#)

## Online Resources for Apocalypse of Zephaniah

- [Bibliographie zur Apokalypse Zephaniah](#)

## Offline Resources for Apocalypse of Zephaniah

- [The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Volume One](#)
- [The Apocryphal Old Testament](#)

## Information on Apocalypse of Zephaniah

Emil Schürer writes: "Apart from the Stichometry of Nicephorus and the anonymous list of the Apocrypha (see p. 126), all we know of this writing is from a quotation in Clement of Alexandria [*Strom.* v. 11. 77]." (*The Literature of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus*, p. 132)

James Charlesworth writes (*The Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research*, pp. 220-222) :

This pseudepigraphon is lost, except for a brief quotation by Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 5.11, 77, 2; repr. by A.-M. Denis, no. 23, p. 129) and for probable remnants in two sets of fragments: one in Sahidic Coptic of fourteen pages on early fifth-century papyri and the other in Akhmimic Coptic of eighteen pages on late fourth-century papyri, both of which were edited by G. Steindorff (*Die Apokalypse der Elias, Eine Unbekannte Apokalypse und Bruchstücke der Sophonias-Apokalypse: Koptische Texte, Übersetzung, Glossar* [TU n. F. 2.3a] Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1899. Pp. 110-44 [Sahidic text; cf. pp. 169f. for transl. of first page], 34-65 [Akhmimic text; cf. pp. 149-55 for transl.]). An English translation, which is literally linked to the Coptic, was published by H. P. Houghton ("The Coptic Apocalypse," *Aegyptus* 39 [1959] 40-91, 170-210; see esp. pp. 42-67 [transl. of Sah. frag.], pp. 76-83, 87-91 [transl. of Akh. text]).

The *terminus ad quem* of the early Jewish pseudepigraphon is clearly the end of the second century A.D. since Clement of Alexandria quoted from it by name (*hupo Sophonia*); but it is impossible to know the date of composition. The extent of the work, according to Nicephorus, was 600 lines. The Apocalypse of Sophonias is also mentioned in the List of Sixty Books, Pseudo-Athanasius' List, and the Slavic List.

Some extremely important questions need to be researched. Do the Sahidic leaves represent the same text? Is that text the Apocalypse of Sophonias as Houghton suggests (contrast Steindorff and Riessler)? If so why does Sophonias' name appear only on the first leaf? How are the two sets of Coptic fragments related? Are the Akhmimic fragments, which are frequently called the Anonymous

Apocalypse, another recension of the Apocalypse of Zephaniah, as suggested by M. R. James (*LAOT*, p. 73) and P. Riessler (no. 62, p. 1274)? The parallels between these sets of Coptic fragments and the Apocalypse of Paul are sometimes striking (compare Akh. text 7:5ff. with ApPaul 10:31; cf. R. Meyer, no. 1469). What is the relationship between the traditions? Was A. Harnack correct in assuming that the Apocalypse of Paul is dependent upon the pre-fifth-century Christian redaction of the Apocalypse of Zephaniah (cf. Harnack's *Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius*, 2d. ed. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1958. Part 2, vol. 1, pp. 571-73)? While the Coptic fragments reveal considerable influence from Christians (cf. H. Weinel in Gunkel Festschrift, p. 163), there is a Jewish original (cf. J. B. Frey in *DBSup* 1 [1928] col. 457). How faithfully do these fragments now preserve the original Jewish text? Hopefully some day we may be closer to answering these questions.

It might be helpful to summarize the characteristics of the three sources that may derive ultimately from the Apocalypse of Zephaniah; the quotation in Clement, the Sahidic fragments, and the Akhmimic text. Clement appeals to a text attributed to Sophonias (the Greek name for Zephaniah) in which the prophet is lifted into the fifth heaven where he sees angels, called lords (*kurious*), who dwell in temples of salvation singing hymns to God. This tradition is reminiscent of some passages in the Testament of Levi, 2 Enoch, 3 Baruch, and especially the Ascension of Isaiah.

The first Sahidic page describes what Sophonias (*anok Sophonias*) sees: a soul being flayed by 5,000 angels for its sins. The Angel of the Lord then takes him to a large region in which he sees countless angels with frightening appearances. The second page unfortunately is illegible.

The remaining twelve Sahidic pages contain predictions about the King in the West, who shall kill the King of Wantonness. Despite appearances to the contrary he is the Son of Lawlessness. The Virgin struggles against this imposter and is joined by sixty just ones who show that the Son of Lawlessness is not the Anointed One. The Anointed One eventually sends angels from heaven. The text ends with an apocalyptic vision of the judgment and the end of the earth.

The longer Akhmimic text does not mention Sophonias (or Zepheniah) but describes how the Seer, led by the Angel of the Lord, sees the entire earth and learns that the departed righteous dwell in a place of perpetual light. Almost all of the apocalypse describes the tortures of the wicked, some of whom are identified (viz. the three sons of Joatham the priest).

O. S. Wintermute writes: "As a result of the preceding arguments we can fix the date of this writing somewhere between 100 B.C. and A.D. 175. In commenting on the author's use of Mount Seir in 3:2 we have speculated about the historical period in which such a setting would be most apt to occur, concluding that motives for a pro-Edomite tradition may have persisted until the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. If the author of this text is responsible for the tradition that places the seer's vision on Mount Sier, then he probably wrote before A.D. 70." (*The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, pp. 500-501)